

“This, What We Go Through. People Should Know:”
Refugee Girls Constructing Identity

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(ABSTRACT)

This study examines ways in which African and Afro Caribbean refugee girls and young women negotiate and perform identity in varied social contexts. Designed as youth-centered participatory action research, the study draws from three years of engagement with a group of refugee girls and young women, ages 11-23, from Somalia, Liberia, Haiti, Burundi, and Sudan. The research occurred in the broader context of The Imani Nailah Project, a program I initiated for refugee middle and high school girls in May 2008. Through in-depth interviews, youth-led focus groups, and arts-based research, Imani researchers (study participants) and I explored experiences and expressions of gender, race/ethnicity, nationality, age, religion, and citizenship status, as well as the intersections among these multiply-located identities. This study spans a wide range of identity negotiations and performances, from micro-level interactions to macro-level impacts of dominant culture.

Three interrelated chapters focus on programmatic, methodological, and theoretical components of the dissertation research: (a) how refugee girls and university volunteers pursue mutual learning within a service context; (b) how girl-centered participatory action research can serve as a vehicle towards *relational activism*, and (c) how broader discourses of othering shape the salience of refugee and citizen identities in the lives of refugee girls. Combined, these articles expand our understanding of how refugee girls narrate self as they participate in and contribute to multiple social worlds.

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to the spark and the soul of Imani Nailah:

Faduma	Nyanawan	Fatumata
Matenneh	Christine	Saadiya
Makaissa	Mirka	Masagay
Maimuno	Shukuru	Kafiyo
Rahmo	Mimi	Maryan
Nakema	Nyama	Abu

Last summer during our interviews, many of you asked me why I started Imani and what I loved most about our time together. I heard myself comparing us to deep roots and blazing stars and Christmas morning, reaching for words to try to describe your central place in my life. Perhaps I should have simply said: I can't possibly comprehend a world without you in it. I dedicate this dissertation to each of you with deep gratitude and much love.

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PROLOGUE

Imani Nailah begins every week when a voice bellows from the intercom, cheerily announcing the end of “Thrilling Thursday” and reminding students that tomorrow is “Fun-Filled Friday!” As the final bell rings, students burst from the red brick middle school through side doors, front doors, a gym door. Suddenly, I’m in a sea of students, teachers little ineffectual islands. Two minutes ago, back inside the school, the teachers had some semblance of control. Now, these same teachers try to rush students onto buses, while students pointedly wait, finishing last minute conversations, throwing jokes and insults up into the air, sneaking in a clandestine kiss or three.

This week, Nakema comes out first, from the gym door. She’s dressed in jeans and her big sister’s shirt, trying on an older style, but one that works for her. Her shoes match her shirt, and her hair is neatly pulled back, braided, cute. She quietly smiles at me; I give her a half hug and ask her how she is, anticipating the same politely noncommittal “fine” I get every week. Masagay walks up, standing slightly separate from us. Earlier in the year, Nakema and I would have *heard* Masagay coming, teasing a classmate, casually flirting with a boy (“He’s just a friend!”), asking her soccer coach a question. We greet with the perfunctory “How are you?” and noticing that she’s wearing the same stretchy black outfit she wore last week, I remind myself that Masagay is increasingly in need of maternity clothes.

Maryan walks out the front door, laughing. Among her many career aspirations, Maryan wants to be a rock star, and even now, this girl has serious rock star style: jeans and a pullover sweater accompanied by a bright, floral head scarf and a red polyester ankle-length skirt, the whole ensemble set off by white tennis shoes. I greet her with a loud and enthusiastic “Maryan!” She laughs, leans into me, anticipating a hug. Last year, this kind of attention would have

irritated her and she would have grimaced at me. It's seventh grade, a new school, and for Maryan, it's a whole new world.

We wait a little. I ask the girls if Shukuru is coming. Nakema shrugs, Maryan says she thinks so, Masagay is lost in thought. Just as I'm about to go into the school and check, out comes Shukuru, all 3'5" of her, making her appear far younger than her thirteen years. She is wearing her standard short-sleeve cotton shirt, thick polyester skirt, and always, always, even in winter, sandals. One scarf covers her head; the other is draped around her neck at the moment, long tails flying behind her as she walks. This second scarf, the paisley green one, is a constantly moving scarf, and throughout the next three hours, it will be across her shoulders, bunched on the table, around her neck. Shukuru is our newest member and is still shy around us, though she is decidedly not shy. Every week, the older girls in the program greet her with "Little People!" They call her our mascot because there is something infectious about her.

