

**“I just want to build a future”:**

**Future Time Perspectives and Case Studies of Refugee Adolescent Girls**

by

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## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Education in Critical and Sociocultural Studies in Education

Title: “I just want to build a future”: Future Time Perspectives and Case Studies of Refugee Adolescent Girls

Refugee girls are underserved in U.S. schools and under-studied in educational and psychological research. Using a feminist intersectional lens and a case study approach, this project sought to illuminate how three high school age refugee girls expressed their intersectional identities and their Future Time Perspectives (FTP; Lewin, 1948) when describing their case studies. It also examined how their intersectional identities showed up in those expressions, and if/how those identities aligned with their learning environment. The study focused on the mismatch between individualistic and collectivist identities interwoven into the other identities of the three girls focused on in this study. FTP should include Collective Time Extension, or an understanding of extending thinking of time into the past and the future, as not just individual, but also inclusive of collective identity. Furthermore, the study interrogated the associated idea of Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST), which posits that as life’s perceived time gets shorter that priorities shift from achievement (academic, professional success) goals, to emotional (building relationships, spending time with loved ones) goals (Carstensen & Lang, 1996; 2002; Lang, 2017; Rohr, 2017). Rather than be on one side of a binary of identities that mismatched with the context they were in, they displayed complex capacities to hold and navigate many identities and understandings at once. The girls in this study leveraged their emotional goals and collective identities; to form and make sense of achievement goals in the individualistic systems they were a part of.

*Keywords:* Refugee, Future Time Perspective, Intersectionality, Collective Time  
Extension

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## DEDICATION

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### School Abbreviations

AVID- Advancement Via Individual Determination

ELD- English Language Development

EL- English Learner

FAFSA- Free Application for Federal Student Aid

### Research Abbreviations

FTP- Future Time Perspective

SST- Socioemotional Selectivity Theory

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Now, since I moved here- I grew up knowing how difficult life is like, I don't want my kids to experience what I have experienced. There are plenty of things to build up a better future for myself, and work hard, and just know there's nothing that will be handed to you so you have to work harder, you have to go hard for it, and just be smart about what you're doing. Because if I am planning a better life for my kids. I feel like it gets passed down to my kids so my kids will want a better life for their kids. And I feel like this one thing that my parents always be like- go and be better than us. Like just be something better for you. (Neza)

The wisdom so beautifully captured above brought us on a journey through time. From the wisdom of parents, to her children yet to be, Neza extended her thinking back and forward, demonstrating the flexibility of her thinking. Her goal was simple: To live a good life, a better life. This was a goal that was relatable to many, but as you will hear in the stories of the three focal refugee teen girls in this study, Neza, Shula, and Esin, their intersectional identities situated them to integrate their understanding of time and connection to others in unique ways.

Neza, Shula, and Esin were the amazing 11th and 12th grade refugee girls featured in this study who shared their case studies and how they understood their collective and individual identities. Neza was a soccer player who planned to get a business degree, whose family was from Burundi, and had a passion for agriculture. Shula was an incredibly witty future airline attendant whose family was from Congo. Esin was a loquacious future airline pilot from Pakistan who adored spending time with her best friend.

## **Positionality**

My path to doing research with these girls began long before my field work for this study. Neza, Shula, and Esin were members of a community that I had spent a lot of time working beside as a refugee resettlement community liaison, adult ESL volunteer teacher, and newcomer 3-5 grade ELD teacher in a mid-size city in the southwest U.S. years before this study. I had met Neza when she was in middle school, and I was a teacher to her younger sister. I did not know Esin or Shula before going to my fieldwork site to begin this research project, but we quickly developed a close rapport during my study. This was partially because of the shared connections through knowing the same teachers, community leaders, aunties, uncles, and children in the community.

In my first position in this community, it was my job to connect families and students to educational resources as a community liaison. In this work, it quickly became apparent that the resettlement system was highly flawed. I realized how unfair and inconsistent allocations of refugee visas were and the many ways families and communities were often torn away from each other physically, if not mentally and emotionally. In the resettlement system, I realized educational services like the ones myself and colleagues were providing were all contingent on grant money that was never guaranteed. This was despite how essential it was for refugees to have support in learning about their new community, connecting with others, and resources. Observing the weakness of the system, and its failures to support connection, influenced me to change occupations to teaching in order to better support refugee families and maintain a more stable position. Not long after becoming a teacher of refugee students, I became painfully aware that the educational system, too, was failing the needs of refugee families in similar ways. The ELD classes I taught were sometimes excluded from school-wide events because they were an

afterthought and not always considered as a full part of the school community. Students were given difficult, individualized, grade-level tests even if they had just arrived and had never had to engage with this type of system before. I saw the way individual practices designed for white American children were not adaptive to the needs of the refugee students I was responsible for supporting.

So, I came to UO, hoping through higher-level study and experience I could do something to address these flawed individualistic systems and help refugee students and families receive quality education. I was still frustrated with many systemic failures and the educational and psychological research that was not inclusive of the fullness of the girls' orientation to time, goals, individual, and collective identities. I saw the coexistence of uncertainty, adjustment to a new context, and hope for the future. This is why it was so important to hear from Esin, Shula, and Neza. While the systems kept failing, the refugees I met within them were not. The girls in this study showed incredible resilience and ability to share clear-eyed visions of their future that integrated the present and past in important ways while being caught in flawed systems. It was my goal to highlight the ways in which refugee teenage girls shared the experience of being a refugee, their intersectional identities, and the ways in which these factors impacted their reflection on the past, their actions in the present, and their visions for their futures. I wanted to understand how their identities impacted their temporal orientations or perspectives on time and how their temporal orientations/perspectives on time shaped their identities.

In this dissertation, I provide qualitative case study evidence which opens possibilities for how educators could best support student success. Namely, if educators had a deeper understanding of commonalities and differences in diverse populations of students that can be one component to better service in U.S. schools. In particular, I questioned how refugee students

envision their futures, and the way they integrate information from their past and present to do so. This has a deep relevance in the creation of holistic models and robust theories in research to facilitate the creation of more successful educational programs.

### **Intersectional Identities of Refugee Girls**

Critical intersectional feminist methodology, with poststructural influence is an important lens in this study (Crenshaw, 1991; Harding, 1987; Harstock, 1983; Hill-Collins, 2016; Leavy, 2014; Sprague, 2005; St. Pierre, 2000). I draw upon this work in an effort to highlight the layers of identity the girls express (Crenshaw, 1991; Hill-Collins, 2016). I further utilize these frameworks to critique the enlightenment humanist assumptions founded in masculinity and individualism that undergird much post-positivist research (St. Pierre, 2000). Furthermore, this lens helps to consider the ways in which identities are constructed, but have real consequences (Nolen, 2020; Syed & McLean, 2015; Villanueva et al., 2019; Westbrook & Saperstein, 2015; White et al., 2018).

One of the important identities to the students in the study is the refugee identity. A refugee is defined as a person who fled their country based on “persecution or the well-founded fear thereof” (United Nations, 2024). Given this definition, I want to make it clear that while I am not attempting to forward a trauma-centered project, I did begin with the understanding that refugee students had undergone life-threatening events that had pushed them into their current circumstance. The experiences of refugee students represent a unique confluence of identities and experiences that may not be generalizable to all immigrant students but are important to better understanding the types of things students and families bring to U.S. schools. Refugee girls, in particular, are the focus of my study because of their unique positionality that is different in terms of age, country of origin, migration status, and collective identity from those typically

studied in both U.S. educational research and psychological research on Future Time Perspective.

### **Future Time Perspective**

One body of psychological research that has yet to be applied to refugee girls is that of Future Time Perspective (FTP). FTP is “the totality of the individual’s views of his psychological future and psychological past existing at a given time” (Lewin, 1948). Specific to this study is the concept of FTP extension, or how far into the past or future a person looks when describing their FTP (Husman & Shell, 2008). This research has important implications for how we understand peoples’ thinking about time, and as of yet there has not been research done with this intersection of identities featured in this paper: Adolescent, refugee, girls, from Africa and the South Asia/Middle East, living in the Southwestern U.S. Furthermore, FTP is foundational to Socio-emotional Selectivity Theory (SST), which states that when perception of life’s time extension is shorter, goals change to focus on social and emotional goals. However, when FTP extension is longer, goals tend to be more achievement-oriented (Carstensen et al., 1999). Both of these theories are important in educational psychology, impactful to decisions about schooling, and seem explanatory for a large population of people, but I wondered if they would apply to refugee girls.

The focus on future thinking is important because of the way literature on refugee students is often trauma oriented, rather than future oriented or even asset oriented. Furthermore, despite schools tending to be future oriented, they often fail to both support and help refugee students imagine a great future for themselves. The micro and macro level focus on deficits, making it difficult to see the assets of or even neutral information about refugee students. In coming to the doctoral program, I actually thought the only way to focus a study on refugee

students was through trauma studies. When learning more about future thinking, I saw a lot that resonated with my experience, but the research I saw did not feature the identity categories that overlapped with the refugee students I had worked with as a teacher and non-profit employee. FTP and SST are theories that are posited to be generalizable, but I wondered if they would be generalizable to refugee girls. While this study does not seek generalizability, it uses critical feminist and feminist poststructuralist lenses to inquire if these theories apply to this group of students and how different questions and methods might be used to be more inclusive of students like the ones in this study in the future. The voices of the students themselves need to be brought into the research and highlighted to expand the fields of educational psychology research to be representative of the assets and neutral information about this demographic.

This descriptive case study analysis was an exploration of the ways in which 17–18-year-old refugee girls in a U.S. high school perceive time and tell the stories of their lives. In particular, I was curious about the way students talk about their intersectional identities in relationship to time and how these expressions exist in relation to the U.S. school environment. Furthermore, I was interested to know if their explanations of time and identity make sense within the frameworks of Psychological Time Perspective research, or whether it was necessary to advance new or expanding ideas to better explain the expressions of students like the refugee girls in this study. The specific questions that guided this study follow:

### **Research Questions**

- RQ1: When students describe their case studies, what is their Future Time Perspective extension and what is the content of their goals?
- RQ2: How do their intersectional identities show up in their case studies and Future Time Perspective?

- RQ3: Do students' Future Time Perspective align with the messaging and curriculum in the classroom in which they learn (particularly in terms of individualism against collectivism)?

All of my research questions looked at the case studies, SST, FTP and goals of refugee students. Theoretically, SST and FTP are talked about together within a psychological paradigm. The orientations students have within SST and FTP should be revealed within their narrations of their case studies, as understood through observation, semi-structured interviews, and student work samples.

### **Research Justifications and Mismatches**

Chapter 2 reviews the literature needed for the study through the lens of research justifications, and highlights mismatches between the construction of U.S. schools and diverse students. The need for this research was twofold: 1) contributing to a conversation to better understand the full experience of refugee girls, which may then influence thinking on how best to support refugee students in classrooms 2) bringing up important theoretical questions for researchers working on the psychological fields of FTP and SST.

As a teacher of refugee students, I often felt that the materials and programs available to support students were insufficient. So much of the curriculum was not culturally or linguistically suited to my students, and the messaging in posters in hallways, the curriculum provided by the school, and the programs that were invested in seemed to not always connect to students. I encountered numerous occasions where it became obvious that the U.S. orientation to time, goals, and individuality/collectivity were not inclusive of the fullness of the identities of my students and their families, which is why it is so important to hear directly from students about their experiences. Furthermore, without intending it, I was sending unrealized messages about

what is valuable in the U.S. In other words, I taught a hidden curriculum (Giroux, 1983) about what success should be. While there is work that looks at the imagined futures of unaccompanied migrant teens (Canizales, 2023), narratives of late-arriving teen immigrants (Birman et al., 2020), and growing work looking at the aspirations of refugees (Hos, 2016), I have not yet encountered work that looks at the combination of intersectional identities in this study and an application of looking at the nature of their goals, or the extension of their FTPs.

By definition, refugee students have experienced persecution or the threat of persecution (United Nations, 2024). Because of this, literature is focused on this trauma experience (Beauregard et al., 2017; Rowe et al. 2017). Much of the literature about refugee trauma focuses on deficits resulting from trauma rather than on the perseverance and tenacity of those who have overcome trying experiences (Dube et al, 2019; Rodriguez, 2015). I see the traumatic events faced by refugee students in their past as part of a complex intersectional identity that many people are committed to supporting them in navigating, rather than a sole defining feature. While at the refugee resettlement agency and as an educator, I continued to marvel at the tenacity and resolve of the refugees I worked with to persevere and make the most of incredibly difficult and uncertain situations. I have seen the ways in which students and families worked together, prioritizing care for one another and how school for them often seemed to fit into their familial and communal duties.

I used the construct of SST to consider the FTP extension of students in an attempt to better understand if this group of students was more focused on emotional, (such as building strong relationships, and spending time with loved ones), rather than achievement goals (grades, graduation, and career), or if there is instead overlap. The research suggests that these types of goals are somewhat contradictory, and one takes great precedence over another in different

situations, however I hypothesized and, I believe, showed that these goals completely co-exist for the girls in this study.

### **Feminist Methodology**

Chapter 3 covers methods and methodology. Importantly, I have been doing this work with a critical intersectional feminist lens. This lens draws on both classic feminist standpoint methodology from the 1980s, (Harding, 1987; Harstock 1983), but also intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Hill-Collins, 2016) and feminist poststructuralism (St. Pierre, 2000). In this paper, I adopt some of the tools of feminist poststructuralism to push back on some of the (post)positivist assumptions born out of enlightenment humanism and common in the white male science paradigm in which psychological research has traditionally been developed (Harding, 1987, 1998; Harstock, 1998; Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007; Reinharz, 1992; Smith, 1987; St. Pierre, 2000). This is not to say that the baby should be thrown out with the bathwater just that it is worth probing at the assumptions made within this paradigm to create opportunities to engage differently. Feminist research calls for reflexivity (Wickramasinghe, 2009) and some educational psychology authors writing about racial awareness are including more reflexivity (Gray et al., 2018; King & McNerney, 2014; White et al, 2019). Importantly, feminist research is relational, and researchers need to build empathetic relationships with participants (Collins, 2000; DeVault, 1990; Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007; Pillow & Mayo, 2007). Furthermore, an important part of this methodology is praxis, or the belief in theory and research not being divided (Stanley, 1990, p. 15). This manifested in a focus on positionality, reflexivity, and suppleness in the collection, analysis, and writing process.

## **Findings and Discussion Overview**

All data was gathered with one classroom teacher and her classes at a public school with approximately 1160 students. The majority of students in the school were of color with only 15% of students being white. The classes took place in 9th-12th grade English Language Development (ELD) classes in a southwest urban U.S. public school. All of the girls in this study relocated to the U.S. between the years of 2015-2017. The students in these classes ranged from 13-18 years old and I did observe all students who volunteered. However, for the purpose of answering my research questions specifically about refugees I adopted a case study analysis for the three refugee girls who fully participated in the observation, interviews, and work submissions. The students focused on in this study were all female identifying, between the ages of 17 and 18, refugee status, from South Asia/Middle East or east Africa, low-socioeconomic status.

This study combined several different components including participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and student work samples. The students in this school district have been purposefully sampled because many of them are refugee students and I have a working relationship with the school district and administration at the school. The findings in chapters 4 and 5 go into depth on the girls, the environment, and the themes of individualism, intersectionality and time. Data analysis was done with coding and a case study style analysis of three focal girls. I looked for the ways the girls explained their case studies and looked at that through a feminist storytelling lens.

In the study, I found that each of the girls expressed complex understandings of their FTP and explained that through rich case studies layered with description of their intersectional identities. First, I found that the girls were constantly negotiating an understanding of the past, to

situate their understanding of their futures in order to make choices in the present. Second, I found that their collective identities, and connections were deeply ingrained in their understanding of their case studies and perception of time. Additionally, all of the girls' future goals were deeply ingrained in giving to their communities. Finally, their understandings of time were dependent on collective memory that helped to construct a vision of the future- collective time extension.

In chapter 6, there is discussion of the findings and the implications. I used the strength of their collective identities of the students to make a point about a different way time perspective should be looked at for the girls with intersectional identities that are outside of the white, male, individualistic norm, and challenge some of the value-laden assumptions built into some of the psychological tools used to measure time perspective. In the discussion section, I argue that if the tools used to do the research have major blind spots to various groups of people, we will continue to provide theories that are exclusive to important members of our communities and worlds. Generalizable tools that do not generalize to all demographics should be re-conceived or recognized to not be totally generalizable. Finally, I pointed to the ways these issues are present in the school lives of students, and how developing understanding of the complex identities of the students on their own can be useful to educators. The implications of these findings are important to expanding research in FTP and SST. If FTP is shaped by shared collective memory, then work needs to be done to expand the tools used to measure and describe it. If SST manifests differently in people from different intersectional identities than the ones tested so far, then there also may be a need to do additional practice with the instruments of SST.

Further, the importance of collectivity in refugee girls, as it is for other collectivist communities, has important implications for education. More work needs to be done to look at

programming that is supportive of students' full identities and does not confine them within the rigid bounds of radical individualism. Education researchers and schools need to think critically about how to make education serve communities in flexible ways.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Cultural Mismatch: Reconciling student assets, and divergent bureaucratic priorities**

The need for my research is twofold: 1) contributing to a conversation to better understand the full experience of refugee girls which may then influence thinking on how best to support refugee students in classrooms 2) bring up important theoretical questions for researchers working on the psychological fields of FTP and SST.

#### ***Justification 1: Understanding the Unique Intersectional Identities of Refugee Girls in U.S. Schools.***

Before diving into this study's method and findings, I first will outline the two primary justifications for this work 1) refugee girls' identities 2) expanding research on FTP. I will then outline research that highlights a few of the major mismatches that this study highlights. These include: 1) Individual against collective achievement, 2) education for citizenship vs. Education for an unknowable future, 3) gendered identities in school 4) FTP/SST research's individualism.

#### **Collective identity.**

Relationships or collective identities are typically important in the lives of people who are both female identifying and from the countries focused on in this study. One definition says that, "Collective identities are those personally valued parts of the self that serve to strengthen one's ties to highly valued social groups and relationships- such as one's gender, race, religion, social class, culture, and family" (Eccles, 2009, p.78). This definition is useful for delving into educational psychology work, but it is important to simultaneously keep in mind that identity is not stable and can fluctuate based on context and the questions we ask (St. Pierre, 2000). While some collective identity is an important component for identities across contexts, there are dramatically different levels of importance across cultures.

For instance, in the enlightenment humanist or “western” view whose paradigm dominates psychological and much educational research, “there is a faith in the inherent separateness of distinct persons” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 226), while in many non-western cultures, there is a belief that people are fundamentally connected to each other (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 227) and sometimes to other living entities (Arvin et al., 2013; Bang et al. 2014). The dynamic nature of identity is also an especially important consideration for those who have an interdependent self because this self-conception “cannot be properly characterized as a bounded whole, for it changes structure with the nature of the particular social context. Within each particular social situation, the self can be differently instantiated” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 227).

Norton (2016) explains a concept of “imagined communities” that she borrowed from Benedict Anderson. For Norton, imagined communities are any group that a person imagines themselves to be a part of. This imagined community has an accompanying imagined identity that impacts a learner’s imagination of their futures. This is also referred to as collective identity. “When people have, or think they have, some traits, characteristics, symbols or history in common, they share a collective identity without necessarily being in direct contact with one another” (Ashmore et al., 2004). Furthermore, there has long been evidence that there are significant differences in collectivist versus individualist orientations across different cultures, with significant differences between both urban and rural people, and amongst different cultures across the globe (Triandis, 1989, p. 510).

### **Why Collectivism and Intersectionality Matters.**

The collective, or interdependent view (Triandis, 1989) of immigrant and refugee adolescents can be very important for a number of reasons. Furthermore, this collectivity is best understood with an intersectional lens that recognizes that collectivity doesn't exist outside of other identities. First, there are a number of protective and beneficial features of collective identities based on parental, ethnic, and religious connections (Qin-Hilliard, 2003). These features are often important to future planning for these children and families. There are also some considerations for students with strong collective identities that may not be of as much concern as for more individualistic students (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Zhou & Bankston, 2001). All of these considerations take on new light when we adopt an intersectional lens to consider these facets. While collectivism is important to many in the refugee community, it differs by gender, race, culture and other factors (Miyazawa, 2017; Qin-Hilliard, 2003; Qin, 2009; Zhou & Bankston, 2002). I use an intersectional lens particularly to look at collectivism for refugee youth and how gender plays into that.

Development of a healthy identity, particularly collective identity, in minoritized students is essential for resilience and school adjustment (Beauregard, 2017 p.114; Berry et al., 2006). Furthermore, students who both integrate and maintain cultural identities fare best in educational environments (Berry et al., 2006). Collective identity is very important to the concept of investment (Norton, 2016). Investment explains the way in which language learners “invest” time in language learning, and other learning tasks, with the anticipation of accumulating social capital later. It has been found in many refugee resettlement countries across America, Australia and Europe that immigrant families tend to have high expectations for their children, and that children often adopt these high hopes, but are unable to meet those aspirations (Debrosse et al,

2020). As referred to in the beginning, it is important to understand the ways in which refugee children with a collectivist identity tend to prioritize collective rather than individual goals (Triandis, 1989, p. 512). For instance, for Black and Latino participants', who are also from collectivist backgrounds, success was weighed in equal measure investment in community, home, and school (Howard et al, 2019, in Mann and Turner, 2023 p. 4). This closely aligns with the ways in which their families invest in education for their children for collective family success in the future. (Qin-Hilliard, 2003; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Zhou & Bankston, 2001).

## **Gender**

The concepts of collectivism and investment become even more complicated when aspects of gender are considered. “Gender equality is associated with the individualism-collectivism cultural dimension so that the closer a society is to the collectivistic pole the greater are gender inequality and differences” (Seginer & Majajna, 2018, p. 198). Girls are often encouraged to do well in school because they will be able to better contribute to their future families (Qin-Hilliard, 2003; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Zhou & Bankston, 2001). In the classic article by Triandis on the self, it was also found that family is often a higher priority for women, and gender is a more salient variable for women than it is for men in one sample from the U.S. for individuals from both collectivist and individualist cultures (Triandis, 1989). Given the age and the focus on a U.S. individualistic group, further research into the salience of gender and family in more diverse samples is necessary. For instance, in working with immigrant adolescents, researchers found that education was a way for girls to support their gender and familial roles and responsibilities. Girls with a good education could get complementary jobs to their future husbands (Zhou & Bankston, 2001). For example, a girl

could become a nurse, and help her husband the doctor (Zhou & Bankston, 2001). While some may prioritize the individual goals and potential of the girl, the collectivist identity means that she may see her goals in the context of support for a husband and family. Rather than judging this orientation, researchers and school officials can embrace the fact that this collectivist identity does encourage a girl to pursue academic and career pathways. From a purely practical standpoint of trying to encourage children to pursue academic and career goals, the collectivist identity can be a support.

A common explanation for why girls and young women tend to do better in school is because their behavior is more tightly restricted than boys in their families (Miyazawa, 2017; Qin-Hilliard, 2003; Qin, 2009; Zhou & Bankston, 2002). Miyazawa cites literature supporting the argument that minority young women were expected to be more responsible, and self-regulated than boys, specifically in a neoliberal society (2017). This idea is also echoed, without the emphasis on neoliberalism, in work looking at Vietnamese refugee girls' gender roles. Parents and boys in their community consistently expected girls to be well-behaved, responsible, and moral. The authors attribute this expectation as one reason girls were able to better focus on and succeed in school (Zhou & Bankston, 2002).

Qin-Hilliard pointed out that in urban settings, girls were less likely to have behavioral problems than boys, partially because of a “shield of ethnicity” created by the girls having more parental accountability, time at home, and ability to maintain ethnic culture (2003). She explained this shield of ethnicity as a type of social capital that girls have. Conversely, boys' time spent outside of the home left them open to more assimilation, and less ethnic maintenance, and also less accumulation of social capital (Qin-Hilliard 2003, p. 106). In a later article, she also emphasized that immigrant girls tend to be more invested in ethnic identity than boys, and

elaborated on the ways in which ethnic and gender identity are co-constituted in immigrant youth (Qin, 2009).

It is important for researchers and educators to appreciate the strengths of collectivist intersectional identities for many reasons. A positive ethnic identity is correlated to academic motivation (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017). Furthermore, children from minoritized backgrounds have higher levels of satisfaction and well-being when they are engaged with both their own ethnicities and cultures, as well as the mainstream culture (Beauregard, 2017). This means that while students should learn about the culture they are entering, it is essential to support the identities they bring with them.

All intersectional identities, including gender, ethnic, religious, migrant, and collective are very important for understanding the students in this study. It is also important to note that the above research does take a binary view of gender, and in many ways this project does reinscribe gender binary through focusing on girls. The research mentioned above does rely on heteronormativity and gender conformity as well. I try to avoid assumptions of heteronormativity and gender conformity in the interviews, but in the following, I will detail how schools may not support these components of refugee student identities.

### **Globalization, migration, and uncertainty.**

Given the ongoing context of global migration, the U.S. remains a global destination for asylum seekers and refugee resettlement (Maza, 2018). For the purposes of this study, I used the legal definitions of asylum seekers, refugees, and the broader term “immigrant” for anyone outside of the legal confines of the refugee definition who moves to the U.S. for an indefinite amount of time. For a visual representation of the relationships among terms see Figure 1.