Haitian, Liberian, Somalian, Burundian, and American, we walk to my car. A short ride later, we arrive at a three-story brick duplex owned by a local Episcopal church. It has that old house smell, beautiful wood work, a gorgeous staircase. We bypass the first floor, which is typically used for A.A. meetings and art classes later in the week, and head upstairs to the art supplies and board games. Over the next thirty minutes, other girls will filter in. Soon, Kafiyo is popping popcorn, Fatumata is making herself a cup of instant coffee, and Rahmo is asking: "So what are we going to do today?"

It's 4:30 and time for Imani Nailah to officially begin.

CHAPTER 1

This dissertation explores ways in which refugee girls negotiate and construct identity. Through three interrelated chapters, I specifically address ways in which African and Afro-Caribbean refugee girls and young women¹ negotiate and perform identity in varied social contexts. This study draws from three years of engagement with refugee girls from Somalia, Liberia, Haiti, Burundi, and Sudan. Study components include in-depth interviews, youth-led focus groups, and arts-based inquiry.

The research occurred in the broader context of The Imani Nailah Project, a program I initiated for refugee middle and high school girls in May 2008. This dissertation is a youth-centered participatory action research pursuit in which study participants act as researchers, significantly shaping the research design and the ensuing knowledge production. Study participants conducted interviews, led focus groups, and shaped various aspects of the study design and interview protocol. Throughout this dissertation, participants in the study are referred to as Imani researchers.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This qualitative, participatory action research study draws from three years of ongoing, almost weekly contact with the seventeen members of The Imani Nailah Project. I began this research by asking: How do refugee girls negotiate and perform identity? Guided by this central research question, I explored the following:

1. What strategies do refugee youth draw from in constructing identity? How do they maintain continuity and/or experience discontinuity among multiple identities?

¹ Most are African and under eighteen years of age. Because of this numerical predominance and the particular themes this study addresses, I primarily refer to the study participants as “African refugee girls” except where I refer to Haitian study participants or participants over age 18.

2. What is the interplay between identity negotiation and performance and the dominant culture? In what spaces and in what ways do refugee girls interact with, feel constrained by, reshape, or adopt dominant culture?

Through program facilitation, research design, and data collection, I pursued a highly collaborative and deeply self-reflexive methodology. Drawing from a multimodal research design, Imani researchers and I explored experiences and expressions of gender, race/ethnicity, nationality, age, religion, and citizenship status, as well as the intersections among these multiply-located identities. While I believe dominant culture and structural inequities deeply impact study participants, I approach Imani researchers as agentic subjects, experts in their own lives.

TRACING THE PROGRESSION: ENTRY INTO THE STUDY

In this study, I am broadly informed by sociological identity theories and deeply influenced by feminist methodological approaches and post-modern theorizations of hybridity, diasporas, and transnationalism. In recognition of the historically-specific, localized, and interactive nature of knowledge production, I pursued a research process in which knowledge is recognized and honored as being co-created, historically-specific, localized, and interactive (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

Through continued engagement with Imani researchers, I became increasingly focused on the unique research/relational space Imani researchers and I had crafted. My understanding of identity itself deepened: Though I had a theoretical orientation that identity was multi-locational, tied to specific moments, and open to a range of ever-shifting enactments, the data collection process animated this orientation and ultimately took my research more deeply into these local

spaces. My focus also shifted to the individual girls in the process: their enactments of girlhood, their senses of humor, their ways of naming their lives and being in the world. I found myself replaying parts of our interview conversations, like this rather humorous excerpt below, in which Kafiyo, one of the Imani researchers, suggests that we take The Imani Nailah Project and make it nationwide. She proceeds to select various adult mentors, naming their roles in her life and outlining their future tasks in this would-be national program.

Kafiyo: Do you think the group is one day going to turn into a big group for like [a] whole lot of people all over the country?

Laura: Hmm. Maybe. Maybe once you graduate from college, you'll be the one to make that happen.

Kafiyo: Okay.