Externally forcibly displaced people are those eligible to apply for asylum and refugee status. International legal code is very specific about the ways in which a refugee can only gain protection based on “persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution;” this language is consistent between the United Nations and U.S. code (UNHCR, 2010).

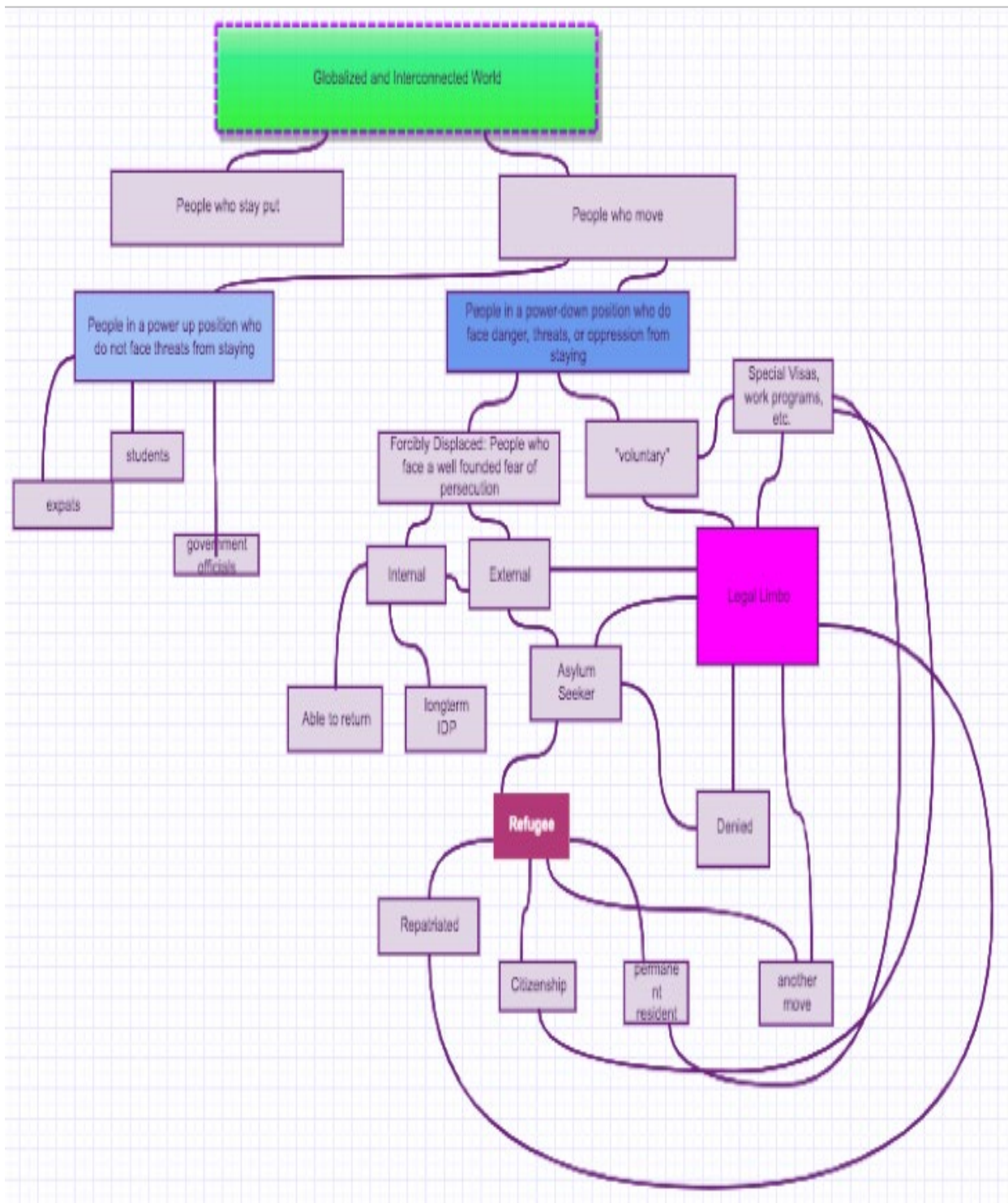


Figure 1: Migration terminology map

Looking at phenomena related to migration is an important context for understanding the systems of which refugee students have been a part. This context helps to better understand the contributing factors to their identities and perspectives on time. This background may also provide meaningful context in understanding the stories the young people tell. In discussing what a refugee is, I will emphasize that while not unique to refugees but common to various migrants 1) nationality and citizenship are tenuous, 2) connections to culture and community far away are a large part of the experience of migration, 3) students with complex migration journeys need to plan for unknowable futures, and 4) students face unique circumstances once in school in the U.S.

### **Tenuous Nationality and Citizenship.**

It will be helpful to differentiate between some common terms used throughout the research: Refugee, asylee, migrant. A migrant includes any person who moves from country to country (UN, 2024). It is an overarching term that is applied to a large swath of people. This may include individuals who come with a green card, work permit, or without documentation. Applying for asylum is the first step to potentially gaining asylum in the country to which a migrant may flee- though majority of migrants do not apply for this status given the difficulty and strict requirements. After that, the migrant then needs to go through further steps to apply for refugee status, which they often do from a neighboring country to get moved to a third country for resettlement (UNHCR). Many asylum claims are never honored and are never brought to the level of refugee status.

Externally, forcibly displaced people are those who are then eligible to apply for asylum and refugee status. Refugee legally has a much more specific meaning than it does popularly,

which has been a debate in recent times. Particularly during the refugee crisis in Europe, there was a large debate over the difference between refugees and economic migrants (Smith, 2019). For instance, the legal code is very specific about the ways in which a refugee can only gain protection based on “persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution”; this language is consistent between the United Nations and U.S. legal codes (UNHCR; Welch, 2017). The way that this has commonly been applied is to leave out anyone who a state sees as being able to gain protection from their own government. Persecution is seen as a state-level issue. For instance, someone suffering from hate speech or harassment would not be protected if the state that they were coming from has laws to address this issue, and/or- the state promulgating the persecution. Refugees have a legal status that gives them certain rights and responsibilities, but those rights stop far short of a clear path into citizenship. Furthermore, this definition does not address any type of economic or environmental migrants.

The legal frameworks outlined in U.S. and United Nations international law, based on their parameters, consequently, leave out a whole host of people who may have genuine need to migrate. It is important to note that the legal definition of refugee excludes “economic migrants” and “those displaced by natural disasters,” so folks who have suffered from collapsed economic systems or natural disasters come to the U.S. as immigrants with no special protections. These people who are left out of the official definitions are often described as voluntary, or people who fail to gain legal status as a refugee or asylee. This is an important point demonstrating the slipperiness of nationality and citizenship, and how easy it is to be found outside of these statuses.

## **Global Connections.**

It is important to note the ways that globalization create conditions for refugees, asylees, and other immigrants to move to the U.S. One definition of globalization is the way in which “deterritorialization” and the erosion of the importance of the nation state have impacted the way that people live and work across boundaries (Olivos & Sandoval, 2015). In other words, citizenship and nationality still exist, but the mobility of people, goods, services and ideas has blurred any hard lines around nationality. It is in part because of this deterritorialization that the “line between alien and citizen is soft” (Ngai, 2014) is easy to recognize and has a relevance in the status of refugees. For many U.S. citizens, myself included, nationality or citizenship has never felt threatened, changes to nationality have always seemed like a voluntary option, and those two simple facts have added a layer of security and directionality to my life. However, for many others, including many refugee students, this is far from a lived reality. In understanding globalization, I subscribe to the idea of “complex connectivity” or the idea that global connections (of people, goods, and communication) do not flow in one direction, but rather are multi-directional and ever-changing (Singh et al., 2007). It becomes clear that while my nationality is fairly stable and I am usually able to move and connect to others on a global level, my refugee and immigrant students often connect in much more complex, multidirectional, and less predictable ways. Transnationalism, the view that migrants do not simply move from one stable environment to another, but maintain complex ties to both places, and may in fact move back and forth or place to place (de Hass, 2008), is essential to understanding the circumstances of refugee students and to the girls in this study. Complex connectivity is essential in understanding the ways in which there is a major lack of certainty, but also the interconnectedness of their lives for any refugee.

### **Uncertain Futures.**

There are three “durable solutions” for refugee migration (Dryden-Peterson, 2017) suggested by the UNHCR; these are repatriation, assimilation into the country of exile, or resettlement in a third country. Refugees are always unsure of which one of these options will be available and so must prepare for multiple contingencies. In other words, “the trajectories of refugees do not fit neatly into the established policy categories of return, local integration, and resettlement. Instead, they are nonlinear and complex permutations of migration, exile, and consistently re-imagined futures” (Dryden-Peterson, 2017, p. 21). With only 6% of refugees across the globe attending college, (UNHCR, 2023) and the patchwork of educational programming on a global scale for refugees, it is no surprise that refugee education has long been thought of as a short-term strategy to carry students over until they can return home (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; 2017). However, the nature of human displacement worldwide due to war, poverty, natural disasters, and climate change suggests that this should no longer be the strategy.

Instead, education for refugees should prepare them for “unknowable futures” (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Research suggests that even when refugees do gain citizenship, their experience of citizenship is still limited and differentiated from white, nationally born citizens (Shizha, 2023, p. 76). While the students in this study do fall into the “resettlement category,” their situations remain decidedly unsettled with connections to their home countries, a refugee visa rather than citizenship, and family remaining in unsafe conditions providing a backdrop of uncertainty. While the girls have found some level of security in their new environment, they do not have the assurance of citizenship, or certainty about their homeland. This lack of certainty gives the girls a unique perspective in goal setting and future thinking that is not often considered in psychological or educational research.

## **Refugee Students in U.S. Schools.**

Understanding the context into which refugee students are typically placed is essential for understanding what the students I worked with faced. School is a required and formative part of the lives of young people in the U.S. Based on my experience in refugee resettlement, I saw that the main service from case managers was to enroll refugee youth in school. Once in school, refugee children experienced a range of circumstances greatly impacted by the variability in location, socioeconomic neighborhoods, teacher training, language access, and more. Despite the importance of refugee services, these services often left needs unaddressed within U.S. schools (Taylor and Sidhu, 2012, in Beauregard et al, 2017, p. 115; Nwosu & Barnes, 2014, p. 436). In fact, a swath of literature finds gaps in services for refugee students in the U.S. and other refugee-accepting western countries (Daniel & Zybina, 2018; McBrien, 2005; Keddie, 2012; Candapa et al. 2007). Refugee students are often tracked into low level or separate ESL classes, and often teachers are unsure of how to support their specific needs (Omerbašić, 2015, p. 472). Even worse, many students are greeted by racism, discrimination, and dismissal of their knowledge in school environments (Omerbašić, 2015). Most literature that exists on providing the best experience for refugee students in new schools focuses on one or both of two areas: 1) linguistic and academic supports (Hos, 2020; Miller, 2009; Monero et al, 2014; Solari, 2014), 2) psychological and trauma care (Hos, 2020; NASP, 2015; Rowe et al., 2017; Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015). In fact, a review of literature (McBrien, 2005) found that psychosocial wellbeing and language acquisition were the two primary areas identified as needs for refugee students. While it is essential to understand that refugee youth do experience higher rates of depression and posttraumatic stress disorder than their non-refugee counterparts (Bronstein and Montgomery, 2011 in Mann & Turner, 2023, p. 4) and that language acquisition is an essential

component to educating newcomers, it is not enough. Refugee students are more than these two categories. While both language acquisition and psychosocial wellbeing research are undoubtedly valuable, limiting research to these areas may have unintended consequences, such as creating deficit models, and a narrow focus on one component of academic success, rather than a more holistic picture of the assets and complex identities of refugee students.

In terms of purely language acquisition research, it is easy to develop a deficit model, in which students who receive English Language Development services are seen only in terms of their lack of English knowledge and the need to develop it (Solari, 2014). The deficit approach is harmful to students and the whole classroom (Moll et al, 1992; Rodriguez, 2015). When students are not seen for their strengths, both the student and those around them lose out. If a student's strengths are not recognized, their full potential is unlikely to be tapped into, and there is risk of demotivating them. Further, the people around them do not get to learn from the student if their voice is not raised in the classroom. Furthermore, recognizing the linguistic talents of students builds a positive peer and teacher relationships and classroom environment. While plenty of research on language acquisition does look at the phenomena in immigrant young people more holistically (Valenzuela, 1999; Vogel & Garcia, 2017), the fact remains that research into a wider view of the dual language student experience is needed.

There are also unintended consequences which stem from focusing solely on the psychological impacts of trauma often emphasized with refugee students (Corbin, 2012). While my research may explore how trauma is one facet through which refugee students perceive time, it is far from the emphasis. According to (Rodriguez, 2015), there is a "danger of compassion," or a danger in research that takes on the perspective of addressing a student only on the terms of their trauma. While there is limited research on refugee-specific differences in academic success,

language acquisition, and trauma-informed care, there is an opportunity for more research that looks at the futures of refugee students in relation to their intersectional identities.

### **Intersectional Identities.**

Bonnie Norton defines identity as “the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2013 in Norton, 2016, p. 476). In this quote we see the importance of thinking about time as part of identity. In this respect, it was important for my project to consider the ways in which collective identity influences the way students understand their past, present, and future. While the discussion defining immigration statuses was at a macro level, and the discussion on refugee students in schools was more at the institutional level, I am interested in the ways in which refugee students see their own futures in relation to their identities and experiences. “Refugee” is seemingly a small component of the way students think about themselves. Given that reflection on the self is an important part of what I asked students to do, a definition of identity is necessary.

“Identity refers as much to what makes individuals unique as to what makes them similar to other people in a group they belong or to which they identify” (Vinsonneau, 2012 in Catarci et al., 2020, p. 114). Here, again, we see that connection to others is essential to understanding identity. In transnational migration studies, “transnational individuals” are those who belong to multiple spaces and as such have multiple identities (Shizha, 2023, p.80). Furthermore, it is important to understand the ways in which power dynamics and discourse shape the ways in which identities are situated and change. In “Beyond ‘culture clash,” Ngo (2008), pulling on Stewart Hall (1989; 1990) and Homi Bhabha (1994), points to the ways in which identity can

often be referred to in dualisms, and not recognized for the ways in which it is dynamic and dependent on the perspective and situation of a given person. It is especially important to remember that salience and meaning of identities change dramatically in context and are not static (Oyserman & Destin, 2010). Part of this dynamism is contingent on culture, and culture is formative in the way identity is constructed.

This issue of salient, dynamic identities is an essential component of what I refer to when talking about intersectional identities. “Intersectional status is not static, and social identities and locations fluctuate across place and time” (Spitzer, 2023, p. 28). A person is never just one characteristic, but is developing in relationship to and co-constituted by the environment which they are in (Ramazanoglu, 1992; 2002) Collins and Bilge define intersectionality as:

. . . a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity of the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people’s lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves. (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 2)

Both Intersectionality and Norton’s definition of identity attend to the temporal aspect of the way individuals see themselves and their relationships, and consider context, power dynamics, and differences. Further, Spitzer (2023) calls on the field of transnational migration scholars to take more seriously the spatial and temporal dimensions of intersectionality in order

to achieve a more textured understanding of how refugee women are constituted, co-constituted and understand themselves across spaces and times. With these inputs in mind, I define intersectional identity as *multifaceted, dynamic, contextual, overlapping components of the way a person understands their relationships to space, time, and beings*. This is especially important in this project, given that I am curious about the impacts of refugee and gender identity on a student's perception of time, and the temporal aspect of identity brings into question the ways in which those gender and cultural or refugee identity markers may also change with time (and context).

### **Gendered intersection**

Taking this intersectional view is important; not only does cultural and refugee identity shape the way students see school and their futures, but also gender is particularly impactful. Across the research, there was general agreement that bilingual girls from immigrant families tended to do better in school than boys and, importantly, were very invested in the present and long-term impacts of their education. Ehrlich (1997) indicated that this has been a consistent finding since the 1970s. For instance, Zhou & Bankston (2001) found that unmarried high school refugee girls were far more likely to go to school, stay in school, and go to college than their male counterparts. Qin-Hilliard (2003) pointed out in a longitudinal study that immigrant girls had higher grades and expected more in the future than boys did. Miyazawa (2017) took immigrant girls' higher achievement as a given in her study and looked at the ways in which girls found meaning to succeed in school. There was a great deal of overlap of explanation of why this might be the case, though each study did offer some unique perspectives as well.

While the idea of academic success in itself is not a feature of this study, the ways in which refugee students, particularly girls, see their futures is, and their experiences of school as

different from boys no doubt has implications for their perceptions of the future and is a possible area for future research. As I will highlight in the following, 1) temporality and 2) relationships are both very important components of the way I am thinking about the identities of students in the study.

### **Adolescent identity and temporality**

There are multiple aspects around temporality that are essential to understanding the identities of the students I worked with. First, as Chao (2019) points out, there is developing research on refugee identity, but much of that research is past-oriented rather than future-oriented. A similar concern is echoed in Daniel (2019), who is concerned that an overemphasis on the pasts of refugee students can lead to deficit thinking and does not leave room for educators to help students develop their identities around their future goals. Second, understanding the temporal element is particularly important for this study, not only because I am focusing on the future time perspective of the young people, but also because my work focused on adolescents.

Adolescents are at a particularly important part of their identity formation and as such refugee adolescents face unique circumstances in building their own identities as they acculturate (Chao, 2019). Erik Erikson's (1968) assertion of the importance of identity development during adolescence has been widely accepted since the 1960s and it is during these teenage years that a great deal of identity integration occurs (Syed & McLean, 2016). One important aspect of this identity formation is temporal integration, wherein adolescents coordinate their past, present, and future (Syed & McLean, 2016, p. 110). In this project, the temporal integration of the teens are apparent in the storytelling, work samples, and observations I have collected.

Across the U.S. and Europe, adolescents show interest in the future, are optimistic about the future, and tend not to anticipate negative life events happening to them (Johnson et al, 2016; Nurmi, 2001). Young people in these studies focused on individual future hopes predominantly- even in cross-cultural studies (Johnson et al, 2016; Nurmi, 2001). Despite these consistencies, research has also found that cultural differences around the “timing and sequencing” of life events can impact the type of future oriented goals that adolescents develop (Nurmi, 2001, p. 9).

***Justification 2: Research on Time Perspective and Socioemotional Selectivity Theory.***

The secondary goal of this paper is to broaden the research conversation in the study of Future Time Perspective, and future thinking research broadly. I am problematizing this idea that future goals are in opposition to social goals- which is implied in the SST literature that poses social goals against achievement goals. According to Oettingen, et al., research on future thinking typically focuses on the ability to predict based on the past, or focus on objectives and goals, and does not look into peoples’ capability to explore and visualize the future creatively (2018). Future Time Perspective (FTP) is essentially the combination of a person’s views of their future, present, and past at a given time (Kooij et al., 2018; Sircova et al. 2014). There are many facets that can be explored in relation to FTP, but for this study I am interested in extension- or how far into the future or past someone looks (Kooij et al., 2018). I have applied this theory in my conversations and theorizing around how refugee girls think about time. This both helped me to frame the discussion with the students, in order to learn more about their case studies, and provided data much different than the populations FTP research typically targets.

In learning more about the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory and Future Time Perspective (Carstensen et al., 1999; Fung & Carstensen, 2006; Husman et al., 2016; Husman &

Lens, 1999; Husman & Shell, 2008; Lang & Carstensen, 2002) of refugee students, two things can be accomplished: First and foremost, teachers and schools can use the information to provide a better experience for refugee students. Given that refugee students continue to face “isolation, low teacher expectations, cultural or racial biases, and struggles with learning language and content simultaneously” (Daniel, 2018), there is a need for continued research with refugee youth to provide support. Furthermore, students who are engaged with both their cultural and mainstream cultural identities report more well-being and satisfaction with school (Beauregard, 2017). Second, I hope to counter the narrative that goals that focus on relationships are inherently present focused, and cannot be part of long-term goal setting. As the literature shows, immigrant and refugee families focus on long-term goals for familial success (Norton, 2016). An additional feature of the project is to problematize the idea that achievement goals need to be highly individualistic. As I will discuss further, there currently exists a very western enlightenment humanist lens of looking at the world that puts in opposition relationship goals and achievement goals (Carstensen et al., 1999; Carstensen & Lang, 2002; Fung & Carstensen, 2006). I want to counter this false dichotomy with the complex narratives from the refugee girls featured in this study: love, relationship and family can, and often are, an integral part in envisioning and setting goals for futures.

### **Thinking about time.**

“The future, like the past, is not a static event” (Hölscher, 2018)

Before diving into the specific areas of SST and FTP, it is useful to step back and understand more of the context in which this research is situated. It is important to realize that thinking about temporality is not static and rather changes and fluxes. People don’t always think about time in the same way, and this changes culturally and through history.

In the 1960s, Reinhart Koselleck coined “past futures” to explain changing perspectives of time, and historical understandings of time and this relates to the important ways people have practiced imagining the future throughout history and the consequences which ensue. Hölscher (2018) highlights the argument that looking far into the future is a relatively modern phenomenon concurrent with the enlightenment, but recognizes it is a debated theory. Hölscher (2018) argues that in premodern times past and future were written about as metaphysical and as existing simultaneously. The author points to European paradigms and a lack of future tense in early European languages, and points to Latin as a root language for speaking about the future. He also notes that the European sources he looks at primarily cite the end of the world as what will happen in the future. In the modern era, religion represented an idea of the future associated with a heavenly or celestial future, and according to Hölscher, L. (2018), a secular future then emerged with advancements in science. Hölscher goes on to argue that through the late modern era, changes of writing about the future have been closely linked to political moments of hardship/pessimism/short term and hopefulness/revolution/technology long term. He outlines the development of turn of the 20th century linear historical time with expansion and domination of non-European peoples, with a concurrent othering of “backwards people” and identifies the technologically hopeful visions of the 60s. He characterizes the modern era as one focused on a linear understanding of progress.

With 80s backlash about how humanity is reaching the end of civilization, technologies changing how we interact with time and with the shift to postmodernism comes our current period. Hölscher, L. (2018) defines our current era as one where people are shaping history rather than being shaped by it. He points to the ways the internet has come to make everything seem timeless because of its evergreen availability (Hölscher, 2018), while for the first-time

having access to histories from diverse people, and not just elites... meanwhile globalization has led to a stark division in the vision of the future between elites and oppressed peoples.

According to Szpunar, Shrikanth, and Schacter (2018), there are two main varieties of future-thinking: episodic or thoughts of the future that are autobiographical and semantic or thoughts of the future that are more abstract/less personal, but they recognize that the two types can overlap. Their current research focuses on the fact that the same brain regions that are essential for episodic memory are also essential for future thinking. This new neurological research offers interesting insight into the idea that thinking about the past goes hand in hand with thinking about the future. There is research from a broad range of disciplines of studying time, and I will review some of the literature that may be important for future studies in the conclusion/discussion chapter 6.

### **Socioemotional Selectivity Theory.**

In order to address research questions one and two and mismatch four, it is necessary to understand the ways SST and FTP have already been researched. Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (Carstensen et al., 1999; Carstensen & Lang, 1996) suggests that as Future Time Perspective (FTP) shortens the importance of emotional goals are amplified. Scholars in the area argue that young and middle-aged adults tend to have longer FTP extension, while older folks tend to have a shortened time perspective with the end of life growing nearer. Within this description of SST lies an understanding of and reference to FTP, which Lewin (1948) broadly defined as “the totality of the individual’s views of his psychological future and psychological past existing at a given time”.

Both SST and FTP are theoretical tools that have been used to understand the psychology of people from many walks of life. Initial research on the subject focused on elderly adults

(Carstensen & Lang, 1996; 2002; Lang, 2017; Rohr, 2017), but additional research is revealing that other life threatening or traumatic events can change goal orientation for people of various ages (Fung & Carstensen, 2006; Västfjäll et al., 2008). These studies suggest that age may be a proxy for any event that primes life's fragility, or in other words, if a person faces a life threatening situation they are more likely to have a similar perspective of a short time extension and emotional goals to those who are more advanced in age (Fung & Carstensen, 2006; Västfjäll et al., 2008). Studies along these lines have been done with Asian and European sample populations of adults. To fully understand, SST's shortened time extension due to age/illness and other factors it seems deeper study and research is required on a broader population, including culturally diverse and age diverse individuals.

This study focuses on the experiences of adolescents, an under-researched demographic in terms of SST given that most studies focus on adults (Carstensen, 1992; 1995; Charles & Carstensen, 2007; Fung & Carstensen, 2001). While few studies have focused on adolescents (Burns et al., 2021), the evidence gathered from adults of broad ranges and emerging studies of adolescents suggests that younger people should have a long FTP extension and primarily achievement-oriented goals. In some ways this aligns with other approaches to research that suggest that despite any cultural differences, adolescents from all over the world tend to focus their futures on a combination of 'love and work' (Seginer & Mahajna, 2018, p. 198). An SST perspective would suggest that achievement orientation would focus on work and establishment as tasks to achieve, whereas the emotional goals typically focused on by the elderly and those who have faced life threatening experiences focus more on the quality of their close relationships. One of the pressing questions for this study is how these (love/work or emotional/achievement goals) balance out for refugee youth, and how they impact one another.

The early works by Carstensen and Lang focus on the value of personal achievement goals for young people, and put those in opposition to socioemotional goals, which are framed as present-oriented (1996). This value laden orientation to time is present in the foundational metrics for a swath of FTP research tools.

***Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI).***

One of the most popular inventories for measuring time perspective is the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI), with 13,400 results when searched on Google Scholar (March 21, 2024). In research studying the equivalence of the ZTPI across 24 countries, this inventory was billed as the “‘gold standard’ for further research on time perspective” (Sircova et al, 2014, p. 9). However, when looking at the ways that this tool was tested across cultures, there are some clear problems. While FTP is based on the work of Carstensen and Lang, they use an inventory that is only focused on the Future of FTP and does not include inventory items for past and present. The ZTPI scale (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) is inclusive of the times outside of the future but is designed around four goal domains that put autonomy, emotional regulation, generativity and social acceptance at odds with one another.



Figure 2: ZTPI scale based on Zimbardo & Boyd, 2009, pulled from Orosz et al., 2017

First, the questions in this survey were not adapted to the cultures at all but were rather just translated. While consistency is valuable from a scientific validity standpoint, we know that not all ideas translate. Furthermore, while some studies look at psychometric problems with the inventory (Keough et al., 1999), the language used to describe the items in the ZTPI are laden with enlightenment humanist values (St. Pierre, 2000). On this inventory, the items are grouped into categories including FTP, present fatalism time perspective, present hedonistic, past positive, and past negative. Even according to the authors, who advocated for widespread use of this tool, the questions break down to show the past as either positive “nostalgic” or negative “traumatic” (Sircova et al, 2014, p. 3). In this conception the future is neutral, just FTP, whereas

the present is either fatalistic “helpless and hopeless” (p. 3) or hedonistic “minimal concern for the consequences of their behavior” (p. 3), two terms that are loaded with negative connotations. This language is culturally loaded with unexamined assumptions about the value of each orientation, making this a shaky foundation on which to build inclusive research and theories (St. Pierre, 2000). Even when people make attempts to make the inventory appropriate for global participants, they maintain the same value laden questions and framing (Sircova et al., 2014). These authors argue that “PN (past negative) and PF (present fatalism) orientations repeatedly appeared as negatively associated with psychological well-being and behaviors whereas past positive and future orientations appeared to be positively associated in many cases” (Sircova et al., 2014, p. 4). Could this be because the questions were value laden in the first place?

In this scale inventory, the questions are only asked about positive or negative memories of the past. There are no questions about neutral memories, or complicated memories of the past. So, when a person does rate themselves to think of the past a lot, it can only be marked as positive or negative. However, if the scale asked for a mix of memories of the past and tried to find out how an individual would make sense of these diverse events in the context of their present and future, the possibilities would be far wider. The people who are identifying with negative questions are being correlated to negative outcomes in life, and it seems plausible that this is circular. The limited interviewing tool is narrowing the possibilities for participants. If a person is asked to describe their life as only traumatic or nostalgic, the limitations for interpretation are built right in. Due to the inherent limitations in this scale, I did not use it to formulate my questions, however, it offers items on past, present and future, which is necessary for work with these students. It is also a very popular scale, and I believe that the data gathered with the girls in this study show the flaws in it, which should be helpful to future research.

For the purposes of this project, I wanted to determine if socioemotional goals coexist with “achievement” goals in refugee students. In the following chapters I investigated any evidence of a shortened time frame and posit that a longer extension of FTP is in fact better because of mental health outcomes that they tie to the future in their questioning techniques. Perceiving a shortened time frame for certain life events can actually help with increased enjoyment of the present (Lang & Carstensen, 2002, p.129). This positive view in some ways is in opposition to the negative framing of shortened time perspective. For example, according to Kurtz (2008) in a study of young adults nearing the end of college, those who perceive the end of graduation as closer tend to cherish the time they have left and express more happiness and enjoyment of that time.

Refugee students have faced many obstacles, and their futures also tend to hold a great deal of uncertainty (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; 2017). Given this, it would be expected that under FTP and SST, refugee students would have a shortened time perspective and a focus on socioemotional goals. It is important to reconcile this reality with the fact that they simultaneously have a need for stability and security, while needing to adapt to a new environment (Hamilton & Moore, 2004). The current guidance is for teachers of refugee students to prepare them for “unknowable futures” (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; 2017). But how can teachers prepare students for a very unclear future, make them feel safe and secure now, and help them adapt to a new environment? Recognizing the goals and priorities of refugee students through exploring their FTP should be a step towards this. Is there a way to both embrace a lack of certainty and the collective identities of refugee students, as well as provide tools for preparing for the future? My research supports the idea that collective identities can be a protective factor, and that having socioemotional goals is not in conflict with but is additive to student wellbeing.

### ***U.S. Schools and Cultural Mismatch.***

While it is difficult to describe U.S. schools as a monolith given the great number and diverse settings across the country, there are some common threads that can be identified when talking about public schools in the U.S. Throughout the history of the U.S. there have been many changes in the exact goals and methods of schools, however one very popular goal of U.S. schools is to “prepare children to be good citizens” (Banks, 2017; 2019; Tyack, 1974). While there are ongoing philosophical debates about what it means to be a citizen, the practice of this goal in U.S. schools often portrays a set of priorities set through a white, settler colonial patriarchal perspective (Banks, 2017; Debrosse et al., 2020; Yang & Tuck, 2012). This perspective often leads to teaching diverse students with a subtractive approach to education (Valenzuela, 1999).

Some of the programs common in U.S. schools, that serve large numbers of immigrant and refugee students, and present in the school district of this study, include “No Excuses” (No Excuses, 2021) and Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID, 2021)<sup>1</sup>, and are in some ways representative of this perspective. Differences in perspective and life experience are seen as excuses rather than assets. Furthermore, these programs focus on a type of individualism that has long been considered part of being an enlightened, reasonable individual within the enlightenment humanist philosophy (St. Pierre, 2000). In 1985, *American Psychologist* published the presidential address of Janet T. Spence who said that “The United States is a success-oriented society whose attitudes toward achievement can be traced to our Protestant heritage with its emphasis on individualism and the work ethic” (Spence, 1985, p.1285). When Janet Spence

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<sup>1</sup> Both of these programs include strategies for educators that are designed to improve graduation rates and college going in low- income school districts. They both focus on individual responsibility for students to do well in school and make plans to go to college.

refers to the United States' attitudes, she is referring to the white, male, Protestant, settler colonial portion of the United States that has dominated the country, and not the minoritized people who also inhabit the lands. A quick Google Scholar search reveals 511,000 results for "American individualism," and a general google search reveals numerous articles discussing American individualism from many angles. For the purposes of this paper, I want to acknowledge the overwhelming weight of that philosophy on U.S. culture and its presence in schools moving forward. The fact that the structures of U.S. society and school depend on an individualistic orientation is one area that limits the scope of who and how benefits from said structures. In addition, the feminist work that I cite is important for critiquing this individualism, particularly the feminist poststructural argument from Betty St. Pierre, which argues that enlightenment humanism is the basis for most scientific research now and is founded in individualism (2000).

As I referred to in discussing refugee students and intersectionality, radical individualism is not the primary perspective of many students in U.S. schools, and was not the perspective of the students who participated in my study. Furthermore, success for students from collectivist backgrounds tends to be defined more broadly; including equal weight on "hard work, determination, financial security, helping family and community and simply being happy" (Mann & Turner, 2023, p.5). Cultural Mismatch Theory (CMT), "asserts that inequality is produced when the cultural norms in mainstream institutions do not match the norms prevalent among social groups which are under-represented in those institutions" (Stephens & Townsend, 2015, p.1304). The fundamental assertions of this theory are that U.S. institutions support white middle class individualistic norms, and under-represented groups in those institutions who do not match those norms are disadvantaged by that system. Much of the research focuses on the

experience of first-generation college students (not necessarily from refugee backgrounds) and asserts that the individualistic, white, middle-class norms championed within colleges and universities are out of step with many students who come from cultural backgrounds that are more communal (Stephens et al., 2012a; 2012b; Tibbetts et al., 2018). Indigenous students have been the focus of much of this research (Fryberg et al., 2012; Stephens et al., 2012a; 2012b). Nguyen and Nguyen (2019) have extended the existing literature to focus on race and ethnicity with Cambodian-American first-generation students, many of whom are from refugee backgrounds. While I have not found much academic literature using the term cultural mismatch in K-12 settings, it is a term used on the website [preventexpulsion.org](http://preventexpulsion.org), which focuses on early childhood success and is thematically addressed in work by authors like Valenzuela (1999). Stephens & Townsend (2015) suggest that this theory is likely to apply across most U.S. institutions and recommend research be done in different contexts.

Cultural Mismatch Theory highlights much of what I discussed in chapter one, the ways in which highly individualistic goal setting and conceptions of success are presented to students from elementary school and throughout their academic careers. With CMT in mind, I wonder in what ways this cultural mismatch shows up in the time perspectives of refugee students trying to navigate a U.S. high school. Given that research on immigrants indicates that collective identities are usually strong, and that parents in particular usually have a focus on building a strong future for their adolescents, this mismatch could have significant implications (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012 in Mok et al., 2021). Research suggests that cultural mismatch can be countered by making “learning applicable to students' lived experiences” (Fryberg et.al, 2015). While research does exist that points to the ways in which immigrants often find ways to manage existing structures, such as in Miyazawa’s project in which immigrant girls experience hopefulness for their futures

based on encouragement from their families and schools (2017), it seems that schools could actually do a much better job of leveraging the familial support of immigrant and refugee families.

Refugee and other immigrant students are amongst those students who are underserved or poorly served by public school systems in the U.S. and other refugee and immigrant receiving nations (Candapa et al. 2007; Keddie, 2012; McBrien, 2005). While I am committed to working with students from the refugee community, I recognize the complicated history of white middle class researchers working with vulnerable populations. There is a long history of white researchers like myself approaching research on the “other” through a deficit or damage-centered model (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007; Yang & Tuck, 2012), placing the source of the damage with the “subject.” In the western enlightenment humanist paradigm, “Most of our research asserts that U.S. educational institutions marginalize people of color” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 36) and researchers often double down on this marginalization. Any non-white, middle class, students are often othered, and statistical models often see a gap between the academic success of these “othered” students and white middle class (or upper class) students. Rather than looking at the complex power dynamics and choices made within structures, theories about the achievement gap often attribute deficits or problems of motivation as the culprit (Urda & Bruchmann, 2018). This deficit approach is particularly evident in much research with refugee students (Daniel, 2019).

I will address choices regarding minimizing essentializing and deficit thinking in chapter 3. However, it is important to note that the priority of this dissertation is to clarify new perspectives of refugee adolescent girls, and to problematize how the U.S. school system does

not meet their needs. I refer to differences between students and the school system as “mismatches,” in line with cultural mismatch theory.

Most refugees, including the participants in my study, have life experiences very different than that of the stereotypical white, middle class, locally born, student American schools are designed for (Fryberg et al., 2013). With those different life experiences come unique identities and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). However, these assets are not always acknowledged and leveraged in U.S. schools, and as such a mismatch occurs. Recognizing these mismatches between students and schools is not an indictment of students, but rather is a call to action for schools to identify differences and foster the best possible environment for all students to learn. These mismatches are at the root of my research questions and the tension between western enlightenment humanist cultural assumptions. In this section I will discuss four mismatches: individual against collective achievement, education for citizenship without citizenship, gendered identity, and FTP/SST research.

### **Mismatch 1: Individual against Collective Achievement.**

Individualism is a huge component of neoliberalism, an outgrowth of enlightenment humanism (St. Pierre, 2000). Neoliberal schooling policies are part of a long history of U.S. schools exclusionary and tailored to teaching a particular kind of white citizen (Lipman, 2013; 2017). Neoliberal policies in schools have been used to base public schooling on free market principles (Lipman, 2017, p.3). Despite attempts to address disparity issues in American schools, neoliberal policies have shifted education from a “public good to a private commodity” (Ivey, 2021, p.34). The underlying belief in individualism as an essential part of U.S. schools creates a disconnect that fails to make headway in improvement of the educational system for a wider pool of value systems.

The psychological studies I reference throughout this text U.S. schools orient students toward “Achievement”: Personal, individual achievement rather than collective goals. This vision of achievement is value laden in the American context. Furthermore, “Achievement” can often be a mismatch with student identities that hinge less on personal achievement and more on connection to others, or achievement which benefits the whole, which is a common trait of many refugee and immigrant youth.

Furthermore, research suggests that achievement goals, or focusing most on personal achievement may not be best for the self-regulation and long-term success of students (Eccles, 2009; Harackiewicz, 2014; Yeager et al., 2014). Instead, having “self-transcendent purpose,” or a sense of purpose in school that is not purely about individual outcomes, can be supportive of long-term student success (Yeager et al., 2014). While American school policy continues to push programs and agendas that are individualistic and often turn familial and community connection into “excuses” in American schools, policies continue to fail to meet the needs of the diverse body of students they are meant to serve (Waters, 2009; Waters & Leblanc, 2005). Therefore, the mismatch that is often seen between schools pushing for individual achievement may, in fact, be at odds with the more supportive orientation that students may already be bringing to school.

The district in which I did my research and teaching had for a while adopted a “no excuses” mantra for personal achievement in school. My personal experience was that the harshness of the program was not a winning formula and there is research which suggests that while some academic measures are improved there are big questions about the long-term efficacy, and the cultural implications of the program on diverse students (Dishon & Goodman, 2017; Golan, 2015; Lamboy & Lu, 2017). “In no excuses” policies, staff were trained to not take responsibilities outside of school as an excuse for not meeting exact expectations within school.

“No excuse” for not going to college was a great example of the individualistic far future orientation of the school. Of course many student excuses were focused on the immediate and long-term needs for themselves, and their families’ collective success not well measured by academic rubrics. Refugee students in this study and who I have worked with in the past had a great deal of familial responsibility and duties including caring for younger siblings, helping their parents in the home, learning English, helping the family with their English, working outside the home, and attending school. These were responsibilities students experienced as ongoing in their lives and part of their identities and fluctuated in salience and rank of priority at different times. Research on immigrant families broadly shows that they often invest up-front, for an imagined social capital<sup>2</sup>, not only for themselves but also for their families, because of a belief that an education now will help the family in the long term (Qin-Hilliard, 2003; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001, p. 125; Zhou & Bankston, 2001).<sup>3</sup> While I do argue that refugees have additional circumstances that may make their full experience different, there is reason to investigate the ways in which these trends for immigrants more broadly may apply in their cases. This is likely true because the girls in this study come from cultures that tend to be more collectivist than individualistic. Students who identify with a collectivist culture are likely to prioritize collective goals over individual ones (Triandis, 1989, p. 512). While the philosophy of many American schools has defined familial responsibilities as excuses, a more inclusive program could embrace the fact that many students have a wide range of responsibilities and

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<sup>2</sup> Social capital is an idea that has been taken up in many ways, but essentially is about how social connections and relationships allow access to resources from the people in those relationships and considers the quality of the resources those social links have access to (Bourdieu, 1985).

<sup>3</sup> I should note that the capitalist language is referential to the texts cited, as there is language about investment used to describe efforts in the present for the future.

leverage the skills that are part of those responsibilities to envision how they fit into a successful future (Moll et al., 1992; Rodriguez, 2015).

Future Time Perspective heavily relies on studying the individual at the psychological level, comes from an enlightenment humanist paradigm, and has primarily been worked on in more individualistic cultures (Carstensen et al., 1999; Lang & Carstensen, 2002; Västfjäll et al., 2008). FTP and other psychological theories tend to be grounded in the enlightenment humanist belief in “the subject” and a study of the individual who is “stable, unified, rational, coherent, knowing, autonomous, and ahistoric” (St. Pierre, 2000, p.500). The highly individualized subject that is at the center of FTP research as a unit of focus is difficult to escape and presents a possible mismatch between the foundation of this theory and the application of it to young people from collectivist backgrounds.

Furthermore, identity functions differently across cultures notably differences in views of the self. One notable difference is between Western and Asian cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989). In their seminal work, Markus and Kitayama outlined the ways in which Asian cultures in particular tend to view interconnectedness as an essential component of the self. In one large study that categorized countries from most individualistic to most collectivist, the overall trend of “western” European/colonized countries are the most individualistic, while many Asian, African and Central American countries are more collectivist (Hofstede et al., 2010). More recent research supports the overall findings of this study and has expanded understanding to see the ways in which Black, Latinx, and many indigenous communities also tend to have more communal orientations (Fryberg, et al., 2013; Gray et al., 2020), but more work needs to be done to expand the demographics included in these studies.

Scholarship is developing to show the chasm between foundational western enlightenment humanist concepts of identity formation and how identity forms cross-culturally. St. Pierre (2000) points out that the humanist self is the “individual who, in spite of much deconstructive attention, remains the dominant fiction of Western philosophy. McInerney and Putwain (2016) point out the dynamics of identity formation for young people cross-culturally and suggest that while Erikson’s (1968) description of identity formation being important largely during the adolescent years is found cross-culturally, the types of identity are not the same. The authors go on to explain that, “In many societies the idea of individual identity, as we understand it in western societies, may be contradictory to identity as it is understood in those societies in which social identity takes precedence over individual identity” (p. 231-232). In other words, immigrant and refugee young people from more collectivist societies' identities are likely to look different than teens from individualistic societies. This is a key point for understanding these teens in school, and outside of it.

While the FTP and SST research has included samples of Asian participants, who are ostensibly from a more collectivist background, the rest of the research has been broadly done with western individualist cultures. Scant research has been done on future perspectives of students from Africa, particularly high school age (Adelabu, 2008). Research has focused on samples of predominantly white European heritage male adults, rather than diverse samples, and where there has been diversity there are still large missing demographics. Research suggests there are some significant differences in perception of time from different cultural groups: In particular, Hispanic, Asian-American, and African-American communities within the U.S. (Munn, 1992; DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017). An interdependent view can be seen across many Asian, Latin American, African, and southern European cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Some recent research has also focused on utility value and FTP among international students from collectivist cultures visiting university in Germany (Mok et al., 2021). Cross-cultural generalizability in expectancy-value theory has not been empirically demonstrated due to the way cultural socialization influences life goals and values (Tonks & Eccles, 2004). While research on FTP and motivation with adolescents exists (Carvalho, 2015; Janeiro et al., 2017; Nurmi, 2001; Peetsma & Van der Veen, 2015), these studies have been conducted in countries with racially and ethnically homogeneous populations. Work done with refugee students in the U.S. is an area that needs much more exploration. Research on this topic could be an opportunity to look at the unique cases of students who are young (and thus should have achievement level goals), but have also faced life threatening events (and thus should have emotional goals primed), often come from communal cultures (and so are likely to have a non-individualistic identity), but are in a new cultural milieu that is highly individualistic.

### **Mismatch 2: Education for citizenship against education for unknowable futures.**

Another notable mismatch in educational theory with American schools is the idea of fostering citizenship and shaping a workforce, but refugees have, by definition, lost national citizenship (Waters & Leblanc, 2005). According to Banks, one of the primary functions of American schools is to prepare students for citizenship (2017; 2019). This unclear relationship to citizenship, in a country where many in positions of power have a very stark view of what a citizen looks, acts, and sounds like, can make it very difficult for immigrant students, as a whole, to feel a sense of belonging in that context (Stephens and Townsend, 2015, p. 1304). If education theory can identify the ways in which immigrant and refugee students DO feel a sense of belonging this could be an improvement in addressing students' integration into American school systems.

I found that the students I taught, and the students noted in this paper are likely to face uncertainty in all areas of their lives on both structural and personal levels. This uncertainty may be related to race, citizenship, class, and refugee/immigrant identity. I became curious about how these identity factors and the case studies of refugee students reflected their unique perspectives on the future. This broad reaching concept is important to include because research in western paradigms supports the idea that perception of instrumentality (how useful something will be in the future) can be an important factor in student success in schools (Eccles, 2009). Furthermore, U.S. schools tend to have the ethos of preparing students for the future, a future that is typically very much about a capitalist vision that includes personal consumption, personal homes, and personal dreams. However, if refugee students have a dramatically different orientation to time, particularly the future, we may need to rethink approaches to best help students learn and prepare for the future that meets their (family/community) needs.

In particular, I wondered how student experiences line up with the temporal orientations with which they are surrounded. Future Time Perspective and Socioemotional Selectivity Theory are both theoretical tools that have been helpful in understanding people's thoughts about time and goal orientations, and seeing if they are useful in understanding how this group of refugee students think about their futures and goals led me to some important conclusions including a better understanding what types of programs would be most supportive of their identities.

U.S. educational programs are designed under the assumption that student lives are relatively stable (Banks, 2017; 2019), wherein it is assumed that a student will stay in the U.S., perhaps even stay in the city they are living in and be able to easily envision going to a U.S. university, and staying stable. However, the nature of refugee status comes with a great deal of unpredictability. Refugees may stay in their country of resettlement and become citizens, or they may migrate to a different country or state to be with members of their families or communities, or if conflict ends in their native country, they may be able to return. These are just a few of the factors that make life for refugees very unpredictable and unstable. As you will see in the findings, the unpredictability of refugee life did not actually stop the girls from imagining a flexible future, but it did create unnecessary roadblocks for them to overcome.

This mismatch relates to my theorizing about the FTP of students in regard to SST. The theory of SST posits that a lack of stability, particularly dramatic or traumatic events, would shorten students' FTP. In this study, I investigated the girls' extension into the future and how the unpredictability in their lives impacts that extension. What I found was not necessarily predictable within the frameworks described here. In fact, the girls defied what SST would predict by balancing short and long extension, as well as achievement and emotional goals.

### **Mismatch 3: Gendered Identities in schools.**

While trends around individual and communal identities can be seen very clearly across cultural lines, there is also evidence that gender plays an additional role in these identities. Across cultures, women tend to be associated with more communal goal orientations (Eccles, 2009). Beyond that, there is an intersectional gender and culture component, wherein women living in binary gendered cultures that are also more communal might have even more communal orientations than their male counterparts (McInerney & Putwain, 2017). This can be even more difficult for young women who are often “given less freedom to make personal decisions (on such matters as dating, education, and career choice) than males in particular ethnic communities” (McInerney & Putwain, 2017, p. 232). In collectivist cultures, identity for women becomes more about interdependence than individuation (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). It is, in part, because of this interdependence that this study adopts a critical intersectional feminist methodology and perspective to attend to differences that may be present culturally and across genders. Furthermore, I adopt the poststructural perspective that identity is not stable, but “created in the ongoing effects of relations and in response to society’s codes” (St. Pierre, 2000, p.503). It is because of the unique relational intersectional identity development and collectivism that this research focused on the cases of refugee girls.

### **Mismatch 4: FTP/SST research’s lens on individualism and limiting definitions in time perspectives.**

When approaching questions about FTP and considering the possible impact of trauma, SST offers a useful theoretical lens within the field of psychology. SST posits that as FTP shortens, the importance of emotional goals is amplified, or in other words when it seems like a

person has less time to live, their priorities change to focus on relationships. Scholars argue that young and middle-aged adults tend to have longer FTP extension (look further into the future), while older folks tend to have a shortened time perspective (live more in the moment) with the end of life growing nearer (Carstensen et al, 1999). The basic premise is that people who have a lot of life left to live focus on “achievement goals” or goals that are related to personal success usually related to academics, careers and finances. However, since older people realize that their time on earth is more limited, they stop worrying so much about success and instead focus on having happy and fulfilling emotional lives. Initial research on the subject focused on elderly adults (Carstensen & Lang, 1996; Lang & Carstensen, 2002; Lang, 2017; Rohr et al., 2017), additional research is revealing that other life-threatening or traumatic events can change goal orientation for people of various ages (Fung & Carstensen, 2006; Västfjäll et al., 2008) et al 2008, p. 69). The same principle applies; no matter your age, if your life is threatened you may perceive your possible life left on earth as more tenuous, less clear, and less about achievement goals. This concept is related to Cialdini’s (1993) scarcity principle which states that “as a source becomes scarce, it increases in value” (p. 1238 in Kurtz, 2008). In this scenario, the “source” is time, and as time gets scarce, people see it as more valuable. Therefore, a person facing this type of threat may shift their priorities to more immediate, emotional goals. So, in general, according to this framework, young people should be expected to have a long Future Time Perspective extension and focus on achievement goals. However, there is a question of what a young refugee’s FTP would be given their past with life threatening events.

Further research has revealed that at any developmental stage when individuals face life threatening events, they are likely to turn toward emotional goals rather than achievement goals and have a shorter FTP (Fung & Carstensen, 2006). This theory describes these goals as

primarily as the way individuals orient themselves to other people. For example, if a life-threatening event was to happen to a person their FTP extension would shorten, and their goals would become “emotional.” In other words, the traumatic event would make them stop thinking so far ahead and just focus on the very near future and the ones they love. The research describes those goals primarily about making connections to others, while the young people are supposed to have goals that are more about individual success. This positioning of FTP being so conditional on age and exposure to traumatic events made me wonder if this reasoning would hold with refugee teen girls.

Because of these unique experiences, the SST and FTP of refugee students could easily be expected to have a short time perspective extension due to dangerous events, or long-time perspective extension due to their youth. Furthermore, the focus on family could mean that emotional goals are prioritized. Given the research on the importance of education for refugee families, it is likely that these coexist in a unique way. The fact that students have faced traumatic events could mean that their life’s fragility has been primed and they may have a shorter FTP and as a result focus on more emotional goals (Carstensen & Lang, 1996). Furthermore, the fact that many of the students come from more collectivist cultures than the U.S. may mean that they are less likely to focus on individualistic achievement goals. At the same time, though, many families instill long term achievement goals in their students that are tied to emotional family ties, and this was particularly clear for girls (Zhou & Bankston, 2001). For many of the families with whom I worked, long-term achievement goals were inextricable from their emotional/familial goals. In other words, most of these students had both individual and communal goals that were interdependent. As mentioned before, according to the work of FTP scholars we would expect younger people to look far into the future and have achievement

goals (Carstensen & Lang, 1996; Lang & Carstensen, 2002; Lang, 2017; Rohr et al., 2017).