Laura: Or even when you're in high school, if you wanna make that happen.

Kafiyo: Like a building like the YMCA.

Laura: Everybody from the whole country?

Kafiyo: Yeah like there's going to be some [in] every state. And we're gonna send every person of Imani Nailah originally in our group for each building to control it, like the boss.

Laura: I love this idea. What kind of things would happen in the buildings?

Kafiyo: Hmm. They'll be a room with ladies like Katherine teaching art. They'll be another room with a person like JD talking about random stuff.

Laura: What else?

Kafiyo: Then there will be a room like Laura talking about how to be a leader. And then there's gonna be a person like Faduma, who's cracking jokes.

Laura: What about a person like Kafiyo? What's that room gonna be?

Kafiyo: You do not wanna know.

Laura: I really do. That's why I asked.

Kafiyo: Um...I don't know. We're gonna do everything. Random dancing.

In addition to the rather amusing moments, there were moments during the data collection process where I witnessed racism and anti-immigrant bias being painfully played as an Imani researcher acknowledged asking herself: “Why can't I just be from the same country they're from? Why am I so black or...why am I so ugly? I would just say that to myself. I would just think about it.” I struggled to make sense of how patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism were getting playing out in the life of a twenty-something researcher who had not been successful academically and, at the decision of distant male relatives in her home country, could no longer delay marriage.

Based on these experiences in the data collection process, I situated my analysis in girls' individual lives and in our joint process of meaning-making and knowledge production. The result is three chapters: “Rahmo's Pet Tiger: Fostering Reciprocal Relationships between Youth Participants and University Volunteers” (Chapter 4) explores how positioning refugee youth as experts subverts a charity model and fosters a reciprocal exchange in an intercultural service context. I investigate reciprocity as a means towards a deepened awareness of structural barriers, global issues, and the nature of service. “It Means that I am Knowledge: GirlPAR as an Emergent Methodology” (Chapter 5) is an invited chapter for a forthcoming book on girlhood studies. In this chapter, I call for the continued emergence of girl-centered participatory action research practices and outline various strategies which facilitate this methodological approach. “Refugee Girls Negotiating Discourses of Othering” (Chapter 6) considers how refugee/citizenship and insider/outsider narratives operate in the lives of refugee girls. I highlight four discourses of othering which construct the *refugee girl* and focus on the ways Imani researchers pursue localized enactments of citizenship.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study expands our understanding of how refugee youth understand, participate in, and contribute to multiple social worlds. It addresses programmatic, methodological, and theoretical components of honoring refugee girls as experts in their own lives and in their communities. This study has broader implications for youth who live at the margins: refugee and immigrant youth, U.S.-born youth of color, lgbt youth, working class youth, and youth with disabilities. As we learn from the voices of refugee girls, we can more fully grasp the ways in which, in an increasingly globalized world, marginalized youth carve out spaces of belonging; resist, adopt, and reconfigure dominant culture; and perform various components of their multi-faceted identities.

I anticipate this refugee-based project speaking to scholars, policy makers, practitioners, and refugee communities. By exploring the challenges faced by a group of refugee youth over a three-year span, this study enhances our understanding of the varied resettlement needs and the ongoing contributions of refugee and immigrant youth living in the U.S. More fully exploring the resilience and contributions of refugee girls will provide compelling insights into the ways in which—and the spaces in which—refugee and immigrant youth narrate self and interact with dominant culture.

This dissertation joins in several ongoing scholarly conversations: theorizing agentic youth subjects; articulating the intersections of gender, race/ethnicity, class, age, citizenship status, religion; and establishing sound methodological practices in doing research *with* youth. As a feminist researcher, it is my sincere hope that this study has significance in the lives of the youth involved in the study, securing a supportive, collaborative space for Imani researchers to explore and narrate their various identity performances.

ORGANIZATION OF DISSERTATION

This dissertation has six remaining chapters. The next chapter grounds this study in relevant theoretical and empirical literatures. Chapter Three provides an overview of the methodology and research design. Chapters Four, Five and Six address programmatic, methodological, and theoretical components of the research. Chapter Seven presents a summary of findings and ideas for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter contextualizes this study in the broader fields of immigration studies and identity. This chapter begins with a review of African immigration history, the status and outcomes of immigrant youth living in a U.S. context, theories of assimilation and acculturation, and sociological and postmodern theories of identity. Throughout the chapter, I discuss the three articles that comprise the bulk of this dissertation. These articles center around the role of reciprocity in cross-cultural exchange, the methodological import of girl-centered participatory action research, and the impact of discourses of othering on counter narratives of citizenship.

Research about African refugees and immigrants, especially children and adolescents, remains quite limited (Amarapurkar and Hogan 2009). Both the African continent and its peoples continue to be cast as the essentialized other, the stark contrast that affirms the primacy of Western progress and culture. African immigrants are typically portrayed as “poor wretched beings” or reborn Western-development success stories (Okame 2006:30). African refugees, in particular, are deployed as helpless victims, the embodiment of the wretched being. Colonialist and imperialist legacies position African women and children as passive victims in need of aid (Massaquoi 2004).

The very idea of a refugee or a refugee community is highly politicized: the identity of refugee is one both offered and imposed by the State (Daenzer 2008, Lopez 1996, Mohanty 1991). National and local governments have a constitutive effect on refugees by broadening or narrowing the space in which they can come to know or name themselves in the host country (Melia 2004). If refugee is an imposed or restricted construct, then our understanding of refugee experiences may be largely contextualized—if not compartmentalized—by the dominant social structures in the host country. Cohen (2004) challenges the idea of migrant communities as

–homogenized enclave[s] of otherness” (p. 125). This challenge is aptly applied to the way refugee youth are conceptualized, or othered, as distinct and homogeneous, based on imposed and static assumptions of what it means to be a young person or a refugee. This study addresses various spheres that constrain or support refugee girls and explores multiple paths to and means of identity construction.

Because the field of refugee studies has traditionally focused on refugee adults, we know less about the experiences of refugee youth, particularly refugee girls (Hunt et al. 2001). While refugee youth have received more attention in recent years, studies on youth tend to highlight psychological trauma and resettlement needs (Summerfield 2008, Pupavac 2002, Ager 1999). Though many refugee youth experience or witness persecution, torture, violence, and the deaths of family and close relations (Yohani 2008, Rutter 1999), a focus on war trauma and resettlement needs can be particularly reductive. Addressing the ways in which trauma-based approaches restrict conceptualizations of refugee youth, Brough et al. (2003) state, –Our gaze can be restricted to transitions in lives rather than whole lives, to victims rather than survivors, to illness rather than health” (p. 194).

This restricted gaze obscures the strength and resiliency of refugee youth (Luster, Johnson, and Bates 2009; Watters 2008), limiting our understanding of identity construction, negotiation, and performance. From dialogue with refugee youth in New Zealand, Tupuola (2004) characterizes refugee youth as drawing from an array of personal, cultural, and global identities. Echoing Tupuola’s (2004) notion of the intersectional weaving of culture, Mason (2007) explores the hybrid nature of identity, shaped both by cultural background and daily interactions. Nilan and Feixa (2006) characterize hybridity as a creative *process* bound in culture, in which new forms emerge through existing patterns, images, and ideas. This view of

dynamic, hybrid identity directly informs this study as it situates identity construction in multiple spheres and in particular socio-historical moments.

AFRICAN IMMIGRATION HISTORY

Immigration is fundamentally framed by state policies and broadly refers to people who hail from other countries of origin and resettle in the United States. Immigrants and refugees now represent 12.4% of the U.S. population (Lansford, Deater-Deckard, and Bornstein 2008). According to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (2000), refugees are a subcategory of immigrants who receive their classification based on U.N. criteria of a well-founded fear of persecution. Despite distinct legal categorizations, immigrants and refugees often have similar backgrounds and contexts of resettlement. U.S. interests—as informed by legal guidelines and political rationale—may be the largest determinant in who is classified as a refugee or a non-refugee (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Some immigrants cannot receive refugee status, despite civil wars and significant physical and economic risk in the country of origin (Hunt et al. 2001). While the experiences of war, flight, resettlement, and acculturation are undeniably real, the construct of “refugee” is an imposed one, a status either extended or denied by the State (Cohen 2004), tied to particular, shifting nationalist projects of the State (Daenzer 2008, Lopez 1996). These projects, embedded in broader power systems and particular socio-historical moments, deeply impact the refugee girls in this study.