However, for the reasons just discussed, it is worth investigating if their FTP does fit within the description.

The research on FTP is laden with similar ideas found in U.S. schools. In the SST research done by Carstensen and colleagues (2002), there is a tension between future orientation and having social goals. However, I assert that refugee students are able to maintain both at once. Within Carstensen and Lang's (1996) design of SST, social goals are coded to be more aligned to collectivism; they focus on relationships, interconnectedness, and spending time with others in the present and are not very forward-looking. Within their framework, these "social goals" are typically activated in older people and those who have experienced a life-threatening situation. For young people from collectivist backgrounds with many "social goals," there exists a contradiction with a lot of the individualistic components of FTP. With many people, including refugee families, there is a desire to succeed for the family and community and not as an individual (Qin, 2009). If this is the case, the model of FTP that sees future goals as individualistic may need to be opened up with collectivism in mind. This is where this research project comes in.

I problematized this idea that future goals are in opposition to social goals, because the identity of many refugee girls stands in opposition to this idea. Refugee and immigrant students broadly hold these close social goals while thinking about their futures, and their families support them toward these long-term goals (Qin-Hilliard, 2003). This is well documented in literature that refugee families are invested in education (Miyazawa, 2017), and see education as an important part of their family's future success (Zhou & Bankston, 2002). I suggest that these emotional/social goals need not be totally present-oriented, and instead can be and likely are an

important part of achievement goals for students from many cultures, including many refugee students. There is literature that suggests that refugee and other immigrant students' hopes for the future are actually very clear and supported by their families (Miyazawa, 2017; Qin, 2009; Qin-Hilliard, 2003). In this literature and in my own experience, evidence exists that these orientations are not only based on culture or migration background, but other identity markers, especially gender (Bolonyai, 2005; Miyazawa, 2017; Norton & Pavlenko, 2004; Pavlenko, 2001; Qin, 2009; Qin-Hilliard, 2003). The aforementioned literature and my personal experiences support approaching this research with an intersectional identity lens.

### **Cultural Mismatch Overview.**

In this section I highlighted four mismatches: individual against collective achievement, education for citizenship without citizenship, gendered identity, and FTP/SST research. The mismatches discussed here are meant to highlight some of the tensions seemingly presented by research and provide some grounding for understanding the unique positionality for the refugee girls in this study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

It is because of the mismatches around individualism, uncertain futures, gender differences, and FTP that I began to wonder how refugee girls understand time and the way that understanding has been shaped in and out of school. I set out to better understand the FTP and identities of high school aged refugee students. Specifically, I aimed to learn more about their FTP with the goal of helping other educators better orient instruction to meet the needs of these students. FTP is “the degree to which a person integrates the chronological future into the present when setting and pursuing goals” (Husman & Lens, 1999) or “the totality of the individual’s views of his psychological future and psychological past existing at a given time” (Lewin, 1948),

and for this study I adopt a view which also considers the present. Chronological futures will be factored in unique ways for refugee students. While there is a growing body of research on refugee students much of this work is done outside the U.S. and there is limited research on the ways that refugee students see their futures. This study is an entry point into better understanding the ways in which female identifying refugee students see their futures in relationship to their identities and tell the stories of their own lives.

I believe that this work could have far reaching applications to other theories and ideas in the education and psychology fields. There is no agreement among FTP theorists about how flexible FTP can be. Socioemotional Selectivity Theory posits that emotional goals become more salient after traumatic events. If emotional goals become more important to those with shortened time perspectives, how do we increase emotional investment in learning? What are the unique characteristics of refugee girls' FTP and how can that be leveraged to support these students' motivation and future planning?

In the following, I outline the ways in which I carried out my research and the theories undergirding that enterprise. I focus on the case studies and goals of refugee early high schoolers and contribute to a better understanding of Socioemotional Selectivity Theory and Future Time Perspective. Applying an intersectional identity lens brought a different nuance to this work of Socioemotional Selectivity Theory and Future Time perspective and highlighted the ways in which identity markers, such as gender, immigration status and collectivity, informed refugee students' experience of time. This study, which explored students' individual perspectives while taking seriously the systems, contexts, and communities in which students are intertwined, required a certain set of methods and assumptions.

## **Summary**

Considering the varied intersectional identities of the research participants in this study included considerations of collective identity, gender, and nationality. These identities often mismatch with the designs of U.S. schools and theories to study the people in those systems. Collective Identity is an important identity for many groups of students, including many groups that become refugees. This collective identity has not been given sufficient attention in the literature of FTP and SST.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Scope of the Study**

During fall of 2021, I conducted school-based observations, analyzed classroom work (some collaborated on with the classroom teacher), and conducted interviews with students. Through a series of observations, student-written autobiographical narratives, and interviews, this project aims to show how one group of refugee students see their futures and identities, with the hopes that this can lead to more generalizable research in the future that will make the lives of refugee girls better. The research took place with 9th-12th grade English Language Development (ELD) students in a southwest urban U.S. public school. The students in these classes ranged from 13-18 years old, but the students focused on in this study were all female identifying, between the ages of 17 and 18, refugee status, from the South Asia/Middle East or east Africa and described their families as working class. While I did observe and interview students from grades 9-12, I decided to focus in on the three focal girls- the details of their selection are expanded upon later.

### **Epistemological/ontological assumptions**

All research is made up of theory, practice, method, and methodology. A methodology is “a theory of how research is done or should proceed” (Harding, 1987, p.3) and is value-laden, political, and reflective of philosophical perspective (Sprague, 2005). While I employed a critical intersectional feminist methodology influenced by post-structuralism, this conflicted with a post-positivist belief that the scientific method allows us to get somewhere close to objectivity and a singular empirical truth with enough precision and thought (St. Pierre, 2000). Much of the literature I cite for SST and FTP falls into this post-positivist paradigm, which is laden with enlightenment humanist beliefs. This perspective is “everywhere,” “natural,” and “the air we

breathe” in western research (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 478). However, a feminist view of methodology points out that methodology of any kind is the way in which a researcher’s methods and philosophy come together in the planning and execution of a research study (Leavy, 2014; Sprague, 2005). I endeavor to emphasize this philosophical perspective of my project.

This project undertook the task of using educational psychology techniques, scales, and theories rooted in post-positivist paradigms, and attempted to use and see them through an intersectional feminist lens with standpoint epistemology in mind. I also have embraced many poststructural ways of thinking and use poststructural tools to push back against what is taken for granted in the research of FTP and SST. These tools were important because they were aligned with the feminist praxis used in this study. These tools allow us to push the limits of not only gender binaries but create openings to question other binaries often present in research. While there are certainly scholars who are deeply committed to keeping tools within the paradigm in which they were developed. I embrace the possibility that through reaching across paradigms and contexts my research will offer a broader and more in-depth perspective on my subject.

Feminist research calls for innovative methods that are able to answer different types of questions and so too, do a growing number of scholars in psychology and educational psychology. “The history of psychological science suggests that the mere accumulation of data, often in support of very local theories, has sometimes stood in for the development of a more global understanding of the phenomena in question” (Michaelian et al. 2016, p. 15). This is particularly evident in Volume 53 of *Educational Psychologists’* special issue on the study of race, ethnicity, and motivation (Zusho & Kumar, 2018). In this volume, many authors called for critical methods, particularly Critical Race Theory (CRT). Indeed, I adopt some components for this work, with an intersectional feminist lens. Many of these scholars have developed these

critical works through the activist lens of CRT (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014; White et al., 2018). The move to adopt more innovative methods is important because simply making adjustments to quantitative methods without addressing underlying assumptions is not enough (Westbrook & Saperstein, 2015). While I deeply appreciate the focus on race and want to maintain a recognition of the impact of race in students' intersectional identities, in my own study I took on the lens of intersectional feminism. There is an opportunity to build on the previous work employing a feminist borderlands approach to the study of refugee cultural and familial values (Young, Muruthi, Chou & Chevalier, 2017), by adopting a slightly different feminist lens.

The intersectional feminist lens I use draws on both classic feminist standpoint methodology from the 1980s, (Harding, 1987; Harstock, 1983), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Hill-Collins, 2016) and feminist post structuralism (St. Pierre, 2000). This lens provides me with the tools to conduct praxis, theory and practice together, from start to finish. This results in attention to different levels of researcher and student identity throughout an iterative process.

In this chapter, I overview the overlapping core assumptions of both feminist critical methodology and critical lenses being applied to educational psychology. Importantly, I want to draw a bridge between critical work that is happening in educational psychology and how a feminist critical methodology mirrors some of that work and extends it with a focus on gender. Feminist critical methodology has many overlaps, and like educational psychologists working on race as a construct, it recognizes the ways in which gender, like race, is constructed but still has material consequences (Nolen, 2020; Syed & McLean, 2015; Villanueva et al., 2019; Westbrook & Saperstein, 2015; White et al., 2018). I share some of the core assumptions of the mixed orientation.

## **Core Assumptions**

The core assumptions of this study are derived from the feminist research orientation that I have adopted. The assumptions below are all related to a and a feminist ethic of care. I turn to Hill-Collins who provides the articulation of an ethic of care so clearly. In her writing she highlights the necessity to recenter the experiences, thoughts and feelings of Black women (in particular) and decenter the “Eurocentric masculinist” orientations to epistemology (1990, p.765). This approach focuses on a care for participants, relationships, community and various ways of knowing. I attempted to demonstrate this ethic of care throughout the process of research planning, data gathering, analysis and writing. In the following, I elaborate on the other core assumptions that align with this ethic of care within the feminist research approach.

### ***Experience and Empiricism***

First, I trusted in the students' experience and valued them as expert knowledge holders about their own identities and experiences. Within the feminist framework of relationality, there is a perception of “people as active, knowing subjects rather than passive objects of study” (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007, p. 147). This was especially important for my research given that I view the refugee students I worked with as knowledge holders who can teach myself and others. Another component of this understanding of relationality is a belief in lived experience as a primary source of knowledge (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007) and that knowledge shared is built out of relationship to families, friends, and communities. I closely align with a feminist standpoint orientation, which recognizes the ways in which groups who have been in marginalized positions have the best perspective on knowledge about their lives (Harding, 1987;

Harstock, 1983) and suggested that the adolescents I worked with had specific insight into the world given their positionality in it.

With this trust in the experience of students, this study assumed that, while empiricism has a great deal to offer in terms of understanding the world, empirical findings are always mediated by discourse, and that meaning making is constructivist in nature. I did this in contrast to the belief that empiricism alone can get us close to an objective truth. Feminist research asserts that gender, even if it is constructed, is an important way that social life is organized and that organization has often resulted in the subordination of those bodies and ideas marked as feminine (Ahmed, 2004; DeVault, 1996; Sprague, 2005). Further, Hill-Collins argues for the voices of black women voices to be elevated through feminist ethics of care (1990). Like many feminist scholars, I agree that gender is constructed, but that the material consequences of that construction are very real for not only study participants, but also the researcher.

These assumptions were evident in the way that I approached my research. A belief in the importance of lived experiences of students was evident in the interviews, and the observations I collected. However, I mixed these different approaches so that I was able to both gather their voices and their interpretations and include my own observations and experiences for empirical findings in an effort to triangulate the data.

I adopted feminist pushback on constructed, yet entrenched norms around minoritized identities by countering (post)positivism, particularly the white male science paradigm in which psychological research has traditionally been developed (Harding, 1987; 1998; Harstock, 1998; Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007; Reinharz, 1992; Smith, 1987; St. Pierre, 2000). In a classic paper by Markus and Kitayama, the researchers point out that much of the views in psychology are based on “the so-called Western view of the individual as an independent, self-contained,

autonomous entity” (1991, p. 224). This is an essential point; not only is research from a particular perspective, but that perspective makes assumptions about the consistency of the internal worlds of individuals across cultures. Furthermore, these white, Eurocentric perspectives are often found in teacher education programs and as a result in U.S. schools (Sleeter, 2017). This is much of what I rebut in this project; not only the research approach, but also the belief that individualism is in some way superior. The girls in this study are not solely individualistic but are collectivist and still set important goals for their futures. At this point individuals are the unit of analysis for educational psychology theories like FTP and SST, so with that in mind I have adopted lenses that treat those individuals with respect.

Critical Feminist research has emancipatory goals and sees gender binaries and hierarchy as an oppressive force which should be pushed back against and interrupted (Clarke, 2015; DeVault, 1996; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002; Sprague, 2005). My goal was to both oppose the binary/hierarchy forces while supporting beliefs and habits amongst the students themselves, while maintaining the research framework itself. Feminist researchers warn that traditional positivist and post-positivist research is biased with a false sense of objectivity and “laden with power and treat knowledge as something to be discovered rather than created” (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007, p. 143-44). Furthermore, traditional research tends to be from a male perspective and focus on male issues, silencing other voices (Rosser, 2007).

### **Reflexivity.**

Furthermore, a feminist critical methodology assumes reflexivity and reflection on one’s own power and relationships to the research. Feminist research calls for reflexivity (Wickramasinghe, 2009) and some educational psychology authors writing about racial

awareness are including the concept reflexivity (Gray et al. 2018; King & McInerney, 2014; White et al, 2019). I am particularly invested in a gendered perspective because of my own deep desire for more gender equality in the world and the care that I have for this community. Feminist research attempts to challenge the issues laden within these (post) positivist paradigms when they advocate for reflexivity and awareness of positionality (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007; Pillow & Mayo, 2007). Feminist research is relational and to be effective researchers need to build empathetic relationships with participants (Collins 2000; DeVault 1990; Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2007; Pillow & Mayo, 2007). While this relationality is true and present in mainstream feminism, indigenous (Arvin et al. 2013; Bang et al. 2014) and black feminism (Hill-Collins, 1986) provide a strong grounding for that relationality.

Reflexivity, or reflective practice, is the practice of critically looking at positionality and your research approach to understand your own privilege and bias in the context of your research (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Naples, 2003). Because a few of the students that I worked with are related to students I taught I knew some of the students before this study. Our relationships did have the teacher student power dynamic, but also included familiarity and relationship that I have already formed with the community. The open, supportive, and safe environment I attempted to foster in my classroom as a teacher was still felt when doing this research and created a dynamic which seemed positive. Reflections about my own role and the impacts the research has on students has always been of the utmost importance for me. In fact, I postponed doing this research to wait for it to be safe to do in-person because of a belief that attempting it virtually would be detrimental and unnecessarily stressful to students. Being present in-person was also an essential way to build relationships, connection, and establish trust between myself and the student participants. I

wanted to provide an opportunity for students to share their stories in a way that felt good for them.

### **Praxis.**

My approach to feminist research includes feminist praxis or “the doing of research” (Leavy, 2014). Feminist praxis, in particular, “rejects the theory/research divide” and insists that the “what” of research is interconnected with the “how” (Stanley, 1990, p. 15). This means that throughout the process of connecting to the site, gathering data, and analysis, the principles of feminist methodology and an ethic of care were upheld and enacted in the process. Hesse-Biber explains that, “to engage a feminist theory and praxis means to challenge knowledge that excludes, while seeming to include ” (2007, p. 3). This offered a challenge to grapple with any biases and assumptions that I had and a need to highlight the students' voices. As Stanley puts it: “The point is to change the world not to study it” (1990, p. 15). While this was a descriptive project, I wanted refugee student voices to be a catalyst for change. This liberatory praxis is an important component of what a feminist methodology looks like and relates perfectly to the goals of CRT already present in developing educational psychology work. Although the information I gathered with this study is preliminary, and is not an intervention study it provides an entry point. I tried to help students feel comfortable telling their stories, speak openly about their futures, and feel good about their own identities after we were done together.

As I undertook this analysis and writing project praxis was an essential component. While making choices about where to cut the data, how to group it, and make sense of it, I navigated a lot of questions about how to not parse out aspects of a whole identity. Feminist praxis ideals informed my writing to maintain integrity in everyone's narrative and not, through excessive changing or editing, cause violence to the meaning. Being brought up in a society and

learning paradigm that emphasizes order, and discrete categories, I found myself attempting to break identity into many discrete categories. It was difficult to avoid even in the language I use. I regularly described the participants as refugee girls, which is descriptive, but certainly not inclusive of the depth of their identities. In my attempts to slice up time and identity, I reached the realization that this is counter to the spirit of intersectionality and some of the other feminist qualitative work I have drawn from. I read a recently published text considering the importance of intersectionality in transmigration studies with refugee women to re-ground me:

“Intersectionality allows us to examine how social beings are situated in and presented to the world as whole entities and how people experience and respond to the effects of both oppression and privilege” (Spitzer, 2023, p. 26). The girls in this study cannot be understood solely through their gender, race, age, or any other category, but each of these identities layer and weave together to make them who they are. They are “whole entities” who have complex layered responses to “oppression and privilege” (Spitzer, 2023, p. 26). Organizing around their meaning-making and how it bumped up against the theories of FTP and SST, as well as the school system in rough and smooth ways felt a more authentic approach that I imperfectly attempted throughout this study.

### ***Research Design***

My study used feminist qualitative research methods to examine the function of FTP and SST in relationship to the case studies of refugee students in high school. This meant leading with the core assumptions detailed above, with praxis and an ethic of care at the center of the work. To do this, I engaged in thoughtful self-disclosure and relationship building with participants to build and re-ignite I gathered this data at a high school in a neighborhood in

which I had previously worked. The data I collected included observations, semi-structured interviews, and work samples.

**Data Collection and Management.**

I was familiar with the school because it was in the neighborhood where I had worked in the past and because of a collegial relationship with the assistant principal who put me in touch with the teacher running the classes I studied. She arranged preliminary approval at the site, and upon IRB and district approval, I was connected to the teacher featured in this study.

For initial data collection, I used convenience sampling to interview and observe as many students as possible in the teacher’s ELD classes. I gathered informed parental consent and verbal assent for all the students in her classes that I attended, with two students choosing not to participate. In total I observed three class periods, 5 days a week for a month.

I combined several different data collection methods: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and student work samples (see Table 1).

*Table 1: Data Collection Methods*

<b>Data Type</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Observation	I took written notes in class each school day during three class periods for four weeks. I also took voice notes in the otter app after leaving the classroom. These notes were about students, environment, interactions and impressions. See appendix 5.
Semi-structured interviews	I used the protocol in appendix 3 as the basis for interviewing students. These took place at a table in the back of the classroom, somewhat separated from the work tables, but still visible to others in the classroom.
Student work samples	Students had created or were in the process of working on the following assignments: Narrative Essay, Life Poem, Brag sheet. The details of these are outlined in appendix 4.

### **Observation.**

I observed students in their ELD classroom and the greenhouse they visited during class. I made and used a basic observation protocol with space for environmental details and general observations (Appendix 5). I observed students in their ELD class with an eye toward the comments that are made by students and teachers during writing class about the future, goals, and identities. In my observations I attended to the hidden curriculum (Apple, 1980) of the classroom as well as the observable messages sent to students about the goals they have, should have, and how their identities inform those messages. I used voice memos away from students to record observations or questions that came up when it wasn't important to quietly write by hand, using the Otter app, which has an AI transcription service. This was an ongoing process throughout my time at this school.

These observations were twofold in purpose: 1) I used notes on classroom observations as data 2) I built rapport by spending time with students. Our rapport helped facilitate more success in other aspects of the study, primarily in building comfort to do the semi-structured interviews.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews.**

I conducted semi-structured interviews based on items in the Carstensen & Lang FTP scale (1996). Feminist praxis and ethic of care was present in the thoughtful adaptation of the scale to meet the needs of the students, and in the invitation and experience of the interviews. This meant that I centered the needs of the students above the needs of the research project. The explanation of the interviews was provided at the beginning of the time in the classroom,

wherein I explained that they were optional and that you could choose to be part of observations without interviewing. I told students that they could approach me if they wanted to talk, or I may ask them directly if they wanted to participate. They were told that they could say no for any reason without repercussions. These interviews were held in the back of the classroom, outside of earshot of the rest of the class when they were working, but visible. Students were invited to do these interviews if they had completed an assignment early, or if they approached me saying that they were interested in talking. Some of the interviews took multiple sessions because of class timing and the ethic of care guiding my way. I checked in to see if they needed breaks regularly to make sure and felt like speaking with me. The interviews were audio-recorded with Otter AI phone software, and I took detailed notes on our discussion (Appendix 3).

### **Work Samples.**

The teacher had given assignments in narrative storytelling writing, poems about their life and a brag sheet (Appendix 4). I was asked to review what had already been created and what was in progress. Some students did continue working and adding pictures on the assignment that they had begun, and I took photos of these assignments.

### **Data Analysis.**

I analyzed pictures of written work from the written narratives, poems and brag sheets, transcribed interviews, and reviewed observation notes. The written work that students produced was photographed using my personal phone and saved to a private drive. For the interview portion, I coded the data in my private documents. I used a deductive coding scheme looking for insights into the way students view their futures and the influences on those views. The parent

codes were based on the themes of each of my research questions and child codes were developed in relationship to the student responses.

When doing my first rounds of analysis, through coding, I saw that more meaningful patterns emerged if I sorted the data based on both time in the U.S. and gender. I identified codes based on my research questions with a focus on time extension, content of goals, individualism, collectivism, and intersectional identities. Throughout all of the analysis steps, I connected the data to the concept of intersectionality. This both connected to my research questions, but also pushed me to identify students with more overlapping identities than others. In this process, I decided to focus the project onto three specific refugee girls. This decision led to a case study perspective. Given the initial limited size of the data set, shifting to a case study was aligned with feminist methodological praxis I used for this study (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Leavy, 2014; Spitzer, 2023; Stanley, 1990, p. 15).

I applied a case study methodology in the analysis of this project. Given that I collected several different sets of data (classroom observations, pictures, work samples, informal and formal interviews) I made the choice to focus on the cases of a few particular refugee girls, rather than look at a larger sample of students, because I wanted to focus on students of similar ages, immigration status, and gender expression. Furthermore, this narrowing allowed for more overlapping intersections of the students in that they were closer in age, gender identity, and immigration status than other students that were a part of the original research. This allowed for more thoughtful attention to their identities, and a more nuanced look into their perspectives.

### *Case studies.*

In this project I explored the ways in which refugee adolescents saw their own timelines and how those timelines were informed by the intersectional identities of each student. I wanted to highlight the unique experiences of gender, race, immigration, and collectivism from the students themselves and saw if there were missing pieces of information about time perspective through an overly narrow lens.

In the observations, I captured numerous expressions of students sharing about their memories of the past, their feelings and thoughts about the present, and what they saw in their futures. In the interviews I explicitly asked them to share about their past, present and future. In the work samples they had the chance to share a narrative from their past, a poem about life that could refer to any time, and a brag sheet that referred to their past and present selves with goals for the future.

Feminist storytelling research informed the way I approached the refugee students' views of their futures (Klages et al., 2019) and how I made sense of the data collected. Storytelling is a great way to amplify voices and learn about the nuances of experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Daniel & Eley, 2017; Klages et al., 2019; Lewis, 2011; Rodriguez, 2010; Ryu & Tuvilla, 2018). While this study did not engage in a full storytelling project, I did refer to these methods in developing the semi-structured interview. In amplifying the voices of refugee students and illuminating their FPT, this study aimed to shed light on ways to support refugee students in their own visions of the future, however near or far they may be.

Both feminist methodologies and narrative research embraces stories as a way to understand the world around us (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narrative research has been seen as a way to highlight otherwise excluded voices from research and is a powerful tool for research

with minoritized students (Lewis, 2011; Rodriguez, 2010). For critical feminists, storytelling has long been part of a tradition of consciousness-raising, and an outlet for sharing as a way to find solidarity. Furthermore, feminist methods like standpoint theory rely on people within specific positionalities to share their stories. Ryu and Tuvilla insist that in order to challenge the dominant narratives that refugees are a burden or deficit in societies, with the truth of the value added by refugees, it is essential to forward the voices of refugee youth and look within their stories for all that they offer and hope for the future (2018).

### **Role of the Researcher.**

As the researcher in this study, I saw myself in several different roles. First, I cared deeply about the students and community and my first priority was to do work that is mutually beneficial and not extractive. This was informed not only by my own sensibilities but also from the lens of feminist research which has activist ideologies (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2014; White et al., 2018). It is my hope that this exploratory work will lead to future research and work that is empowering to the community. This reciprocity was best developed by my active engagement in the classroom, based on the terms set by the teacher, and by being responsive to students' moods and schedules in my data collection. I paid attention to how much work they had in order to not ask them to step away to interview with me if they had too much work. I also did not ask for interviews, or ended interviews early, if students did not seem engaged in the process. I offered assistance to the teacher and students in whatever way they needed. The benefits of this were two-fold: 1) I contributed to the environment 2) I fostered better relationships with students, which enhanced the quality of the data.

My role depended on building a relationship with the classroom teacher to be in her

classroom. The classroom teacher was a seasoned veteran with over 20 years' experience teaching in the U.S. and Russia, we did meet and talk about ways to support students in the daily activities and upcoming school events. During collaboration with her, I discovered that she already had a few assignments planned that were well aligned to my research goals of looking at students' life narratives and their goals for the future. I also was able to support students in the moment with questions they had about assignments and other academic issues.