U.S. immigration policies have always been implicated in broader racialized discourses (Mohanty 1991). In the context of post-9/11, highly racialized notions of secured national borders, immigration—for both refugees and immigrants—remains deeply contested and hotly debated (Minh-ha 2010). In the first one hundred years of the U.S., persons escaping war and

famine were not considered refugees. While race-based exclusionary immigration laws had begun much earlier, it was not until the end of World War II that the U.S. established its first refugee admissions policy. In 1951, the United Nations Refugee Convention defined a refugee as an individual either unable or unwilling to return to the country of origin: "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (Article 1A(2)). Despite this universal declaration, the first emergency-based refugee admission program, embedded in U.S. Cold War policy, offered sanctuary primarily to Eastern Europeans escaping communism (Roberts 1982). While one in seventy-five Africans met the criteria for refugee status, members of the Soviet Union benefited from a quota 1000% higher than their African counterparts in fifty-three countries (Lapchick, Hooks and Williams 1982).

While the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 lifted exclusionary race-based laws, it was not until the Refugee Act of 1980 that Africans first received legal classification as refugees (Roberts 1982). The Refugee Act of 1980 established federal programs for resettlement and allowed entry of 50,000 refugees worldwide per annum. Until the passage of this act, U.S. policy had not followed the 1951 UN Refugee Convention guidelines, which the U.S. had signed in 1968 (Chomsky 2007). While African immigration has increased in the last two decades, the rates continue to be far lower than other immigrant communities: In 2000, there were eight million Mexican immigrants and 900,000 African immigrants (Bossard 2007).

There have been three distinct waves of contemporary African immigration. Between 1972-1977, African migrants comprised 1.8% of all U.S. migration, primarily through family reunification and employment visas. These numbers rose to 2.7% between 1978-1989, and later to 4.6% between 1990-2000 (Lobo 2006). There are currently an estimated 1.2 million African

immigrants living in the United States (Grieco 2004). Between 2001 and 2006, African immigrants represented at least one-fifth of the overall growth in the U.S. black population. This growth has primarily occurred in the last twenty years. For over 170 years (1820-1993), roughly 410,000 Africans were admitted into the U.S. as permanent residents. In less than twenty years (1980-1993) approximately 250,000 African immigrants were admitted in the U.S (Arthur 2000).

The two largest groups of African refugees are Somalians (over 65,000) and Ethiopians (over 43,000); also included are Sudanese, Liberians, Congolese, Eritreans, Rwandans, Sierra Leoneans, Angolans, and others (U.S. State Department 2009). Since the Refugee Act of 1980, U.S. presidents determine country-based quotas per annum (Veney 2009). The 2010 refugee quota for all of African was 15,500, a 3,500 increase from 2009 (Presidential Determination No. 2009-32, 2009).

African Refugees Cast as Victims

Despite this population growth, research on African refugees and immigrants remains limited (Amarapurkar and Hogan 2009). Okame (2006) and Massaquoi (2004) critique the ways in which African immigrants, in particular, women and children, are essentialized as either perpetual victims or would-be Western success stories. In the public consciousness, war-affected refugees have replaced famine victims as the cause-du-jour (Pupavac 2002; Hardy and Phillips 1999). This refugee-as-victim discourse, which is replayed in both popular media and academic contexts, inferiorizes Africans, valorizes U.S. Americans, and obscures geopolitical as well as U.S.-based structural inequalities (Daenzer 2008; Hajdukowski-Ahmed, Khanlou, and Moussa 2008; Loughry 2008). In a review of newspapers articles covering the arrival of the Sudanese “Lost Boys” to the United States, Robins (2003) notes that the narratives perpetuated common

assumptions about the backwardness of Africa, the superiority of the West, and the generosity of U.S. Americans: “[T]he media tended to construct the refugees as incomplete, vessels waiting to be filled; the U.S.A. as Promised Land to describe how the mythical American heartland has become a place where success is measured by the ability to consume” (p. 35).

Consider the following from an academic context: “For the vast majority of African children, the refugee episode is catastrophic.... Often unaccompanied and totally uprooted from familiar surroundings, they summon whatever psychological resources left to them to cope with the grim task of survival” (Bryant and Ahearn 1999:79). Without in any way diminishing the complexities of refugees experiences and the horrors of war-based trauma, I join Okame (2006) Massaquoi (2004) and Robins (2003) in interrogating the preponderance of popular and academic texts linking African refugee to victim.

The history of U.S. immigration policy situates refugee girls as part of a two hundred year regime in which immigration—and immigrant bodies and labor—are deployed in service to broader U.S. economic and political interests (Mohanty 1991). The participants in the study are at once ushered into a sweeping, assimilationist “nation of immigrants” discourse while also positioned as the “other” based on race, class, gender, age, faith, and visible minoritized status. Where do actual experiences, the lived realities of refugee girls, fit into these nationalist, essentializing discourses? How do U.S. structural inequalities, embedded in particular socio-historical immigration contexts, impact the range of identity markers available to newcomer youth? Is there a space in these discourses to recognize the agency of refugee youth, the ways and contexts in which African refugee girls interact with and reconfigure dominant systems of meaning?

To speak to the lives of Imani researchers, I initially draw from the literature on immigrant youth, in part because the experiences of refugees are not often distinguished by country of origin or from their immigrant counterparts. Further, the majority of research on refugee youth focuses on trauma and mental health, resettlement needs, and school performance (Hunt et al. 2001), failing to offer the kind of longitudinal or structural analysis currently found in immigration literature. In pursuing this review of immigrant youth living in the United States, I am deeply aware of the distinctions between refugees and immigrants and the inherent limits of analyzing the experiences of African refugee youth through data primarily focused on Latin American and Asian immigrant youth. However, African refugee youth are likely to experience similar resettlement patterns to recently arrived immigrant groups marked by high-poverty and visible racial minority status. When possible, I highlight studies addressing the experiences of African immigrants.

IMMIGRANT YOUTH IN THE UNITED STATES

While immigration rates are at an historic high, the actual percentage of foreign-born people in the U.S. is equivalent to the rates of the great immigration wave at the turn of the twentieth century (Clark, Glick, and Bures 2009). It is the face of immigration that has changed considerably: Beginning in 1910 during the first significant wave of immigration, 97% of children in immigrant families were European or Canadian. Between 1960 and 2000, the numbers of children living in immigrant households tripled, from 6% to 20% of all children. By 2000, one in every five children in the United States was a child of an immigrant, with 84% from Latin American or Asia. By 2030, demographic projections suggest that among all children

living in the United States, one in three will be first- or second- generation immigrants; the majority will be youth of color (Hernandez, Denton and Macartney 2008).

Immigrant families living in the U.S. have varied experiences with social inequalities. A comparison of outcomes for first generation, 1.5 generation (a term coined by Rumbaut [1991] to refer to immigrants moving to the United States prior to age ten), and second generation immigrants indicates that by the second generation, immigrants have equivalent or higher attainments than third generation non-Hispanic whites in education, labor force participation, wage income, and household income. However, these outcomes are ethnic/race specific, as children of Asian immigrants tend to do better than European immigrants. Caribbean or African immigrants tend to have more varied outcomes (Passel and Van Hook 2000). As members of specific socio-historical immigration contexts and particular racial/ethnic groups, immigrant youth are significantly influenced by the reception of the receiving country and ties to native country (Clark, Glick, and Bures 2009). Immigrant youth are shaped by—and participate in—multiple contexts and identities, or what Falicov (2003) refers to as *ecological niches*. These niches are based on the perspective offered by the intersections of ethnicity, class, nationality, education, geography, religion. Challenges experienced by immigrant youth may be more salient or pronounced in individual families or in specific ecological niches.

Risk factors impacting immigrant youth outcomes include economic deprivation, a linguistically isolated household, a mother who has not graduated from high school, and a one-parent family. For the children of immigrants, 67% experience at least one of these four risk factors, as compared to 35% of native-born children (Hernandez 2004). In particular, the growing gap between affluent and working classes leads to reduced employment opportunities for all but highly educated and highly skilled immigrants (Waldinger 1996). Globalization has

reduced the demand for low-skilled and semi-skilled immigrants in the United States, which can confine immigrant families to similar rates of unemployment and social isolation experienced by native-born people of color in impoverished communities (Zhou 1997).