While I understand that the power dynamics were complex, my goal was to make sure students felt comfortable to refuse participation and be honest with me. A few students did decline to be included in my observations, and a few did not want to be interviewed. It was a tricky power dynamic that I continually attended to by always accepting a lack of physical or verbal engagement as a communication of a disinterest in participating. My participation as a supportive part of the class improved the relationships with myself and the teacher and allowed students to gain familiarity with me. The fact that students had this opportunity to get to know me and know that talking to me for research was totally voluntary meant that the students who I did end up interviewing expressed active interest in being part of the process. Several students requested to talk to me and seemed quite happy to be able to express themselves. As I refer to in this paper, I had one student in particular who really wanted me to take note of what she said and share her story. Another one of the girls had some strong perspectives on gender that she thought were especially important to share. The third girl featured was reluctant at first, but when she felt more comfortable shared a clear eyed perspective on her values and the importance of her own ideas.

### **Timeline.**

The data collection took place in September and October of 2021. Contacts to administration and staff went out before the close of the 2020-2021 school year. Teachers were consulted during their professional work days before the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year and one teacher agreed to participate during that time. The initial meeting with the teacher and the start of official in-school classroom observations was postponed to September. The teacher's version of the storytelling/narrative activity could fit well into the beginning of the school year curriculum and aligned well with other future oriented activities they would do. See Appendices 1 and 2 for key dates and the filed work timeline.

### **Participants Overview.**

Students for this study were selected based on my familiarity and previous employment with the school district. I have continued contact with administrators in the district since I worked there and the assistant principal agreed to allow this project in the school, after IRB and school board approval. The students in this school district have been purposefully sampled because many of them are refugee students and I have a working relationship with the school district and administration at the school.

I have changed the names of the participants for their protection. While I focus on three girls, a few other students will be referred to in relationship to the focal girls. Any person written about has had their name changed for anonymity and students who were observed in the class are only referred to if they and their parents signed consent/assent forms. I attempted to choose culturally appropriate pseudonyms for the focal girls that match their personalities with the name meaning and blend the cultures they are from. For instance, I looked for Rwandan and/or

Kinyarwanda names, and Christian names that might be popular there because of the background of my participant I am calling Neza. I looked at Islamic girl names as well. I explored blogs and baby naming websites to access popular names, along with prior knowledge of common names from those cultures (Chakraborty, 2024; Ntwari, 2013).

Controlling for time spent in the country was not something that I could account for ahead of time, but ended up dealing with in analysis. The length of time in the country happened to align well for the focal participants in this study. I did observe and interview students in grades 9-12 from a variety of backgrounds, but only used data from students who identify as refugee girls, who are 11th or 12th graders, and have been in the country for 3-5 years. This meant that I had additional data from a variety of students who were some combination of non-refugee migrants, non-female identifying, or not interested in interviewing. Collecting a breadth of data in partnership with willing student participants felt like the most authentic approach in this context. Given that a rich description of the participants and setting draw on the qualitative observations, interviews, and work collection, I found it necessary to do a whole chapter detailing these. The intention is to provide important details to highlight the intersectional identities of the students and begin to reveal some of the important components of their FTP. The following will provide a more detailed description of the participants and environment in the study.

## **Chapter 4: The Environment and Students**

In this chapter I outline the focal people and places in this study. You will meet the teacher who ran the classes I observed, a few important friends and connections to the girls, and most importantly, the focal refugee girls. I think it is important to know a little bit about the teacher because she set the tone for the classroom. If it had been another teacher's class the data may have been different. After this I will describe the overall school environment as I experienced it: The surrounding neighborhood, entering the premises, and making my way to the ELD class, and anywhere that class went.

### **The People**

#### ***Students***

Some students were shy to talk to me at first, but when my former students, now in high school, came to talk to me and word spread that I was Ms. DeRosia, former teacher to many students in the neighborhood, some students became more open and interested in talking to me. Some, like Esin, were ready to talk as soon as the project was described.

#### **Esin.**

Esin described herself firstly as a person whose parents are from Afghanistan and added that she had a good childhood in Pakistan until her father died when she was about 8 or 9 years old, and then moved to Jordan to resettle. At the time of interviewing, she was almost 18. She had fairly straight, long, dark, hair that she usually kept up, wore jeans and t-shirts, was petite in stature, but high in energy.

She had great memories of time with her family and going to school as a young child in Pakistan. Her parents were from Afghanistan but moved to Pakistan where she was born. After the death of her father, her mother moved her and her siblings to Jordan and worked as a

dressmaker for a few years before deciding that she needed to leave and brought Esin (age 13) and her siblings to the U.S.

Esin was bold and confident and ready to take on the world (with the help of her very best friend, a girl also from Afghanistan and the older sister of a former pupil of mine). Esin's best friend Fatima was also a 12th grader, but she had come directly from Afghanistan. As soon as I walked into class, Esin eagerly introduced herself and was so curious about who I was. When I said that I was hoping to learn more about their lives, she immediately volunteered to talk to me and started sharing about her life. Esin was very high energy, very talkative, and spoke incredibly quickly of so many of her ideas.

Esin dreamt of going to either the large state college in the city or the local community college and becoming a pilot. Esin was very motivated to prepare for college and career. She had a mentor who had facilitated someone at Southwest teaching her about what it was like to be a flight attendant. Esin in particular really wanted to do stuff to help people in Afghanistan. Neza and Esin sat next to each other in class and often chatted with the young man in front of them.

### **Neza.**

The first time I saw Neza in class, she was wearing a "blessed" sweatshirt with a cross on it, headphones around her neck, a surgical mask under chin, and her hair in fluffy pony tail. Neza described herself as first and foremost a girl who loves: soccer, her family, and laughing with her friends. She also identified as black, refugee, and "African." She often talked about her identity as an African person, but specifically mentioned where she was born (Rwanda), where her parents and extended family were from (Burundi), and Tanzania, a neighboring country in east Africa with a new female president, which she brought up when talking about gender. She had strong memories of life in a refugee camp as a very young person, moving across borders, and

moving to the U.S. at the age of 11. She shared that her family started the resettlement process when she was age 7.

She was, at the time of the interview, 17 years old. She hoped to go to college for business on a soccer scholarship, and dreamed of one day starting a micro-finance company for farmers. After achieving these things, she also hoped to start her own family. She was bubbly, bright and generally very talkative, but took her time when she spoke and thought of the right way to say things. Neza was also a senior in high school at the time of interviews. Within minutes of introducing myself, Neza realized that I was “that Ms. DeRosia”- I was her sister’s former teacher. She had met me in the past when I had done home visits to check on students and meet families, and when picking her little sister up from school to walk home together. Upon making this connection, Neza was even more warm and curious than when I first walked in the door. She asked me all about how I was doing and what I had been up to. She told me that her sister Grace had loved my class and her and her former classmates talked about it often. She said that we should go find my previous students to say hi to them, because they would be excited.

When I asked about her sister, she grew solemn. Grace had developed leukemia and had to be heavily isolated and withdrawn from school to avoid COVID-19 or anything that would compromise her treatment. Despite this tough news, Neza maintained that the family was looking forward to Grace finishing another round of therapy and had the opportunity to reassess in the next few weeks. Despite this difficulty, and the difficulties behind her, Neza was bubbling with hope.

### **Shula.**

Shula first walked into class in black skinny jeans, white long sleeves, black mask on her mouth, and her hair up in a bun. Shula described herself as a Burundian refugee. She and her

family moved from Congo to Burundi as refugees when she was very young. Like Neza, she often referred to “Africa” rather than a specific country. Shula was more reserved and rather than speaking a lot, had a very full range of facial expressions. She often expressed herself with raised eyebrows, and small jokes to people near her. She was friendly, giggled a lot, but was careful not to disclose too much. Inspired by her grandmother, she dreamed of being a flight attendant.

At the time of interviews, Shula was a senior in high school and 18 years old. She had a lot of energy, but it was well contained. She projected self-assurance even when declaring that she did not know something. On her senior brag sheet she said her top three qualities she identified for herself were “communication skills, responsibility, and caring.” The talents that make her stand out are “translating Swahili and English” as well as “creativity.”

I came to know Shula slower than the others, because she walked into a room with her own priorities on her mind and a fair suspicion of those she didn’t know. She was very willing to casually chat with me and tell me gossip about the school and students, but was a bit reluctant to sit down and interview with me. She observed other students interviewing and I reminded the class that they did not have to answer questions that they did not want to. I also reiterated that names would be removed, then she said okay no problem. I told her that I respected her caution.

I decided to break hers into two sessions, partially because of time and so it wasn’t too much at once. The first session went smoothly, but in the second she was a bit quiet and needed me to repeat questions. I didn’t think she was trying to resist questions and verified with her that she wanted to participate, she was just unsure how to answer and was distracted.

Shula was persevering through high school but didn’t love academics. She also had a job outside of school for family income. She was most interested in spending time with friends, watching YouTube videos, and spending time with family. She shared so much about her pride

in her family, where she was from, and her hopes for her future. She elided much of her experience of leaving her home, and her transition to the U.S. Rather than give details, she talked about how hard it was, and that it was a very bad time. Shula wanted to be a flight attendant, and she told me a story about how her grandma was a flight attendant in the Congo and how she would like to do the same thing.

### **Other Notes on People.**

While a few students were reserved, all but two students agreed to be included in my observations. I did interviews with many students who are not focused on this paper, and I owe them gratitude. While I only focus on the three girls mentioned above, there are a few other people who I did choose to also create pseudonyms for because of their proximity to the focal girls. Neza's sister is named Grace. Esin's best friend, who she talks about at length, is called Fatima throughout. Shula's friend in class is called Natalie, and another friend of Shula's is called Hanna. The school counselor also has been named Mr. P.

### **The Environment**

In order to understand the perspectives of the young women in this study, it is helpful to be able to envision the environment where I collected the data, how I saw the place and them; and more importantly how they saw the place and themselves.

When you come from Africa, America, the way people talks of America is like another Heaven. Yeah it's like you're not going to be working hard, like everything that you want. You don't have to work hard for a you can just being like, I want this, can you get it, and I- because when I got here, I lived in apartment, and my parents didn't get a job

like till five months, of living here, because we came by the IRC<sup>4</sup>. They were the one paying our rent. The way I expected America to look, and the stuff -it was just so different. So I was just like, oh so we in America right now? (Neza)

Neza perfectly explains important components of both her past perceptions and current experience of living in the U.S. The glossy America shown in media that gets transferred to people living both inside and outside of the U.S. certainly did not align with the very low-income, desert neighborhood in which the girls ended up moving with their families.

### **Context of the Students' Arrival.**

All of the girls in this study relocated to the U.S. between the years of 2015-2017. Neza came to the U.S. at the age of 11 in 2015. Shula came at age 12 in 2016 and Esin came at age 13 in 2017. They came as middle schoolers without previous English instruction. Neza and Shula had both lived in Central and East African countries in refugee camps before making their way through the complex United Nations refugee application process and making it to the U.S. to be resettled in the Southwest U.S. through a federally overseen refugee resettlement program. Esin, on the other hand, had been born after her parents fled their country of origin, then her mother, and siblings moved again to Jordan after her father was killed in conflict. Finally, after several years of trying to raise children as a single mother in Jordan, Esin's mother was able to get their immediate family resettled in the U.S.

This meant they were all coming at some time during or after the election of Donald Trump and some heavy shifts in attitudes toward immigrants. There were large shifts in rhetoric

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<sup>4</sup> IRC: International Rescue Committee, a prominent refugee resettlement agency that helps with the process of refugee families arriving, finding housing, work, medical and educational transition support. The federal government allows for a small allowance of funds to each family coming through one of these agencies.

and policy as they adapted to their new environment. With all of this going on in the U.S. they also were aware of ongoing turmoil in countries of origin.

Another layer in the experience of the girls in this study is that within 5 years of their arrival, they lived through the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic in a country still relatively new to them. Before arriving at their school, I predicted that they would express concerns about the pandemic, but most of the discussion was about practical interruptions.

Due to the state guidelines of the high school, school closures differed state by state, and my ability to pursue this project was limited by University of Oregon until September. This is not to say that COVID-19 was not still a concern by the time that I arrived. In fact, Neza was absent for several days before my official research time started because she was out with COVID-19. This was a particular concern because her sister, Grace, was battling leukemia treatment and trying to stay healthy in a household of approximately 8 people.

The school environment during study:

While I did not take the time to ask students to describe the physical environment of their neighborhood in the U.S., they all alluded to this not matching their expectations of America before arriving. This is particularly evident in Neza's featured quote above. Because of this, I will briefly describe my observations of the neighborhood and school.

Each day visiting the school, I passed a Dairy Queen, a few check cashing shops, a series of two-story apartment complexes, and a few small strip malls with small shops. There was no major grocery store within a mile of the school, but there were a few convenience stores. The Walmart Neighborhood Market pushed out a more low-cost broad selection local chain in the area a few years before the study. Right across from the front gates of the school were inexpensive two story apartments that historically were not part of subsidized housing, but would

make deals with local refugee agencies to allow for refugees with no American rental history to stay. The apartments had chipping paint, no landscaping, were in clear need of repairs, and were strewn with toys and items in the area around the complex.

There was only one way for cars to enter campus because all the perimeters were gated. You could see the top of the football stadium sign from around the outside and some of the roofs, but apart from that it was hard to identify it as a school until you got to the front gate. When you reached the front gate, you had to stop at a little gray industrial hut in the driveway entrance. This housed a security guard, who when I arrived daily was usually a casually dressed heavy-set 30s-40s male presenting Latino. On my first visit he asked me who I was but did not require ID. He seemed satisfied with my explanation. The next day and onward, he recognized me and waved me into the lot. I saw this man recognize and wave folks in regularly. He was always smiling, offered a welcoming salutation, and knew many students by name.

After parking under metal sunshades to block out the harsh desert sun, drivers must pass across a concrete area for people to congregate before and after drop offs/arrivals/departures before entering another gate that led to the actual school buildings. There were green fences between the parking area and the main buildings.

There was also a guard by this gate which you passed on foot. He was a very friendly older Latino man. Sometimes he wore school attire or a badge and other times not. We usually exchanged pleasantries about the weather. One day he shared that “he didn’t have any complaints but even if he did no one would care.” When I entered the gate, I realized that this high school had a spread out campus.

There were typically one or two more male guards, one black and one Latino past this main gate between the office and the auditorium area where the first outdoor guard was.

Sometimes the second guard was a bit more serious. Other times there was also a very friendly and conversational male security guard. He often joked with students, and some seemed to know him by name. At the end of the day, there was a male additional guard who helped with release from school/pick up. He clearly had a good rapport with students and typically offered fist bumps and special handshakes with students as they left. The guards were not school resource officers, but seemed to just be guards hired from the community to supervise the comings and goings of people into and out of the school.

I had to pass the library and a few outdoor hallways to different buildings before making it to the main office/administration building. When I got into the office, there was usually an older white female presenting receptionist who greeted me and chatted with me about the daily events. One Friday she told me that I had missed the homecoming assembly and that a very handsome man called “Mr. America” had presented, and it was a very enjoyable assembly. Each day she asked me where I was going until about a week and a half into my project. She repeated multiple times where I was going and promised she would remember. The next day she did and was quite chuffed about it. There typically weren't many students in this building other than student helpers. After getting my visitor tag each day, I was free to enter the buildings.

There were many unattached buildings, and buildings and gates were locked during lunch time to keep students in a concentrated area near the office. There was a mix of indoor and outdoor hallways. There were different types of messaging around the hallways: One bulletin board had multiple signs that seemed to be part of an anti-self-harm/suicide campaign with slogans like “you are not alone” and “we need you.” Most of the other messaging was about fundraisers where you could purchase Frappuccino and other snack foods. There were some

signs outside of bathrooms saying “this is the 300 hall bathroom. Where should you be?”

Classroom door windows were themed with different college names/colors/logos.

Most adults on campus wore t-shirts and pants or shorts, except for administrators who wore business casual trousers, skirts, blouses, and button-downs. During my time at the school I only met the head principal once in passing. The only time an administrator went into the class I was working in was when the assistant principal came with me to introduce me.

School Demographics.

For the academic year 2021-2022, according to the state school report cards: Focal High School was a public high school in a district with both high SES and low SES schools (AZ School Report Cards, 2021). This particular school was lower SES with an enrollment of 1,160 students, 63.62% Hispanic, 2.93% Asian, 11.12% African American, 3.97% Native American, 15.35% white, 2.33% multiple races and 0.69% redacted students, making it a majority minoritized population school. Of the students identified as EL, or needing explicit English Language instruction, 94% scored minimally proficient on state ELA assessments, 6% were partially proficient, and none were proficient or highly proficient. This is of course unsurprising, given that if they passed the ELA state test they would likely pass the state EL test, making them no longer designated as EL.

The school graduation rate overall was 67.53%, with females (71.43%) more likely to graduate than males (64.66%). Interestingly, white students were the least likely to graduate that year at 58.33%, and ELs likelier at 66.67% (although some ELs might also be white).

Classroom Environment.

The ELD classroom was far from the front office and required passage through several indoor and outdoor corridors. There was nothing particularly obvious from the outside of the

room that it was an ELD class other than the teacher bio that showed her as an ELD teacher. Once inside the room, the left was set up with six two-person tables arranged in a 2x3 with chairs facing the front of the room where there was a whiteboard and projector area. Beside the front board was the teacher desk with a computer and her supplies. Around two sides of the room and forming an L shape that cut some of the back of the room from the front student tables were desktop computers. For a person walking in, their right would have a few desks and shelves in the back with papers, materials, and some space that is sometimes used for students to work more independently than the main seating area. This was where I pulled students to the side to do interviews.

Teacher- “Ms. Ivanova”

I had not had the opportunity to work with this teacher before meeting her for this project, but came to learn about her shared beliefs in the potential of all students, and her no-nonsense approach shaped by her own experience as an immigrant and in schools in Russia/the former Soviet Union. She came to the position with a wealth of education and an advanced degree in linguistics, and brought that to the work she did with students. The environment of the classroom was comfortable and, flexible, but had clear boundaries.

Her background became apparent in some interesting instances, like when trying to help students with their math when they were floundering. One student wouldn't do hand gestures, despite her wanting him to participate in the language building practice of Total Physical Response<sup>5</sup>. She then had to manage student behavior through comments toward one of my participants Esin: “Let J talk now, thank you Esin. I see you are very good at math.” The teacher

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<sup>5</sup> Total Physical Response is a language building strategy that aims to connect words with physical movements for improved memory of the term.

tried to validate the student who was very invested in showing and sharing her academic ideas. While she did this, Ms. Ivanova showed the distributive property on the board, seemingly struggling with the correct words to describe it, and kept calling it distributive “power,” and narrated to students about how she knew how to do math in the “Russian way.” I raised my hand for a while trying to get her attention to tell her the word is “property” not power. She fixed it on the board and explained that math teachers give vocabulary to students but not definitions.

This instance showcases a few important things about the teacher. One, she cared a great deal for her students and supported their success in classes outside of her own. Two, she managed her classroom with care for validating students and made space for different voices. Three, she recognized some of the ways her identities informed the ways she taught students—including her Russian identity. Her disposition shown through in the classroom environment she cultivated.

The classroom was overall tidy and organized, but not overly manicured and showcased a variety of pre-made teacher selected posters, school wide posters, and student work displayed. At the front of the class were AVID sponsored Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration, Organization, and Reading (WICOR) posters. I did not hear reference to the WICOR idea but it was physically present. The teacher also had a “How do I run my Love and Logic Classroom” poster on the front wall. She also had Academic Vocabulary space on her board and the first featured words I saw were morphology and metacognition. These representations demonstrate academic (vocabulary), individualistic concepts (AVID), and connecting concepts (Love and Logic).

There were also school specific posters. One that was in the class and around campus was “The A list”, which had things students need to do to be successful: ID badge visible, electronics

put away, earbuds out, materials ready. Near the door, there was a “mask up ‘cat mascot’” poster. Despite posters like this, masking was not popular at the school, with very few students and faculty wearing masks. I began the study by wearing a mask, but based my masking off of what the other people in the room were primarily doing on any day. As part of AVID expectations, there were many college pennants around the room and a representation of one specific university on the front door of the class.

One of the really lovely components was the student work. Ms. Ivanova had a bulletin board to highlight “excellent work.” On this board there were examples of the life-story narrative and examples of poetry students had written; some of these were featured as part of the analysis in this paper. She also had pictures of students from her classes in their graduation garb proudly displayed, as well as other pictures of herself and ELD colleagues with students at events and in the classroom. There was a computer-generated poster entitled “Focal High School Student Greenhouse” and it had many pictures of ELD students working in the greenhouse.

The greenhouse could be considered an extension of the classroom, because the students spent a lot of time working in the space. The work was not graded, but they did do lab write ups for grades. The greenhouse was down a long outdoor corridor several buildings away from the ELD classroom. It was tucked behind one of the gym buildings in what would have otherwise been an apparently unused space of dry grass and dirt. Inside and outside the greenhouse were raised beds growing an assortment of flowers, vegetables, and herbs. Many students in the ELD classes came from backgrounds where growing and agriculture were culturally and communally significant.

## Chapter 5: Collectivism, Intersectional Identity, and Time

### Life Poem

It's up to me

I cannot be the only one

Who doesn't have a clue?

About where I am heading

Nor what I am meant to do

But time will not wait for me

And as the days go passing by

One thing I know that I control;

It's up to me to try.

(Neza)

In this portion I forward portions of observation, narrative, and work that does much to address my questions about individualism, identity, and time. I hypothesized that the individualistic identity orientation common in the U.S. would not align with the collective identities common amongst individuals who are from the societies that the girls in this study are from. Furthermore, I identified that the research on FTP and SST are designed with that individualistic orientation assumed, and that this would not function well for groups from collectivist cultures. However, in the communication from the girls, they integrate their collectivism with individualism and this shows up in their expressions of time and life story.

In the opening poem in this section, Neza highlighted so many of the tensions identified in the mismatch section of chapter 2. She opened and closed with individualism, the future being in her own hands. However, her second line reached out to others, seeking connections to others

who relate to her. She highlighted some insecurity about the future and about time passing by quickly; an acute awareness of time. She related to a sense of uncertainty paired with determination. She did both at once.

In this study, where I anticipated mismatch or friction, I often found abundance instead. Abundance particularly from the girls and their families, and often abundance and generosity from members of the school community. This is not to say that there were not any mismatches or friction, but that the girls, in particular, were amazing at holding multiplicities within themselves. This complexity embodied by the girls was an invitation to me as a researcher to adopt complexity in my analysis and reporting of my time with them. I also invite readers and other researchers to adopt an eye for complexity in receiving the girls' stories.

The complexity shone through in a few important ways. First, the girls displayed a range of individualist and collectivist orientations throughout the project. They were concerned with their communities and with how they would do their part to reach their dreams, to support their communities in their own unique ways. They all had their dreams, but every one of those dreams involved supporting their families, and their countries. Second, the girls' intersectional identities were constantly brought up in layered ways. Rarely did a girl focus on only one aspect of her identity, but instead would weave various components into one topic. Third, their comments and work were almost never limited to one period of time. This made organizing the data clearly into past, present, near future, and far future limiting.

## **School**

Life

Life is a lesson

That nobody can stop taking while they still alive

And in those lessons a decision must be made. Good or Bad

When you decide to take a decision it forces you to do it because you decided to

Take a decision

Decisions must be made in life for a better future.

(Shula)

For the girls, school was of great importance in the moment, but understood clearly in all the contexts of the past, present and future. As the quoted poem above exemplifies, “life is a lesson”; all of the past informs where a person is now, and informs difficult decisions for the future. These are all connected and are what make life meaningful. In terms of FTP, the girls reflections showed both long and short time extension in a given conversation. This ability to show multiple extensions gestures toward SST that is both achievement and emotional oriented. All the girls reflected on the differences in educational experience and opportunity in the different contexts they had and would move through. Each of the girls communicated that a top priority for the near future is doing well in school and preparing for college, tech school, or university. Within SST this would be conceptualized as achievement level goals. The past was shaping the future for them, but not in a way that pushed their focus off of achievement and long-term success. Neza and Shula specifically talked about the ways in which they had better educational opportunities in the U.S. and how that was prioritized in their families. Despite the importance of school, appreciation of particular staff, and gratitude that school was available to them, there were many examples of the school being built on individualism. The process of testing, grading, and applications for life after high school were all examples of difficult, overwhelming and isolating experiences for the girls.

When I asked Esin about her experience of school, she immediately thought about her past, and shared how happy she had been as a young person living a “normal life” in Pakistan. She said, “ I went to school in Pakistan since I was young, like, yeah, my dad, like, always take us to school and everything like that, because normal life.” When I asked a clarifying question about how she felt about her early life, she said, “Yeah, I was really happy with my family and education and everything. Yeah, it was really good.” For Esin, school was part of a very happy and important part of her memory, one where her family was intact and undisturbed by conflict.

When Shula talked about her history of education, she had more complicated memories with more of a focus on the opportunities in front of her now. She shared that the U.S. schooling was better than her situation in Africa:

Like we have free like — free education? Yeah. And like, we have, like my parents like they have work. And we do have free food like sometimes. Yeah. Like we have free food sometimes- but in Africa you have to work hard to get food or to get clothes or to pay for children to go to school.