Poverty Rates. Increasingly, in comparison to previous decades, immigrant families experience a significant reduction in economic stability. This is a relatively new phenomenon, as between 1970 and 2000, immigrant youth were slightly less likely to be living under the poverty line (12%) than their native-born counterparts (14%) (Van Hook, Brown, and Kwenda 2004). Immigrants from Africa, Asia and Latin America tend to have less economic stability, even if they are educated (Liu and Kerr 2003). Immigrants have higher poverty rates, with 15% of immigrants living below the poverty line, as compared with 12% of natives. In immigrant families with children, 26% are under the poverty line, as compared with 22% of native-born families with children. Using the 2x-poverty measure (i.e., twice the established federal guidelines), poverty rates for children in immigrant families are even higher, at 49% versus 34% for native families (Hernandez 2004).

Though immigrant parents demonstrate a strong work ethic, many parents are unable to secure full-time, year round work. The fathers of native-born Caucasian children secure full time, year round work at rates double to fathers from Latin America, Indochina, West Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Parents with limited English skills are less likely to secure good paying, full time, year round jobs (Hernandez et al. 2008). Lower earnings are associated with increased poverty, poorer health outcomes, and substandard housing (Beiser et al. 2002).

Educational Outcomes. For immigrant youth, strong academic outcomes and future educational aspirations are critical components to successful resettlement. Immigrant youth have higher academic outcomes than native-born peers of similar socioeconomic background (Zhou

1997) and immigrant parents are more likely to talk to their children about college (Kao 2004). While children in immigrant families are almost as likely to have a father who has graduated from college (24% vs. 28% for native born children), they are three times more likely to have a father who did not graduate from high school (40% v. 12%). Children from Cambodia (51%), Central America (53%) and Mexico (69%) have the highest rates of fathers who did not graduate from high school. A significant proportion (12-20%) of immigrant fathers have completed less than eight years of education. While immigrant parents tend to have strong commitments to their children's academic outcomes (Hernandez and Charney 1998, Kao 1999), they often lack the educational and institutional knowledge to help their children succeed.

Immigrant youth are more likely to be behind a grade than children in native-born families. By age sixteen, 10% of immigrant students are behind a grade, compared to 8% of native-born students. Graduation rates are higher among native-born students, at 79% compared to 72% for immigrant students. Racial/ethnic differences among children of immigrants are significant. Only 62% of immigrant students from Mexico, Central America, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Indochina graduate from high school (Hernandez 2004). Segregated limited English proficiency (LEP) schools may in part explain the high dropout rates among immigrant children. Half of students with LEP attend schools in which at least 33% of their fellow students have LEP (Fix, Zimmerman and Passel 2001). Almost 25% of children of immigrants live in a linguistically isolated home, as defined as a family without one member speaking English exclusively or very well (Hernandez 2004).

Health Outcomes and Health Risks. In the past two decades, first generation infants and adolescents have had better health outcomes than their native-born peers, a phenomenon termed the "immigrant paradox." While the immigrant paradox persists and calls for further

investigation, reduced health outcomes in future generations suggest that living in the United States may increase the risk of poorer health outcomes in immigrant families. Increased rates of obesity among the children of immigrants, including Mexican (Ogden et al. 2002) as well as Asian and Pacific Islander (Harrison et al. 2005) children serve as one example of unhealthy acculturation-related outcomes.

Conversely, some immigrant children experience malnutrition in or infectious disease from the country of origin, leading to stunted growth (Mendoza, Javier, and Burgos 2007) or higher rates of tuberculosis, malaria, hepatitis A and hepatitis B. Tuberculosis and hepatitis B are especially prevalent in Latin American and Asian children who have not had adequate access to health care (Armstrong et al. 2001). Non-English speaking children of immigrants face higher psychosocial health risks than their Caucasian native-born counterparts. Risks include alienation from classmates, being bullied, or feelings that parents are unable or unwilling to assist their children (Yu et al. 2003).

Finally, immigrant parents often lack access to affordable health care. Immigrant children and parents are much less likely to have health insurance than children in native-born families (76% versus 88%). For Latino families, uninsured rates remain higher even after controlling for parental education, work status, and family income (Hernandez 2004). First generation immigrant children from Mexico have the highest uninsured rates and the lowest rates of having access to a health care provider of all immigrant groups (Burgos et al. 2005).