Now Shula wanted to improve her GPA from 2.35 to 3.00 by the end of the semester, and had goals to graduate, since she had not been able to graduate last year when she was scheduled to do so.

Each of the girls saw school as important and not guaranteed and sometimes this would manifest clearly like in the following it did one day during instruction from the teacher. While the teacher was speaking, Damian’s phone rang, making an audible buzz. Instead of putting it away he texted back and forth and kept getting buzzing sounds on his phone. Irritated by this, Neza said, “Damian, put your phone away!” Shortly after this phone-based distraction, Esin interjected by asking if Ms. Ivanova got her hair cut. The teacher responded by saying that she

cut her own bangs. Further annoyed at the lesson being pushed off track, Neza said to Esin and anyone else, "Stop disrupting class." This episode is a direct reflection of Neza taking ownership of improving her situation at school. In a conversation where she shared the importance of spending time with "the right people," and focusing on the "right stuff," I asked her what type of stuff she should focus on. She responded clearly with the following:

School. Yeah, get good grades, make sure I come to school every day. When I miss a day and just make sure you know, I took up with the teacher I talked with the teacher, just to keep good grades because I feel like I did not do well in my freshman year, just because when you get here, you're just gonna be hanging out with friends. I'm not gonna pass with a D or with that F so I'm passing with a D. I'm still going to pass the class. And I feel like I had that type of mentality when I got here. So I did not focus so much on my grade and I'm seeing the result now on my GPA I'm like I need to get my GPA up high like that's my main focus right now, so I can be able to go to the college that I want to go to that can be able to go to the university. (Neza)

In this quote Neza highlights her struggles with integrating into the individualistic grading system and prioritizing achievement goals over emotional goals when she talks about spending time with friends rather than grades. The grading system in U.S. schools are highly individualistic and depend on individual focus. While she did adapt to the individuality, it raises the question of what it would look like to create more collaborative structures for new refugee students to succeed within. Neza is working hard in a system that isn't best suited to her collaborative nature.

In other conversations, Neza and the other girls shared some of the struggles of adjusting to the new environment when they first arrived in the U.S. When I talked to the girls, each of them had been living here for several years and were not facing the intense shock of initial adjustment.

During the time of the study, they all were very focused on school. Esin was particularly focused on doing well in school and, like Neza, perceived doing well in school as the most important thing she had going on. She clearly explained what her present priorities were:

For me right now, it's really like this week, it's really important for me to like, do the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) of all my college and I have appointments with the counselor and the teachers so I can like they can help me with the doing the FAFSA and the applications for like the universities I want to go.

An example of how important academic success was to Esin was when one day she came in a bit late because she was meeting with a counselor and she asked about a paper on her desk: “What is this?” she asked. Ms. Ivanova flatly stated, “This is the result from our test, which was not very good.” Shula’s friend, Natalie, laughed at the exchange as Esin’s usual cheerful expression turned sad and tears welled in her eyes.

In this section you can see how the girls prioritized school success and college. They balanced emotional goals of friendship and family, with their achievement goals for the near and far future. Their extension to the past informed their school-based goals. You can also see how they connected to their collective communities and resources to ensure that their and their families’ plans stayed on track. Furthermore, despite highly individualized expectations the students navigated them.

### **Testing and FAFSA.**

The girls frequently mentioned testing, indicating the importance of academic success. They were also exposed to expectations and presentations about testing and FAFSA. These are two topics that highlighted the tension between individualism, collectivism, and support. These topics also brought about situations where the girls negotiated understandings of managing and making sense of time. The state-mandated annual English proficiency assessment and completing the FAFSA were examples of the girls working toward “individual” goals, with big collective impacts in mind and support tailored toward individual students, rather than family or collective work.

One of the most individualistic components of students' experiences in ELD with the most collective results is state testing, particularly English language proficiency testing. Students were expected to work independently on a high stakes state test that not only impacted their class placement, but could impact their teacher's professional progress, the school's score on the state report card, and more.

Before I started my official observations, the teacher shared with me that her classes would be piloting a new style of the English proficiency assessment that was supposed to be shorter than the previous test. Students were very much aware of this as is evident in the following exchange. Ms. Ivanova explained that the class would be trying a new type of English proficiency assessment that should be better and faster than the old one, as she asks them to get out some practice questions. Esin who was slumping from previously being asked to let someone else speak in class, couldn't help but clarify if “only the practice is short?” Neza exclaimed to no one in particular that the old one was too long, like 3 hours, and Esin agreed. Seemingly ignoring the English proficiency assessment discussion and focusing on avoiding the practice questions,

Shula said, “We don’t have it” then Ms. Ivanova said, “Yes, you did. We did four of them.”

Shula laughed and looked at me with a shrug of trying her best, but not quite getting the outcome she hoped.

The English proficiency assessment was a state ELD test much like other states’ that aims to assess four domains of language acquisition: Reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It was one of the primary ways students were placed in ELD-specific classes and the primary way they were able to move out of the classes and the need to continue to take the assessment. Like all state standardized tests, students must perform the tasks independently and have a limited range of accommodations and support for their engagement on the test. Despite this very individualistic testing experience, the scores have big collective impacts for teachers, classrooms, schools and districts. Growth or stagnation on this test has big impacts on funding, school reputation, and resources.

Another individualistic experience, with some support, the students faced was the school preparing them for their next step after high school. Neza did the FAFSA after she caught up on work that she missed from a COVID-19 quarantine, but she asked for a meeting with the college coordinator. Ms. Ivanova said he was coming to class tomorrow. Neza said she wants a meeting anyway. Throughout the time Esin also talked about meeting with the counselor for help.

One component of this college prep was a guest speaker from the counselors’ office who gave the presentation: “My favorite f-word,” referring to the FAFSA forms that students needed to complete to get financial aid for college, university, or tech school. His goal was to get every eligible senior to do the FAFSA no matter what they chose to do after they graduated. He told students that it would probably cost some money to apply to colleges and get in, but he wanted them to keep the options open. In order to incentivize students, the counselors decided to provide

a free t-shirt to anyone who finished the form. When he shared this, no one seemed particularly excited. He shared that he had come in previously and really encouraged students to reach out to him or anyone at the school if they have questions. He had little cards to make appointments to get students started. He said if you didn't like him, that's okay, ask your counselor or coach or whatever. He had done the form many times and wanted to help. To drive his point home, he asked Shula if the FAFSA was the most difficult thing in her whole life. She shyly said no, seemingly slightly embarrassed to be called on.

He said everyone can do it and continued saying that students only need a "Social Security or green card a number, permanent resident number." The teacher pushed back on this statement and asked about students without documents. The presenter avoided answering the question directly and said something along the lines of, "that makes it harder but we can look into it." In this environment, the lack of clarity seemed a bit heavier than it might elsewhere. Before wrapping up completely, he made a joke about students signing up for appointments and choosing which classes they want to miss most.

In this presentation, the speaker intended to make college more accessible for students, but also reified the perspective that missing class now to go to college in the future was a sensible choice (Destin & Oyserman, 2009; Husman & Lens, 1999). This choice created the situation where the girls had to sacrifice help in the classroom to get help with another highly individualized need. They were savvy to knowing that those individual achievement level goals served their communal emotional goals, but faced a difficult choice to do so.

After he finished speaking to the class, I caught him on the way out to find out more. I asked what was provided to all students, and none of the tests were financially covered for everyone. They offered college admissions exams, including the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude

Test (PSAT) and American College Testing (ACT) on campus. None of the exams were mandatory and were opt-in only, often outside of school hours. So while the school did have some support, students were in many ways on their own to figure out finances and balancing their other responsibilities to make time to take the test outside of school hours.

One of the difficult situations for refugee students was ensuring that they were meeting the requirements for high school graduation in a timely manner while adjusting to a new environment and learning a new language. This came to light in the classroom when I worked with a student looking at her Tyler (online data management) account and saw that her 9-11 grade English credits were “not complete.” I problem-solved with her and we figured out that there was an error because she was in ELD and not in a general education Language Arts class. As we investigated this, Shula overheard and said she was supposed to graduate last year but didn’t have her English credits. I later learned from the teacher that Shula could get the credits as long as she advanced to the next level of ELD each year. Shula stayed in the same level multiple years so she did not get her credits. The process, requirements, and consequences were apparently not well understood by Shula before or the other student who was facing the same problem. Experiences like this highlight the need for more support and advocacy for this demographic of students.

Doing individual work and making individualized plans was a struggle for students in many contexts, but was an added difficulty for students in this study. Sometimes they faced typical struggles like the following: Neza needed to write a paragraph but said she couldn’t because it was too boring. Shula agreed because they did it 2 years in a row. I pointed out that they have lots of past experiences to write about but they remained unenthused. Neza wanted to give up and said she couldn’t finish that day. Instead I told her she could do it because she had

20 minutes and I sat by her to keep her focused and off of Snapchat, an app she had said distracted her often. Neza wanted to stay on track but faced the difficulty of completing a solo task that was challenging, while facing distractions.

The ELD class ended up serving as a space to support students who were expected to work on highly individualized assignments in classrooms. For example, there were several occasions where Ms. Ivanova ended up covering content from other classes, and needed to be flexible with her assignments. As I brought up when introducing her, she had so many students struggling with math that she tried to do a focused math lesson. She applied ELD strategies and Ms. Ivanova asked students to read out the problem solving in English and one by one cold-called them. She told them that, “You have to learn how to speak math **language**”, pointing out the relationship between different subjects and language. While this support was great for students, it shed some light on the individualism of teachers not being responsible for math and sending it to the ELD teacher to do. In this environment, students and the teacher were filling different roles and attempting to flexibly address the individualized needs of many students in the class. For example, Shula watered plants while others reviewed math vocabulary.

The reliance on the ELD class as a catchall for the students in it was also reflected in the individualistic approach to catching up after COVID-19 quarantines. While some students were in the greenhouse, Neza and Damien stayed to catch up on work from being absent. The school did not develop a procedure for students who missed for COVID-19 or other sickness. This meant that when students were absent, they tended to fall behind. For instance, Neza missed four classes of her home-economics already, then missed 2 weeks of all of her classes. She said no teachers sent any work to her or her friend who was also staying back. Neza didn't finish her make-up work over the break because it was difficult to focus on it while she had family

responsibilities. After the next break, students would be doing a pilot state English Language Development test of three parts, not five. The students would have testing in the morning for 3-4 weeks and would be missing other classes to do the pilot. Myself, Ms. Ivanova, and some of the students worried about this time. Ms. Ivanova also said that COVID-19 made scheduling and students keeping up with their assignments very difficult. The lack of school support for students missing class showed the level of individualism expected and entrenched in this environment.

One of the vocabulary words that was taught during my observation time was independence. The teacher did some instruction and asked about the word “independence.” Students said it is doing your own things. They started talking about work, buying things and having an apartment. Shula talked about a story when she didn’t listen to her mom and her friend got hit by a motorcycle and now is “crazy from the wreck” and now lives in NY, seemingly as an example of trying to be independent before you’re ready and a cautionary tale about not listening to parents. Reflecting on the discussion, the things that were discussed as independent were not talked about as altogether favorable. A few students were interested and excited about the prospects of buying things and having more personal space but many seemed skeptical about the responsibility of work, and as Shula demonstrated in her story, the possibility of foolish decision-making when acting solo.

For several days in a row, students got make-up days to do work that needed to be finished before the end of the term. On the work days the following was posted on the board:

First quarter summary:

1. Paragraph about a past experience and an illustration
2. Quiz on reading strategies
3. Greenhouse lab report 1

4. Star test
5. Summary report
6. Finish incomplete assignments
7. Brag sheets

Students choose the order of what they did for 2-7

While the students experienced a great deal of individualism, collectivism was a strong presence in their lives inside and of school. Students talked about support they got from school staff, community, friends, and family. There was evidence of some collective approaches from the teacher.

### **School Support.**

While the overall ethos of the school focused on individual success, and students experienced a lack of support in many ways in the school environment, the students also benefited from attempts at support in various ways and some collectivist elements in their ELD classroom. Esin talked about how she got help from many different people in all the conversations I had with her, in a way that I would describe as supportive rather than fully collective. She told me about,

The great teacher she's helping like at lunchtime. I told her I will come tomorrow like this period and seven periods so you can help me like more. You can get more time to do it and I have appointment. Mr. A, he's a counselor. I'm going to talk with him about like scholarship and like those things. He also can help me too. (Esin)

Both Esin and Neza mentioned teachers, counselors, and family as being supportive of their future goals. Neza said "I have all the support I need" very confidently. Esin easily rattled off all of the school staff who could help her. When talking about her college career and what

she needed to do to become a pilot, she was unsure what college classes she would need but believed she could talk to a guidance counselor and, “ I will tell them, like, what I want to be. So they can help me choose my classes.” Esin had confidence that there will be people who will help to support her goals, but when I asked her if she had met any female pilots she had not.

For Esin, her best friend, Fatima, and other academically inclined friends were a huge support for her future. She said in the beginning of getting to know each other they talked about the past but “right now we just talk about our future.” Esin felt nervous about going to a nearby state university but felt more confident because of support from friends.

Oh my friends are already there...And my other friends are there. Like I have a lot of friends there too... My best friend wants to go there too. That's why I like to go there too. That's all but I'm gonna go there.

She shared that she had a little bit of knowledge of the process because both of her brothers were already in college. They were both taking a break from the local community college because it was online and they found it hard to engage that way. When it returns in person they will return, she told me. These layers of support and connection were so important for connecting to college possibilities and made Esin’s plan much more detailed and vivid than my other two participants. This highlights that despite the girls conforming in many ways to the individualized system that the school largely provided they leveraged individual supports and collectivist assets.

One of the unique collectivist elements of the school experience was the way the teacher and classes took charge of maintaining the school greenhouse. This was part of what the ELD classes did together that supported the wider school and provided an environment where many students were able to connect to their pasts and feel successful. Working in the greenhouse

allowed for relationship and community building between teacher, and student, students with each other, and students with the wider school. In fact, the ELD class was basically in charge of the school greenhouse and Neza, Esin, and Fatima (Esin's friend) took science students to the greenhouse to show them how everything was done. Not only did the practice of working in the greenhouse build community, it seemed as though the space lowered students' affective filters and allowed for casual conversation while working in the space. In the greenhouse space students spoke casually with me and each other about their case studies.

The girls connected to their past family foodways through participating in the greenhouse. One day Esin picked onions and mint from the garden to be used. Neza got excited and shared a family recipe/memory for how to use the herbs as we took turns smelling them together. Esin said the green onions were good just to eat or to cook. In her family they would grind up the mint and mix it with yogurt and put it on everything. These memories were concrete examples of how these communal school activities in the present allowed students to tap into their pasts for self-efficacy and joy in the present.

The teacher was also particularly enthusiastic in getting the students invested in the space which in turn allowed for the collective to relate to the future in unique ways. Ms. Ivanova brought up climate issues with students, and encouraged them to participate in a compost program, and participate in greenhouse chores. One day, when I arrived, Shula and her best friend in class, Natalie, were coming from the greenhouse while Ms. Ivanova talked to Hanna about the earth being in danger and how their activities contribute to a better future for the earth.

On another day Ms. Ivanova was presenting the beginning of a vowel activity when Esin and Shula came back with plants for use from the greenhouse. Neza gave an example sentence using the target word preserve, "we preserve the planet with plants." Ms. Ivanova clearly liked

this and said, “You know how to put me in a good mood” as Neza congratulated herself by saying “good job, Neza ” to herself. Connecting to the greenhouse, climate change, and the future of the earth was a priority for Ms. Ivanova that students embraced.

### **Language.**

While they did not talk at length about language, it was an important part of their identities that the girls all brought up during our interviews. Their days were so immersed in continual language development that they didn’t bring it up in a lot of circumstances. They primarily talked about the process of learning English.

Each of the girls in this study had a different journey with school, but all were currently at a place where they cared about succeeding, graduating, and moving on to college and saw their past efforts in learning English as one of many skills that would propel them on their paths. For instance, Neza said the process of learning English when she arrived was very difficult and said, “English is weird, miss.” Shula also discussed the ways in which showing up to the U.S. in middle school and not knowing English was incredibly difficult, but learning languages was something she enjoyed and thought that skill will help her in her goal of being a flight attendant. When Esin spoke to her best friend, they mixed languages. She confidently stated, “We speak many languages. So English was easy for us to get it. Like you'd learn it really fast.” She then went on to explain that she spoke her parents’ first language, Farsi, along with Urdu, Hindi, Pashtun, and Punjabi. All of these language experiences were woven into their lives, but were no longer the primary concern in their lives.

This aspect of their identities was another where they had to balance aspects of their identity. In terms of mismatch, the school environment was set up for individuals to use English for success, but for the girls they had to connect to others to build this new language and connect

with others. Their own languages brought them together with new friends and allowed for the maintenance of connection to families.

### **Family and Friends**

All of the young women I interviewed talked at length about the importance of family and family type bonds. While each had different dynamics within those relationships, it was clear that family was important for all of the participants in this study. Their collective identity as understood through familial relationships was essential in their understandings of their own identities, understanding of time, and relationship to their goals. In the case studies explored in this text, the line between family and friend was sometimes blurred and is supported by my own experience teaching in this environment. I would often be introduced to “aunties” and “cousins” who would advocate for students I worked with, who were what I would think of as family friends. These relationships were very interconnected and fit within more of a collectivist framework.

For instance, the first connection I had with Neza was because I already knew her sister. This fostered a natural and immediate dialogue and trust. We had a common bond and that was felt quickly. When I introduced myself to the class, Neza verified that I had been her sister’s teacher and referred to a time when we had met. This was at the apartment complexes when visiting my former student with home visits as a teacher. There were people sitting on porches chatting, kids outside playing, and people with doors open with smells of many different foods wafting out onto the sidewalks.

As I mentioned, in discussing the greenhouse, food was an incredibly important part of collective life for all of the girls and was a particularly strong way of connecting to family. Family relationships and identity were very much tied to food in the stories of the girls. Esin

described the challenges her family faced when moving to the U.S. and navigating the food culture.

At first when we came here it was really hard to understand the language and like the Halal food- where to get chicken? It was hard for us to not go to somewhere to get food. Like we went to [local Kroger chain] - it wasn't Halal food -we didn't know about it. Because in Pakistan everything its Halal. You don't think about anything. In here when we went. It was like a lot. There wasn't any Halal. So it was really hard to find Halal food. So we had to find an Arabic store so we could get meat and Halal things.

For Esin, she recognized the challenges faced by her family as systemic issues, where her collective identity was not supported by the environment. Her family identity and functioning depended on having access to Halal food. Neza mirrored similar concerns about the differences between foods, and how her communal identity and relationship with her family shaped this when she said, “like me growing up seeing my mom I feel like I learned just how to eat healthy food and use natural food, And I don't know- I eat some unhealthy food but she always cook healthy food.” Neza shared that “in Africa the chickens grow natural. Here there are too many ingredients, medicines, chemicals.” But she also said that there was hardship that went with that higher quality of food, “but there you go and carry water on your head, and like it's a big place, and you have to go and make sure it all got watered.” Like Esin, her responses show the ways that the environment in the U.S. creates unique challenges to collective identities around food and family.

Food, family, and friendship were so intertwined that students would often go off campus to engage in community food culture. For example, when walking into campus, Shula and

Natalie yelled to me “hey miss” as they returned from off campus and I crossed the parking lot. They asked if the bell rang. I said I didn’t think so. They asked how I was doing. I asked back and where they went for lunch: To Shula's brother's house. This example illuminates the community feeling of students moving off and on campus and how food with family and in the neighborhood was something that fit into the lives of the girls.

Neza shared with me how when I last met her and her family (when I was teacher to her sister) they had been at the local apartment complex and how important that place was. At the time, this complex was an essential part of the community. There was a huge population of refugees moved to this complex, leading to their enrollment in this school district. Refugee agencies and school employees, including myself, knew that we would go to one of these two nearby apartments when looking for anyone. It was a community hub where children and adults were often found outside socializing and relaxing and you could ask anyone where to find someone and they would help you find them. As both a teacher and a service provider, sometimes we wouldn’t have up-to-date apartment numbers, but if we showed up a young person would take us to the family home. We would often be offered tea and snacks by many people’s families, and have the chance to check in with the community in this way.

Neza said she missed this environment. In her description she mentioned how there would always be a soccer game going outside, and someone’s mom cooking or someone working on a car and it was always fun and something to do. Neza also shared, “I love soccer. It runs in my family.” For her, even though she has faced struggles with playing soccer as a girl, the passion that her whole family had for the sport and her determination to follow her passions had pushed her to pursue soccer clubs as soon as she arrived in the U.S. Now, she reflected sadly, she lived on “the east side” where it was boring and had no other refugees to talk to.

While the community was an important way for some of the students to connect to friendships, others kept and created important friendships remotely. Esin talked at length about her best friend Fatima who shared a lot of identity components, but did not have a shared appreciation for video games. Getting into them gave Esin a way to bond with people far away. “I have another best friend. She lived in Australia...And then we just play games and play with another friend and my sister. We have like a squad. In a game. It's like online game, which we fought that get together like at night.” I asked her more about the game and she shared, “It's called Pub G and we played all the time when we like we fight over the game.” She explained that they would excitedly strategize and tell each other what move to do next. She also added that she had a Saudi friend who was part of this “squad.”

Friendship was important to all the students. All three of the girls in my study talked about the importance of friendship. While Neza talked a lot about having fun with friends she talked even more about not spending time with the wrong people. Shula also said that it was important to be able to trust friends and that sometimes they wouldn't be trustworthy, but did list her ability to give friends good advice as one of her skills, and something important to her. Esin talked at length about the importance of the relationship with her best friend (also from Afghanistan/Pakistan) who shared her identities as a refugee and diligent student determined to do well in school and go to college. “Yeah. Yeah my best friend is [like family] she came from Pakistan too. And we just became friends here and in my family, they don't live here.” In the same breath she explained the importance of her family that lived far away.

Given the distance and disconnect from family far away, building up those friendships and keeping all connections alive was important for each of the girls. Like most teens, friends

were so important, the connections were incredibly strong for these girls, and supportive of other identity factors.

Students talked about the importance of keeping and bringing family together. Neza talked about the fact that her immediate family waited extra time in the resettlement process to ensure they could all travel together. Shula's family also prioritized the immediate family staying together, but one brother was not able to travel with the rest of the family. Esin's journey was actually a result of her father being killed and her mother not feeling safe as a single woman. The surviving members of her immediate family were able to travel together, but every student had loved ones left in their country of origin. Esin talked about the desire to connect to family who were not in the U.S.

They don't live in U.S. But now when the Taliban right, so my, my mother's cousin.

They came here because they were working in the military there. They came here- but they didn't come in this state right now. But we want them to come here. So we can have like a big family together.

The other girls did not discuss specific plans for other people to resettle but instead talked about how their plans for the future could support their home communities.

They each had slightly different relationships with what helping the family looks like. Shula helped the family by working at a fast food restaurant and giving money to the family to pay bills for her family of 10 (she had 2 brothers, 5 sisters, and 1 lived in Africa). Neza worked with her mother on weekends for farmers markets, and in maintaining the home. Esin shared that her mother expected her to excel and focus in school above other responsibilities. She had just recently begun helping at home with cooking and cleaning, and Ramadan was a time when she would help. Esin explained that everyone was busy most of the time. Her mom worked and came

home late, and her brothers also worked and they didn't have much time together, but "in Ramadan, when it's Ramadan, like holy- it's a holy month for us. In Ramadan we all get together to eat." They all contributed to the family and used this time to celebrate.

Of course, as teenagers navigating teen life there were absolutely differences in the ways family members were regarded. Shula said that she felt close to her whole family, but when asked about sharing important or delicate information Shula says she can tell her mother important things but not her dad because "he can't keep his mouth shut- he would tell the whole family." Shula shared that her dad set a lot of rules for her and this was illustrated when she shared that she wanted to go to homecoming, but dad wanted her home by 10. She was unimpressed with this curfew. Esin had a hard time relating to her biological sister and said her sister was not friendly, only had one friend, and didn't want to cook. Esin had a difficult time relating to these personality traits. Despite this love and connection extended to all family and near-family from her.

### **Matrilineal history.**

FTP primarily refers to an understanding of the past and future from a given moment in time, and for all of the girls their understanding of those was largely shaped by their mothers and grandmothers. All of the girls spoke knowingly about the experiences of their mothers, grandmothers, and women from their communities, and in many cases made connections to gendered expectations and gendering in the world around them. Connecting to the knowledge of their mothers was important for each of the girls particularly in making sense of the past, and for planning their futures. Their extensions to the past included family memory of their mothers' and grandmothers' lives.

Shula felt comfortable speaking about delicate things with her mother, and talked about how important she was to the family. Esin also spoke very movingly about the commitment her mother had to the family and the way she brought them to the U.S. to have a better, safer life. Neza spoke at length about her abiding admiration for her mother and the way she adapted from life in Africa to the U.S. saying, “Like, she's always a learner” in all of the organic agricultural work that she does. Neza’s mom worked at a local Mexican food distributor packing food and had a plot of land and sold many vegetables. She did in Africa, too. Neza talked at length about her mother’s love of gardening, healthy food, and sharing that food. This made Neza love it, too, and she and her brother helped harvest cucumber, peppers, and other vegetables to help mom with this side job.

In the following poem Neza elaborated on what she saw from her mother.

**A person who pretends to be**

A person who would pretend to be

Strong when she is hurt

A person who would pretend to be

Happy when she is sad

A person who would look

Happy when she wants to cry

A person who would

Look hopeful when she is hopeless

A person who would

Work hard for you non stop

The person is your mom.

As you can see in the poem and the comments from the girls, they all had a very connected and empathetic understanding of their mothers. The understanding of the motivation and sacrifices of their mothers demonstrated the strength of that connection. Esin spoke knowingly about the time after her dad passed away in Pakistan: “It's like kind of dangerous to live by yourself, like, as a mother. So that's why we came here.” She spoke at length about how her mother wasn't allowed to go to school as a child in Afghanistan, and made it a priority for all of her kids to go to school. These stories and experiences made it clear that Esin had a close relationship to her mother where she was allowed to know exactly why choices were made, and the gendered struggles her mother went through.

For Esin, it was her mother's generation that missed out on school, but it was more present for Shula. Shula actually missed out on school for some of the time in Burundi. When making difficult decisions on who went to school in Burundi, Shula's brothers were prioritized. As Shula described, school in Burundi costs money, and parents with many children could not always pay for all of the children to go. She spoke with great empathy for the difficulty that her family faced to afford basic needs, and expressed gratitude for living somewhere where school is free and comes with free food.

Shula also referred to women in her family story who had inspired her. As I mentioned, Shula wanted to be a flight attendant largely because of her grandmother's experiences. She connected to the stories her grandmother shared of being a flight attendant in airlines in the Congo, and proudly shared about how Congo used to be glamorous, and her grandma got to see so many amazing things. Shula wanted to see and do the things her grandmother had done.

Neza also broke down gender challenges she saw in both Africa and the U.S. She said in Africa “they don't expect a lot from women, just have kids, cook, clean and sleep.” She said she

has seen similarly low expectations in the U.S. in some cases, but at least women here are not expected to be married early, and you can see women in many jobs. She explained that she was lucky that when she first moved here, her mom was worried about her doing stuff that boys do, but that her dad was very supportive and she was able to show her mom about the possibilities for girls to do anything boys do. Neza circled back to talking about how in Africa older men would marry younger women because the man would have his life together, want kids and try to marry a girl right out of high school. She reiterated the home-bound expectation of women, but transitioned to say, “That's why I am so glad now, our president back in Tanzania. It's a woman. And it's a big surprise to people... She can also be a president, even though she's a woman.” Neza recognized that there was pressure around the role and that not only does the president have to do as well as a man but that, “she have to work extra hard... there's so much to prove. When you're a woman when you take over a man's job.”

Neza was so thoughtful and passionate about this subject and from thinking about the condition of women in Africa said, “I feel like this here too. People- like- women get disrespected taking over men's job.” She pointed out that women have to work twice as hard to prove themselves, but that there are more opportunities here to do so. She was happy that she was not going to be forced to get married at a young age and said, “I just love we have so much opportunities opened. We just have to go for it. Like, if you're born in Africa this is a big opportunity to be here.”

In talking about her soccer playing, Neza unpacked a lot about her identity. She spoke about a young girl from Africa who saw her playing and wanted to play soccer too, but her parents wouldn't let her. Neza said: “Like someone really need to sit down and lay out African parents like, - whatever a guy can do. Trusting girls too they can do. Like, we are that powerful

team that can do some stuff." When I asked her about how her parents respond to her soccer playing she responded by saying that her dad was quick to get on board with her playing, but her mom thought it was for boys or men. She said, "my mom was worried" and "I showed her, like, mom I can do this. Like we are in a whole different country, like here you see kids- girls grown from 3-5, to 10- 20 playing soccer." She recognized that this was a big mental shift for her mom who had grown up with, "this whole mentality says soccer is only for guys-for men." Neza continued talking about how expectations for guys and girls were so different in general. She expressed concern about the possibility of failing and disappointing by not exceeding expectations and rested on the question, "Yeah, they really expect so much from guys than girls, what do they expect from girls?"

In this discussion, Neza unfolded complicated feelings about gender, nationality, and generational expectations. I could hear her struggle with the conversations she had with her mother, attempting to convince her, and empathy for how her mother had been in a context that taught her those expectations. She continued to use the word expectation, and highlighted how little she felt girls get support for doing things outside of marriage and home-making.

Throughout the study, all of the girls connected with their moms' stories as part of their sense-making of gender and personal case studies. They also connected to other women in the community and culture. These connections were essential to the way they conceived of themselves and their futures.

### **Homeland and Familial time/collective past**

Each of the girls discussed homeland, nationality, race, ethnicities, and refugee experience intertwined, with overlaps of different times and spaces in their explanation. Most conversations I had with the girls were very much like tapestries, weaving together different

components to create a tapestry of their thinking, familial memory, and memories of collective past.

An identity that was very much connected to collectivism was racial identity. The student who had the most to say about her racial identity was Neza. When I asked Neza about her most important identities, she responded, “Black. And I feel like I’m smart but I don’t focus like I’m supposed to. And I stay away from people that I just feel like they’re a bad example. I try to survive.” As you can see in this passage after identifying black as an important part of her identity, she jumped to explain her intelligence, the types of associations she keeps, and survival. Although I could have followed up on any of those associations, I wanted to get more at what blackness meant to her. When I asked how being black influenced her life, she started by saying,

If we come to a place where we don't have no more food here, like I understand that because I have experienced it. I know how it feels. Yeah. So like, also working hard is not a surprise thing. Because I grew up seeing my parents working hard and waking up every 5 am going, coming back to work to provide for us like, yeah, also just keep my head up. (Neza)

For her, she clearly drew a strong connection between black identity, hard work and survival. Being black meant hard work, but also perseverance and strength. She went on to explain that it has been difficult to learn to keep going, using the example of playing soccer and saying,

And I'm just the only black girl right? I've heard a lot of things on the sideline. Me being black taught me to always keep my head up. I try this [being quiet] to ignore what's been talked on the sideline, being called that black girl on the team it's so messed up. But I just

be taught, like to keep my head up through anything. And just learn how to keep calm.  
And don't just react on anything. (Neza)

For her, being black has meant learning how to always keep her cool, even when dealing with things that are truly “messed up.” She found a way to tap into pride despite hostility. In these different passages, Neza layers her intersectional identities in a complex way and ties her race to her refugee experience, her family history, and her identity as an athlete. She processes her race as something that has both been a point of challenge for her, but also as an identity that has made her stronger. She seemingly is able to access this strength through reference to her family history and her FTP extension to the familial past, to inform both her achievement oriented, and emotion oriented future goals.

An interesting finding that I had not attended to in my research planning was the concept of home as the ancestral land of parents to the refugee girls. In looking at their past extension, their connection to the past actually reaches beyond their own lifespans. It depends on the collectivity of their family and a shared story of homeland as the place the family lived for an extended time. This concept was brought to my attention in reporting on the current conflict in Gaza, wherein Palestinians are being systematically driven from places that in many cases still don't feel like home because of an ancestral connection to another place in the region that their family had already been driven out of possibly before the birth of the interviewee. This story highlighted the concept of ancestral memory and kinship as belonging (Denby, 2023).

In one of the stories that piqued my interest, people shared the family memories as their own extension into the past. One Palestinian poet said, “I've gotten to enjoy how memory lives on in my parents and how it returns as if it is a living thing” and makes it clear that he isn't just talking about the idea of generational trauma, but rather “Even when we're silent or when the -

that particular language of that memory is no longer spoken, it lives in us” (Joudah in Denby, 2023).

This perspective provided another layer to better analyze data that I had in speaking with the girls in this study. In the process of analyzing and reflecting on the observations, student work, and interviews shared below, along with a “thinking with theory approach” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, where I connected the data to emergent theories around me, I saw something interesting emerge. In looking at the data, I realized that there wasn’t a good cut not only for intersectional identity categories, but also for time to cut memory into. When the girls talked about the future, they often were not just talking about the future, they were talking about the present, the past, and not just a past that they were physically present for, but a familial memory/collective past.

This complexity was well represented through multiple touch points with Shula. Both on her senior Brag sheet and in her interviews, Shula identified leaving Burundi and coming to America as incredibly impactful circumstances in her life, but when she explained those were not in isolation. Shula shared that she was actually born in Congo, but when the war came and she was 5 years old her family moved to Burundi. For her, she had almost no personal memory of Congo, but spoke to the familial memory of the events. The following is an example of Shula telling of her refugee story in three forms. First is a piece of writing she did for a narrative writing assignment given by the teacher prior to my project, the second is an excerpt from an interview she did with me, and the third is another excerpt from another interview where I specifically asked her about the past.

“Living as a refugee camp is difficult” (Shula)

Living in a refugee camp is not that easy. My family and I used to live in Congo when the War started, our life started changing in so many ways. We had to leave Congo and move to Burundi. My siblings and I didn't go to school for almost 3 years because at that time my dad had no job or my mom. It was very difficult for us to get food and clothes. We had to sleep 5 people in one room. It wasn't that easy for girls to sleep in the same room as boys because there were not enough beds for us to sleep on. Last but not least my parents didn't give up on their children, they did their best for us to go to school and get some clothes to wear even though we were not getting new clothes every day. (Shula)

“Actually, we moved to Burundi, because in Congo that we're in, because there was fighting... Hutu and Tutsi- something like that. And then my mom, she's Tutsi- if there's, there's like a family that has a Tutsi in there- They start killing them for no reason. And then my dad say we had to move to Burundi to find another way how we can live. I came with mom, dad, 8 siblings on big bus to Burundi refugee camp”

“My past was like, so difficult. And my siblings and I, we, we didn't go to school in Africa for three years because my dad had no money to pay for us, but here in America it is like free.”

In these passages Shula highlights so many components of her individual identities, collective identities, collective time extension, and connection with the present. Without pause, she highlighted her identity ties to Burundi, Congo, and Tutsi, mother, father, siblings, gender, SES, student and refugee.

Importantly, in two pieces she tied her familial memory to Congo- her home. Shula took the familial memory of her mother's Tutsi identity into her narrative to make sense of the events that happened to her family. Based on her telling of the story, it isn't clear what of this is coming from original memory from her, or of family re-telling. Even if I asked, I am unsure if she would be able to tell me it was an original memory or not. I think this blurry memory, mine/theirs/ancestors, illuminates something more interesting about memory and our understanding of time. While the FTP research I have cited thus far, focuses on the individual, the data from the girls gestures to memory as not purely individual, but also co-constructed. Understanding time in any direction is not an individual endeavor, particularly when collective identity is strong- this is what I'm calling Collective Extension. This Collective Extension to a familial memory of homeland is consistent across the girls' narratives and will be supported with additional research in the coming chapter.

In the passage below, Esin identified Pakistan as where she is "from" but paid special attention to highlighting her familial link to Afghanistan, and the impacts that legacy had on her today and in the future.

So, my parents are from Afghanistan. I am from Pakistan, because I was born and raised there and my school, everything was there. So, I was there for like 13 years and then after that I came here. When I was eight or nine years old, my dad passed away. So, I'm here with my family, my mom and my three brothers and a sister, and my sister-she's a junior and she came here too.

My mom doesn't want us to work. She wants us to like educate and be a better person in our life because, when she was younger, she couldn't go to school because her father didn't let her, he was like, it was really because in Afghanistan it was like, Taliban, and

everything there in her time. So that's why she wanted us to have a better life. But, like her dream. She wanted us to like, make it real. (Esin)

In this passage Esin uncovered so much about her current condition and future plans based on her mother's experience of Afghanistan. She recognized the connection between the Taliban, education, and her mother's dreams for her as a girl from a place with a legacy of female exclusion. In this case, the temporality and space are so essential to understanding Esin's mother, and as a result Esin's identity. Furthermore, in various other interactions I had with Esin, she expressed how important it was to support her family and "people back home" when referring to Afghanistan sometimes and Pakistan other times. "Home" showed up differently for the girls; it wasn't stable but hovered in the past. For Neza and Shula, I heard them talk loosely about being from Africa, interchanged with specific countries, or references to "home."

One day Neza was broadly referring to Africa as "home" and when I asked her to tell me more about home she said:

Home. I was born in a camp where like refugees— like a lot of people live together. Born in a big family, grew up with what parents... You just keep like experiencing people dying of not having enough food, and traveling back to back just because of our days are not safety. Moving places and places and places just go find peace. People getting mistreated just because they're not from that place that they live in. (Neza)

She then elaborated on some of the many moves her family underwent.

Yeah, Rekoma camp. Yeah, yeah, then I had to move to Mutabeeray. After that, that camp got closed down. They know how to move from Tabeera to Nirabusu, which after that is when we became official refugees. Then after that we started getting interviews.

Why, we don't live in our home country, it was- it was a long process, it took probably almost four years for that process to be able for us to come here. (Neza)

In these passages you get a small sense of the turbulence and instability of home, but also that continued tether to a “home country.” The girls each were flexible but consistent in the messaging that home belongs to the family and if it belongs to the family it belongs to them. Their identity as a member of a national identity was founded by a familial Collective Extension to the past. On another occasion Neza was talking about home and said:

Burundi. I'm talking about Burundi because that's where my original - even though I have not been there. My mom told me, they told me, they go, they show me to my grandparents, but I was so little, I really don't remember like I was probably a few months, but it's a poor country, which we have. We have so many stuff that we have big, like a lot of coffee. (Shula)

In this passage it is clear that Neza acknowledges that she has no personal memory of the place she calls home. Because she has no individual memory she calls upon collective memory of world events such as SES and resources to build understanding around her estrangement from her home. This suggests that particularly for collective identities, collective memories, and collective extension to the past may play a huge part in building those.

Family... the first and last thing on the girls minds

Students' expressions of their future time extension varied, but many of them were thinking long term. While family was incredibly important to all of the girls, “starting their own” or pursuing romantic relationships and having their own kids was a very long term, not short term, goal for all of them. In general, the girls were thinking 15 years or so into the future, as

highlighted by all the girls' replies when asked, "How old are you when you think of accomplishing your goals in the future?" and they all replied with an answer like "30-something." They all saw their goals as a long game, with the first part of that game being education, then career, and after that building romantic relationships and kids, across a timeline spanning decades.

Neza also thought about the ways in which she did want to have a family, but not until after she had time to pursue her career goals. At the start of chapter 1 I highlighted a quote from Neza about how she brought together the wisdom from her parents to imagine a better life for herself and future children. When I asked her when she imagined starting this phase of her life, she said in her 30s. Neza thought far back to her early childhood when explaining the past and had ideas about her far future. She was planning out the details of college, knew the path it would take to have the skills to start her own business, and thought out how that business could help her community. When the girls described their far extension into the future, they described career, family goals, and hope.

I asked Neza what she wanted for her future and she said, "Like everything, I really need to say about my future is like I have so many things in my head and I'm just like I'm running out of time." Because Neza had spoken about the future for herself and her own kids, I asked when she saw that happening for her, and she said,

I mean, kids, kids we can have kids at any time. Yeah, it's not really a thing to rush into. Of course have your own house, have your own career, like when you have kids that's your kid. You ever have to take care of them. I feel like- I feel like it's something I really don't put in my mind. Like by the way, do you know how these people- be like by 22, by 25 I'm gonna have a kid? Yeah, I really don't think I am. Yeah, I want to focus on kids.

Neza made it clear that she did not see any reason to hurry into marriage or child rearing and went on to explain that some families where she was from in Burundi would force “kids to get married” and families would “bring the boyfriend to them.” But she was very happy that she, “haven't seen that in my family.” She beamed, “I feel like even if we get married at age of 40 my parents wouldn't mind. That's good, because we don't get forced to get married.” Neza went on to talk about her sister who got a boyfriend and got married right after high school, even though her parents did not tell her to. Neza made an exasperated face and said, “She's now 22. She have two kids.” I noticed her expression and prompted her to keep talking by saying, “I see you making a face....” She took a breath and said, “Yeah, I feel like I'm a kid at 22.”

Neza held on to her familial links, and had a strong imagination of her future family life, but was so clear that she needed time to do these things on a time scale that would put her in a position to put her energy into that family. She reflected clearly on her own level of maturity and capability at different ages and times. In this excerpt she clearly articulates a far-reaching future time perspective and a strong collectivist identity. Her success is tied up in her parents’ success and the success of her future children and grandchildren. Despite having this framework, she also was able to clearly articulate the necessity for her to forge her own path that is different from her sister who married early. Focusing on her education and contributing to communities through her work as a business person is top priority.

Similarly, Shula had a pretty clear vision of the future for herself. She was sure that she wanted to be a flight attendant and knew she wanted to go into a tech school program. She realized that she would need training before fully being able to do the job. She also knew that doing that job was one way to give back to her community and to connect to the memory of her grandmother, a former Congolese flight attendant.

Esin also thought back to early childhood in describing her past. In thinking about the future, she was able to think out the general plan of going to college, training to be a pilot, and tackling that career goal. She did not prioritize having a husband and children right away, either. The refugee and immigrant students I spoke with had big dreams and were taking concrete steps to get themselves (and their families) there.

### **A shared future**

“I just want to be happy and make people happy. That's like the goal.”-Esin

Each of the girls shared a very clear vision of the future that featured them pursuing their own goals in an effort to contribute to their communities. For instance, Esin explained that, “In my country now there is Taliban. So my family needs help, mostly. So I will help them first. And then the other people.” She clarified that she wanted to be a pilot to be able to have enough money to help people, and asked if there was anything else that she really wanted in her future. She said, “I love flying and traveling” and that she would like to ‘have a look other cultures and those things.” but then she returned to her goal to, “help like, poor people.” She continued to explain that her ultimate goal was to have money to help people and explained that when she doesn’t have money for someone who needs it she thinks about how she wants it so she could help. She said “So it's like, kind of my goal, to have a lot of money and help people not like to be rich rich, but to help people

Neza also was very focused on giving back to her homeland when she said, “I just want to grow my own country- Just make a better country.” For instance, Neza shared the ways in which she could envision a bright future for herself that integrated her home culture, the opportunities available to her here in the U.S., and the passions she shares with her family. In multiple instances she shared that her mother’s passion for growing produce, finding healthy

foods, and creating nutritious dishes was essential to her personal identity and a strong connection she had to Africa.

Neza was looking for a program where she could learn about business and accounting so that she can begin a microloan business for farmers, particularly farmers from Africa. She had gone on tours and talked with college officials about getting a soccer scholarship to help fund a college education where she can both play a game she loves and learn a skill that connects to her individual and communal identity.

She also felt a strong connection to her country of origin, where her grandparents still reside. In talking about her dream to do microfinance for small farmers, she explained the complications that necessitate this work. She explained that farmers in her home country, “we don't get rich for that”, (using a collectivist we). she explained, “ I don't know why but like you really need somebody to actually, like, you know, work hard and just try to keep the public [money and goods] inside- it's like let's keep it in our country...” She went on to explain that Rwanda is a “ really a poor country where people die because there's not enough”, but made it clear that she knows that there are structural forces at play keeping people from being financially successful, referencing big companies and politicians.

In this part of her discussion, Neza demonstrated a complicated understanding of her individualistic and communal identities. She does feel connected to the U.S. and the opportunities here, but also feels a responsibility to give back to her country of origin because she knows people are taken advantage of. She also demonstrates a complicated conception of time and place.

Like Neza, Shula also was very clear that she believed that making money to give to the people of Africa is an essential part of her future. For instance, Shula's time extension went far

back into her own past and into her future. She recalled her early childhood memories of migration, and even tapped into the collective memories her grandmother shared of being a flight attendant for an airline based out of Congo, before Shula was alive. Shula also thought a great deal about giving back and said, “I certainly want to be able to you know, to help people about everything, and money to give to people in Africa.” I checked for understanding and she clarified that supporting people in her country was, “the most important thing.” She explained why by saying, “I mean people die every day. Like we losing people. There's always this war, back to back and it's just people dying now. Have been now for ages.” She expressed frustration and asked why people would kill when, “it's like we have literally like big places we could grow stuff.” She went on to question why people fighting would “keep your home except the people.” She wanted to help make the most of her home.

#### Life Poem

I realized that to live more,

I had to be less afraid,

I did it,

I lost my fear,

And gained my whole life

Each of the girls focused primarily on their hopefulness for the future and most of their reference to struggle was in the past. However, they recognized possible roadblocks when I specifically asked and in their work. As you see in the “Life Poem,” Shula took the challenges from the past and turned away from fear, referencing past, present, and future seamlessly. The student is powerfully moving through the challenging emotion that is carried with her from the past. Similarly, when I asked Neza what challenges could get in her way she said,

Of course there's challenges. Challenge is what makes you strong enough to keeps you going, because if you get everything easy without challenge- life itself is a challenge. Like, if you don't like handed things like this, it makes you smarter. Makes you do big things. (Neza)

Rather than identifying specific challenges in the future, Neza celebrated that she has already faced challenges that help her be prepared for whatever comes her way. She felt “smarter” because of the hardship that she faced. Shula similarly identified the challenges she had faced as character building, and expressed that she knew life would continue to have challenges. Out of all of the girls, she seemed the least sure or single minded about the direction of her future, but did talk about the importance of using her life experience to get better. In each of these examples, the girls’ FTP extensions to the past assisted in their ability to extend to the future.

Shine

The sun shine everyday

We should shine like a sun

Every day is a new day

Think big

Do big

Dream big

Work hard.

While Esin also talked about the challenges that she and her family faced, she was thoughtful of the challenges right in front of her and maintained a hopeful vision of the future.

As you can see in the poem above, she was very optimistic and felt that she could take each day's challenges on. Esin, Shula and Neza would also return to positive affirmations, that would recenter them in moving toward the goal of giving back to their communities.

In this chapter the girls have shown the ways in which they understand school responsibilities as part of and in relationship with the constellation of their case studies and identities. They shared the ways that their collective identities are essential in their life plans for school, the ways people help them in school and the shortcomings of individualism at school. They shared their journeys in navigating language and culture and how essential family and friends are in creating both identity but a sense of time and space. How they perceived their own histories was deeply tied to relationships with their mothers in particular, and included memories sometimes beyond the scope of their own individual memories. Their sense of home was informed by collective memories, and while family was important they were not prioritizing marriage and children for themselves until the far future. They were most committed to giving back to their communities.

## Chapter 6: Discussion & Conclusion

The girls in this study have inspired me, encouraged different possibilities for thinking about education for refugee girls, and offered information that complicates FTP and SST. For one, FTP and SST were created with the individual as the default unit of analysis. This is, at least in part, an outgrowth of enlightenment humanist traditions (St. Pierre, 2000). Strong individualism was not reflective of the girls' identities in this study. I also grappled with a latent assumption in these bodies of research that two things can't be true at once and discomfort with coexisting simultaneous truths. I think this is grounded in the enlightenment humanist desire to "find out exactly what is going on" (St. Pierre, 2000) rather than engage with the differences and complexities ever-present in existence. Complex thinking is required to make sense of the weaving of time, space, and identity for these young women, which they exemplified with their own words, writing, actions, and expressions of their communities. For this study, critical and poststructural feminist critiques opened questions and avenues for thinking through these expressions and the implications on FTP and SST.

In the following I will elaborate on the limitations of the study, responses to research questions, and directions for future research. As I highlighted throughout chapters 4 and 5 and in response to RQ1, the girls' FTPs extended well into adulthood, as well as into their far pasts. Furthermore, I assert that they engaged with a Collective Time Extension, wherein they drew upon the collective memories of their kin and communities. In order to articulate this idea, I chose to add research on the concept of Mental Time Travel that I conducted after gathering and beginning data analysis. In response to RQ2, the girls' intersectional identities were woven into their case studies and explanations of their FTPs. They brought up race, gender, nationality, academic, and collective identities throughout the study. As I hypothesized in response to RQ3,

the girls did identify with strong collective identities, but that did not prevent them from navigating individualistic expectations.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Despite the questions that this research addresses in regards to working with refugee girls in schools, and in FTP/SST research, there are limitations to this study. The small sample size limits the possibility of generalizability of this study to research about and with refugee students. From the outset, I did not aspire to generalizability, but rather to elevate the voices of students whose voices are not always heard and do a preliminary probe to see if further research should be done with this population in FTP and SST. In order to clearly address my research questions, adopting a case study focus allowed for more clarity and precision in addressing the topics. The students in my study were from refugee backgrounds, primarily South Asia/Middle East and east Africa, and therefore generalizable claims about all refugees cannot be extrapolated from this study. Generalizable claims about these locations could not be made based on these case studies either. The point is not generalizability, but rather to introduce possibilities for how we might expand discussions, questions, and improve tools in education for refugees and research on FTP.

Furthermore, these stories are strongly bounded by place and time. This school, like all across the U.S., had undergone a particular time of crisis in light of the pandemic. I can never know how these students would have responded if they were not still living in a pandemic at the time of the study, particularly given that I was curious about how the dramatic events in a refugee student's life would shift their FTPs. Had this study been done before this particular crisis in the U.S., it stands to reason that the data could have turned out very differently and since we are still learning more about the impacts of COVID-19, the idea of generalizability is even further from possibility. The impacts of COVID-19, racial violence, the capitol insurrection, and

the uncertainty of school structure caused by much of this could all be considered traumatic events. Given this, having the opportunity to interview students and ask them about how these events have further shaped their thinking was important, and may make this study unique.

This was also not longitudinal and would have surely yielded different results if I had collected information about the girls over the course of a year, rather than over the course of a month. Instead, this is a moment-in-time research project capturing how they saw their case studies, identities, and FTP during one month of their lives rather than over time. While the results may look different, I do not think that their expressions should be discounted. I learned a great deal about what mattered to them and found that worthwhile in itself.

Finally, the questions I asked, the things I found worth noting, and the nuances of the work I took an interest in are particular to the theoretical lens I adopted and my own positionality. A small tweaking of the questions I asked would have provided different data. I also chose to narrow the findings to three girls rather than search for broader themes or focus on more students who were present. There are many opportunities for more questions to be asked through different lenses.

Despite these limitations this study offers two primary contributions. One, the voices of this group of girls have been amplified and raise questions for what information should be centered in working with refugee youth. Second, these voices raise large questions within the frameworks of FTP and SST. The combination of the girls' identities when these were applied showed important gaps in their functioning worth pursuing. Furthermore, this research has led me to develop the term Collective Time Extension in order to describe some of the gaps I saw in the FTP and SST research.

## RQ1 and RQ2: Collective Time Extension

At the outset, in RQ1 I asked “When students are describing their case studies, what their Future Time Perspective extension is and what is the content of their goals?” In this research I discovered a multilayered answer to this, including answers I did not anticipate. The girls had rich descriptions of the way they saw their lives through the lenses of their gender, national, ethnic, and collective identities. I had anticipated cultural mismatch in terms of them being part of a system that was not designed for an “unknowable future,” and while the system had its flaws, they navigated the unknowable with clear goals and some steps for how to get there, founded in their understandings of their identities.

In response to RQ 2 and how the girls’ intersectional identities were present in their case studies and FTP, I found that the identities were layered into their descriptions, work samples, and observable behavior. The girls brought up race, gender, nationality, academic, and collective identities throughout the study. Furthermore, the girls not only had a combination of a near and far extension into the future, but also an extension into the past that was beyond their own individual, first-hand experience— I’m calling this Collective Time Extension. Collective Time Extension could be an important concept in improving education theories regarding refugees. According to Burns, Martin, and Collie (2021), students with a more extended FTP are likely to be more engaged in academics over time. With this finding in mind, and evidence from the present study, the extension into both the future and the past for the refugee girls seemed to be a protective factor for them academically. This protective factor is likely helped, not hindered, by collective identity.

This concept of Collective Time Extension, and the protective element of collective identity is supported by Qin’s concept of “shield of ethnicity” which relies on girls having

developed identities related to specific imagined communities (Norton, 2016; Qin, 2009). It supposes that girls imagine themselves as part of a community of people with similar ethnic backgrounds and value that community to the point that they associate it with their identity. One important aspect of shields of ethnicity is that it points to the ways in which having a strong collective identity is an asset for the futures of the young people rather than a detriment to be overcome. This is also essential to the concept of Collective Time Extension.

The girls in this study were plugged into their collective identities and their connections to their families were present in most conversations I had with them. Collectivity was both motivating and formative for them. They were driven to try hard in school and set goals for the future largely because of this collective identity.

The theory of shields of ethnicity doesn't account for the temporal aspect of identities outside of gender and collectivity. It holds a binary view of gender that the girls in the study pushed up against, most notably Neza who fought to play soccer. This difficulty is reflective of the mismatch I outlined as mismatch 3 about gendered identities.

Furthermore, a large component of shields of identity was based on heteronormative expectations that were not as present in my research. The girls in my study did not rely on heteronormative rules for themselves about needing a husband to be a contributing part of the family and community. My addition to the theories I employed is Collective Time Extension is inclusive of familial support that does not depend on binary gender and could draw upon shields of ethnicity as well as the following.

The fields that I see adding nuance and texture to understandings of time within the concept of Collective Time Extension could include research on extended understandings of the mind. For example, in recent years there has been emerging, but still inconclusive, research on

the concept of shared historical trauma and the physiological impacts that are passed down, called epigenetics (Dias & Ressler, 2014; Ghahari, 2023; Heijmans et al, 2008; Horsthemke, 2018; Kellermann, 2013; Pembrey, 2018; Spinney, 2021). Fields grounded in social justice and liberation (Edelman, 2004; Halberstam, 2005; Munoz, 2009; Springgay & Truman, 2019), focused on disrupting normative approaches to understanding time and encountering time in a non-linear way, are also very promising (Ivey, 2021, p. 57). Indigenous futurities, which focus on decolonization and press for the imagining of possible futures that are outside of the settler colonial paradigm are also important lenses (Dillon, 2012; Ivey, 2021; Tuck & Yang, 2014; Whitehead, 2017). Critical black authors who push for varied ways to look at time, including ideas like Afrofuturism, are also important for doing textured intersectional studies of time (Brown & Imarisha, 2015; Eshun 2003; Kilgore, 2014; Womack 2013;). Afrofuturism is the “ontological belief that change is possible and life does not have to be as it is currently” (Bennett, 2016 in Ivey, 2021, p. 59). This is a very promising theory to approach work with refugee girls, given that the girls in this project were very interested in the possibilities for the future.

### **Mental Time Travel Research**

The research that is most theoretically aligned to the psychology model of FTP and SST is work that emerged throughout the late 2000s to the present on Mental Time Travel or the field of study on the ways that “remembering the past and imagining the future are intimately connected” (Merck et al., 2016, p.284). I added this body of research after analysis, when I recognized how much the girls described different time periods in a given conversation or encounter. When I found that memory and future were consistently tied together in the narratives the girls shared I sought out additional research to add depth to the FTP research.. For the girls,

and throughout Mental Time Travel work, rich memory could be linked with an ability to “mentally time travel” to the future with similarly rich detail. The evidence for a strong connection between memories of the past and “memories of the future” has existed since 1985 with the publishing of “Memory of the future: an essay on the temporal organization of conscious awareness” by D.H. Ingvar. Ingvar (1985) laid out a strong argument regarding evidence for similar brain functions for memory of the past, as well as the way we create possible stories for our futures. The author argued that humans essentially have to remember short and long range plans for the future. While Ingvar does argue for a linear conception of time, he also posits that:

The interaction between the neuronal machinery for past/present/future defy even a crude description. It appears that it is from this interaction that consciousness takes its origin. The brain cannot produce normal conscious awareness without the “self” having ‘total’ (1985, p. 133).

In this same article, Ingvar argues that temporal structure, or serial information of our sensory input, is essential for meaning making and that in thinking about the future we refer to and build serial concepts for the future (1985, p. 134). For the girls in this study, the concepts of FTP on its own did not explain enough of the way the girls talked about many time periods all together. After initial analysis I researched Mental Time Travel to explain the fact that the linear, segmented, time explanation doesn’t necessarily work for describing the ways that the girls spoke of past, present, and future as existing simultaneously. This work done in this field should be referenced in future work with refugee students because the field has grown with important additions to Ingvar’s early concepts.

Subsequent research in Mental Time Travel is building upon the foundational ideas presented by Ingvar. Mental Time Travel was developed to add more nuance and detail (Michaelian et al., 2016). Theorists have long considered the importance of episodic memory for future thinking, but are now also looking at somatic memory as another link between past, present and future Mental Time Travel (Szpunar et al., 2016). Neuroscientists researching Mental Time Travel are laying out the important ways people build these mental connections (Michaelian et al., 2016).

However, Mental Time Travel does not include collectivity and recent research on Collective Mental Time Travel is a stimulating move toward the type of scholarship that more robustly explains the expressions of the girls in this study. Topcu and Hirst (2022) lay out Mental Time Travel as both *personal and collective* by identifying an array of research on collective cognition. *Collective* Mental Time Travel may be a better tool for understanding participants with collective identities.

In addition to Collective Mental Time Travel, fields like Collective Memory Studies and transnational studies should be integrated into research on Collective Time Extension (Gutman et al., 2010; Hirst et al., 2018). These approaches attempt to bridge the gap between the disparate fields of collective memory, Future Time Perspective, and Mental Time Travel by pointing at the ways in which future thinking and episodic thinking are linked in the brain, and collectivity is an essential consideration (Merck et al, 2016). Particularly in the field of transnational studies (Gutman et al., 2010; Levy, 2010), there is an important understanding in the way memory is called upon in understanding how transnational people behave across contexts. Gutman and colleagues also brought into focus the way that looking to the past can be perceived as limiting

progress (2010), but, like I point out in this study, we should understand the connections between past, present, and future.

The data from the girls aligns with these theories in the ways that they told their own stories and explanations of their thinking. They were able to articulate the layers and complications of identity and time weaving and how their elements influenced each other. First, the girls did have time extension into the distant future with relative clarity. They identified careers, steps for how to get there, and potential pitfalls. As we saw with the girls' explanations, they knew that in order to achieve their dreams in the future they needed to do well in school, do the FAFSA, go to college, and connect with experts to support them. They also knew that this dream served not only their family, but their whole community. Importantly, they realized that they were part of a community and needed support on many parts of their processes and offered insight to others. They took school seriously and advocated for their education in the present, with the future in mind. But the future was not enough, it was only part of the picture. The far past played an essential role in their FTPs. While some of the more difficult details of their past were not shared with great detail, the impact of the events was explained as instrumental to their life trajectories. Importantly, "Mental time travel highlights the evidence that episodic memory, too, is better conceived as a conscious act of construction, rather than a faithful re-enactment of the past" (Suddendorf et al., 2009, p. 1317). So it does not matter how "accurately" the girls told their stories, but how they made meaning out of the stories (Schacter & Addis, 2007; Szupunar et al., 2018).

The importance of meaning making over accuracy supports the ways that the girls' told their refugee migration stories, along with happy memories of spending time with loved ones and going to school with the inclusion of details from the perspectives of family members. This

suggests that particularly for collective identities, collective memories and Collective Time Extension to the past may play a huge part in constructing the elements of Mental Time Travel.

Thinking about mismatch 2 education for an unknowable future, and applying the concepts of Mental Time Travel and Collective Time Extension to the girls' stories provides some interesting insights. While the girls spoke of the challenges of the past and present, this did not stop them from imagining possible futures. In fact, the challenges they had faced seemed to help them understand that life is not predictable, but that they could persevere through incredibly challenging situations. Neza articulated this clearly when talking about how her family, family memory, experience, and her racial identity gave her unique tools to take on whatever comes her way as an adult and future parent. While the nature of the past has led to very unstable circumstances, the girls were able to make sense of it all and come up with contingency plans. They had clear ideas, but not rigid ones, for their present and future, which drew on individual and shared memories.

### **Challenging the FTP research**

The findings in this study challenge some of the tenets of foundational research of FTP and SST and the questions about intersectional identities should drive more robust theories. For instance, TP research broadly still often uses the ZTPI (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). As reviewed in the literature (Orosz et al., 2017), this scale is embedded with questions that have enlightenment humanist value-laden labels of different orientations of time. The design of the inventory not only presents the past, present and future in opposition to one another, but also highly prioritizes the future as more positive than the present or past. See figure 2 presented in Chapter 2 pg. 51.

In the ZTPI, Zimbardo positioned the past as either negative or positive, the present as hedonistic or fatalistic, and only one category for a neutral future (Orosz et al., 2017). The shocking thing about this scale is the idea of a value neutral FTP, when the past and present are labeled in such value laden ways. This is not to mention that the items are highly culturally dependent on ideas of deadlines, obligations, and progress for the future. The implication of this neutrality is that people aren't having complicated associations with the future outside of the idea of "progress." In the neutral framing of the future on the ZTPI, it almost asks the reader to assume the humanist assumption of the future as positive because of that idea that the future is progress. None of the items in the ZTPI are about looking forward to pleasant times with loved ones or engaging in meaningful activities in the future. This makes the scale not particularly useful for the girls in this study. This is likely why there have been attempts to recreate the scale for different cultures (Siracova et al., 2014). I would argue, though, that as long as these value heavy concepts are foundational to the adapted scales' theory, they are going to miss important information about diverse participants. I would argue that a survey alone would not be sufficient to capture a range of information, about participants, but an improved survey would be one improved component of a broader project. Genuine attempts to capture the feelings of the participants are important if more meaningful data is to be collected, and more expansive ideas about FTP are to be understood.

What the girls were doing in the present was not something that I would describe as either "hedonistic" or "fatalistic" as described in the ZTPI scale (Orosz et al., 2017). While they did occasionally express the realization that some things might be out of their control, "fatalistic" seems too strong of a word to describe this for students who simultaneously believed that they could make the most of their lives by working hard and making the most of what was available

to them. The terms hedonistic and fatalistic are heavy with negative philosophical connotations that make it shocking to pose as the only ways to engage with the present. Even when students talked about past “negatives” or “positives,” they were able to engage in sense-making around those feelings. Furthermore, this scale misses an essential component: Collectivity. The girls were doing what they were doing with other people that they were in community with. There was shared control over their lives, and shared outputs.

This has implications for SST research, which puts achievement goals in opposition to emotional goals. The girls in this study expertly held both of these types of goals at once. Furthermore, this body of research suggested that traumatic events would likely shorten time perspective and as a result have individuals focus more on emotional goals. However, trauma didn’t come up in the way I thought it could have. For girls who have been both through refugee experiences and a dramatic pandemic, I thought there was a good chance that they would have more to say about the pandemic, but it only came up in the context of how it was still impacting practices that were still present during the study. My study suggests that the girls’ collective identity impacts these goals, and as such they were possibly not as prone to the impact of the traumatic events they were facing on their SST goals.

Research needs to move away from the future narrative perspective which frames past orientation as depressive or pathologized and move toward emerging research on future thinking, which suggests that the cognitive tools for memory and future thinking are largely the same tools. A rich memory of the past can lead to a rich envisioning of the future. Future thinking is the sensemaking of the totality of a person’s life and connections at a given point in time. It is not devoid of history and connection beyond our own individual brains. Our past, present, and future are with us and make us better at making future inferences.

Further, our thinking, and seemingly the girls' thinking about the past, may not just be about us as individuals. Instead, depending on a complex network of intersectional identities, our FTPs may be highly influenced by our collective identities. In this paper I suggest that strong collective identity could point to something I call Collective Time Extension, which impacts the present, as well as future extension.

It is my hope that the research that I presented in this paper can open dialogue about the ways in which past, present, and future should not be considered valuable in and of themselves, but rather for how they are being taken up. Furthermore, this research suggests that more probing should be considered in SST's emotional and achievement goals in teen refugee girls from collectivist cultures. The girls in this study seamlessly presented perspectives of the past influencing their current actions that they saw as leading to imagined futures in community with others.

### RQ3: Educational matches and mismatches

As I hypothesized at the beginning of the study, the girls did identify with strong collective identities, but that did not prevent them from navigating individualistic expectations. While much of the school environment remains individualistic, there were moves made by the teacher and other school staff to help students be supported in the environment. More importantly, the girls and their families were able to incorporate these orientations that are sometimes at odds with one another. Despite this, there are many opportunities where advocacy and support for students and families in school and the community would be very beneficial.

Previous research demonstrated the ways in which immigrant girls' success is highly contingent upon the idea of a successful future self, both individually and collectively. Qin-Hilliard discussed the ways in which parents support girls' education, partially because of the

belief that it will help the family in the long run (2003). Girls and families in the Zhou and Bankston study also expressed a strong belief that education in the U.S. is tied to better economic futures (2001). Girls were encouraged to do well in school because they would be able to better contribute to their future families. Put so bluntly, that gendered and economic message may come across as cynical, but in my research I found no cynicism, but clear eyed and savvy navigation of the different systems the girls lived within. Messages about the American dream were not only supported by parents, but also by the school. These girls believed that if they worked hard and made sacrifices in school, they would be able to go to college and navigate themselves into a life that they and their families desired. This finding can be tied back to Norton's concept of investment in education (Norton, 2013). Girls saw making specific choices in the moment as necessary in order to achieve academic success and as an investment in their imagined future selves. More than this, though, they built a familial extension into the past to conceptualize their choices and understand that all things, including struggles, are temporary.

The concept of imagined communities can also be applied here, because those past, present, and future selves were situated in the imagined community of working America, but equally as part of the African or South Asian/Middle Eastern diaspora. The girls in this study aligned with findings in previous research (Miyazawa, 2017; Qin-Hilliard, 2003; Qin, 2009; Zhou & Bankston, 2002) that showed the importance of both cultural heritage and integration into a new community for academic success. Each of the girls talked about how important it was to navigate both.

### **Directions for Future research**

In all, my study with the girls aligned well with existing research on gendered immigration, but had much less alignment when it came to the psychological frameworks FTP

and SST. The research with the girls suggested possibilities for investigating Collective Time Extension, a deeper investigation into inclusive psychological frameworks, and more research with people from diverse intersectional identities.

One avenue for future research is to further investigate FTP and identity with other groups of refugee and migrant students. After more descriptive studies, this work can be longitudinally engaged in ELD classrooms like it is beginning to do in mainstream classes (Burns et al., 2021). Furthermore, there are implications for future interventions that could support the identities and FTP of refugee students.

To learn more about refugee girls and get more nuanced and rich case studies expressed, a wider breadth of methods should be used. Arts-based methods such as painting/drawing (Feen-Calligan et al., 2020; Rowe et al., 2017), digital storytelling (Gilhooly & Lee, 2014; Omerbašić, 2015), as well as oral and written storytelling (Storycenter, 2021), have been very successful with refugee groups. This was not a therapeutic project, but other projects that do therapeutic work with refugees of all ages are often done with arts and storytelling because of the ways in which these mediums allow for a wide range of expression and communication (Dieterich-Hartwell & Koch, 2017; McKay & Bradley, 2016). Community programs (Harvesting Hunger, 2021; Refugee Art & Voice, 2021) that have been successful with refugees have included art therapy and writing projects.

There is a need to improve service, support, and research which can be inclusive of communities and families of students to better understand collectivity. Importantly, this research should continue to be asset-focused rather than damage-centered (Tuck, 2009). It was not within the scope of this study to interview families and community members, but future research may consider those extensions of refugee students when designing studies and interventions.

There is a major need in FTP to adjust language thinking and tools as I discussed in relation to RQ1 and RQ2. While the studies I drew upon for FTP (Carstensen, 1992; 1995; Charles & Carstensen, 2007; Fung & Carstensen, 2001) do not draw on the ZTPI, much research in the wider field does, and there are latent assumptions across the discipline that need attention. For researchers who are still using the ZTPI, serious questions should be asked about the moralizing categories for the time periods, for a start. For FTP researchers who are using the Carstensen and Lang scale, more attention into how the past and present play into future thinking is a next step. What types of questions could be developed that are more inclusive of the differing ways people integrate past and present into future imagining? A further direction could be to reimagine the ZTPI and questions with ones that are more neutral, and in partnership with people studying time in the target culture.

Furthermore, there are opportunities to do research with a broader swath of participants across all FTP research. Adolescents, especially ones who have experienced potentially traumatic events but have persevered, are an area of research which warrants attention. How can researchers balance support for processing trauma without eliding the important ways students make meaning of every aspect of their past to plan for the future? Researchers need to attend to these questions in ways that avoid damage-centered narratives (Tuck, 2009). Intersectional analysis that embraces the nuances of different identity components will be ideal additional research.

There is also a need to investigate programs that are highly effective at leveraging collective identity strengths among refugee and immigrant communities are also needed as evident by the girls building identity based on extension to shared memory and collective

memory. This is an example of what I call Collective Time Extension, which is the using of collective memory or collective thinking in extending into the past or the future.

As I have discussed, education for unknowable futures for refugee students is a sound principle. To support this idea I would recommend research and programming that aims for education for flexible possibilities. As researchers I suggest we look into best ways to continue to help educators support students to plan with flexibility in mind, a skill I would argue the girls in this study were already honing.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined the FTP as explained through the intersectional experiences of Neza, Shula, and Esin. All revealed important aspects of their case studies and in the process shared complex understandings of their FTP and intersectional identities. I analyzed their stories as presented in observation, semi-structured interviews, and work samples using a critical feminist lens and the theories of FTP and SST. I found that they did have significant FTP extension into the far future and far past. They showed complicated navigation of memory of the past and future in order to orient their present lives in ways that were partially consistent with SST. They did have achievement oriented goals, but these goals were very much enmeshed with emotional goals. Those goals were not as individualistic as expected based on the SST literature, but were instead embedded in being part of familial and ethnic/national communities. In fact, their extension to the past included collective memory and provided grounds for me to seek out the additional lens of Mental Time Travel and Collective Time Travel. These fields contributed to me developing the term Collective Time Extension to describe the ways in which the collective stories from the girls shape their extension into the past and the future. We as researchers of education and psychology need to collectively take collective identity more

seriously. Appreciating the nuance of intersectional identities and their implicated needs will make for a better future for researchers and students.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### Key Dates

Proposal Defense	May 12th, 2021
Contacts sent to school staff	May 13th, 2021
IRB plan developed	May 13-26th, 2021
Proposal Resubmission	May 28th, 2021
IRB plan submitted with revisions	May 28th, 2021
IRB approval	End September 2021
School District approval	Beginning of September 2021
Field Work	End of September 2021- End of October
Data Analysis	September 3rd 2021- 2022
Writing	January 7th, 2023-May 2024
Full Rough Draft to Committee head	April 1st, 2024
Draft to full committee	April 19th
Dissertation Oral Defense	May 29th, 2024
Revisions Due	June 12th, 2024

Commencement	June 17th, 2024
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**Appendix 2**

Proposed Field Work Timeline

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1 (pre-research)	Teacher meet and greet	Teacher scheduling and coordination meeting	Assist teacher(s) with prep for students		
Week 2	Observation	Observation	Observation	Observation	Observation
Week 3	Observation Conduct semi-structured pull out interviews	Observation Conduct semi-structured pull out interviews	Observation Conduct semi-structured pull out interviews	Observation Conduct semi-structured pull out interviews	Observation Conduct semi-structured pull out interviews
Week 4	Observation Conduct semi-structured pull out interviews	Observation Conduct semi-structured pull out interviews	Observation Conduct semi-structured pull out interviews	Observation Conduct semi-structured pull out interviews	Observation Conduct semi-structured pull out interviews

## Appendix 3

### Semi Structured interview protocol

#### Refugee Futures: Storytelling Interview Protocol

The following is intended to address RQ3: What relationship do the participants see between their own intersectional identities, their responses to the IAT, and the physiological arousal they experienced during the test?

#### Pre-Interview

- Following state health guidelines, and wearing proper PPE the interviewer will welcome the participant into the interview room and help make them comfortable.
- The interviewee will have a parent/guardian sign an informed consent prior to the interview.
- The interviewer will remind the participant of the assent guidelines, and their option to abstain from any part of the study or drop out.
- The interviewer will share that phones, and computers can be used to share information through photos, online texts, or even translation apps if that is helpful for the participant.
- The interview can begin.

#### Interview Script

Thank you for your continued willingness to participate in our study. As you know I am a researcher with the University of Oregon, trying to learn more about your life story and how you think about your future. I hope that what I learn from you will help other students and teachers have a better experience in U.S. schools. Since you have the experience as a refugee of moving from another country to this one, I think you have a lot of important knowledge to share.

While we are talking I just want to know what you think. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. You don't have to answer something if you don't want to. You can say "skip," or "next" if you do not want to answer. Also if you do not want to talk anymore you can say "stop." I also have these cards right here for you to point to if you want to point to them that say "skip/next" and "stop". I want us to have a fun talk together and you are free to share anything you would like. Your name will be kept a secret, so no one will know it was you who said something to me.

I will combine the things I learn from talking to you with what I learn from other students like yourself, and the things I learn from you during class and in the questions you answered for me, but I won't use anyone's names.

I will record our talk so I can remember what we both say. Do you have any questions before we begin? [answer respondent's questions]

Thank you. I will begin recording now. Once I start the recorder, I will ask you for your assent to be recorded for this interview. [*Start recorder*]

This is [RESEARCHER'S NAME} speaking with [PARTICIPANT'S NAME] on [DAY, MONTH, YEAR, TIME]. Thank you again for speaking with me today. Could you please say your name (Wait). Is it okay for me to record while we talk? [*Wait for consent before moving on to questions*]

1. When you were thinking about your past, how far back did you think? Why did that time seem important?
2. How long have you lived in the U.S.?
3. Tell me about the most important things in your past. Who, what, where?

4. When you are thinking about your life right now, what are the most important parts of your life? Why are those things important to you?
5. When you are thinking about your future, how far into the future do you think?
6. What is the most important thing that you want in the future?
7. You shared \_\_\_\_ about your future in the classroom activity, what do you think will help you reach your goals?

Those are all of my questions. Do you have any questions or comments for me?

Great. This concludes our interview. Thank you again, [PARTICIPANT'S NAME], for taking the time to talk with me today.

*[Stop recorder]*

## **Appendix 4**

### **Work Sample Prompts**

The teacher did not provide any formal rubric or paperwork for these assignments, but gave directions to the students on the board and orally about what they were meant to do. The life poem was an assignment that I was not present for the introduction but it did fit into a larger unit where students read poetry.

#### **Narrative Storytelling assignment**

Students should write at least one paragraph describing an important event in their life. They should give details about why it was important and what it meant to them.

#### **Life poem**

Students were asked to create a poem based on example poems they had used to write about what life means to them, or what life is about.

#### **Brag Sheet**

Students were asked to fill out an informational form about themselves that they could give to teachers to request letters of recommendation for college or job applications.

## **Appendix 5**

### Observation Protocol

*Observer:* Nicholette DeRosia

*Site/classroom:*

*Date and Time:*

*Class topic:*

*People in the room:*

*Important environmental details:*

*General observations:*

*Reflections:*

*Any issues:*