In addressing ecological niches, labor markets, economic stratification, educational outcomes, and health factors above, I demonstrate how the experiences and outcomes of refugee youth are deeply embedded in the larger framework of a stratified U.S. Structural barriers and social inequalities in the U.S. deeply impact the lives and outcomes of immigrant families.

Theories of assimilation and acculturation account for these structural impacts in varied ways, each appealing to a different refugee subject.

THEORIES OF ASSIMILATION AND ACCULTURATION

There is no grand theory of immigration, though there are several themes (Portes 1997). For the first half of the twentieth century, perspectives on immigrant adaptation centered on the assimilation perspective (Zhou 1997), which positioned all immigrant groups as participating in an irreversible process of assimilation, ultimately abandoning old cultural patterns and ethnic characteristics for participation in a shared common culture (Park 1928, Warner and Srole 1945, Gordon 1964). Distinctive cultural patterns and native languages existed as disadvantages to be overcome on the path to social mobility (Child 1943). Dominant culture, as represented by the host country, was valorized; culture of origin was inferiorized to such an extent that it was positioned as damaging to the immigrant, a road block to be overcome. Assimilation was “directional, unilinear, nonreversible, and continuous” (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001:8).

Assimilation models, largely predicated on a European subject, predominated until the 1960s (de Anda 1984). In light of changing immigrant populations and patterns and informed by the Civil Rights movement, acculturation scholars began to explore the ways in which and the degree to which newcomers achieve, resist, or are denied integration in a new country. The classic definition posits acculturation as a process of cultural change fostered by contact between two separate cultural groups, with the focus on how newcomer groups adapt to and adopt their new culture (Redfield, Linton and Herskovits 1936). De Anda (1984) explores a *dual socialization process* through which a newcomer fosters competence in the traditional culture

within the context of inherited culture. Berry (1986) advances a four-stage model—integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization—based on the newcomer’s relationship between traditional culture and the new culture. This model focuses on the process through which an individual interacts with and—as a result of these intercultural encounters—becomes acculturated to the dominant culture. Though Berry and Sam (1997) acknowledge variations in cultural groups, they position the process of acculturation as largely universal for all newcomers. Within this frame of universality, “culture and history are variables that enable the ‘display’ of the pre-given properties of the acculturating self” (Bhatia and Ram 2001:5) without any acknowledgement of the ways in which culture, history, and a host of “variables” (race, ethnicity, gender, age, etc.) are intertwined with or shape the salience of individual acculturation.

Other scholars address the impact of structural conditions on acculturation. The structural perspective provides a framework to more fully understand differences in the integration trajectories of refugee and immigrant families. Social stratification, based on class and race/ethnicity, leads to inequitable access to economic stability or power and prestige (Barth and Noel 1972). As such, refugee and immigrant families have differential access to achieving full assimilation in U.S. culture. In many cases, refugee youth learn their outsider status through exposure to host country value systems: While refugee youth often become familiar with host country value systems in order to negotiate public spheres, learning these values carries the weight of learning and experiencing outsidership. Rejection and stigma are often overt, based on racialized notions of the refugee as other (Muecke 1992). For refugees with visible minority status, racism and discrimination present particular, ongoing challenges (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001).

In awareness of these structural barriers, Portes and Zhou (1993) advance a *segmented assimilation* model, highlighting the factors—schooling, employment, discrimination, etc.—which negatively impact or block impact the acculturation processes of variously positioned racial and ethnic groups. Newcomers have upward as well as downward outcomes, due in large part to structural factors in the receiving country: Social mobility is neither guaranteed nor unidirectional (Zhou 1997). The segmented assimilation thesis suggests that refugees and immigrants are variously positioned in a range of affluent and impoverished segments of U.S. culture, and achieve selective, consonant or dissonant acculturation in the host country. In constant acculturation, newcomer youth and their parents pursue accelerated integration in the new country; in dissonant acculturation, newcomer youth may devalue parental and country of origin values while achieving integration into host country youth- and countercultures (Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Rumbaut 1994; Portes 1995; Zhou 1997). Through *selective assimilation*, newcomer youth determine which aspects of the new culture they will adopt, deliberately preserving strong bonds to the ethnic community (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). This biculturalism offers a protective function (Bacallao and Smokowski 2005) and may lead to positive adaptational outcomes and economic integration (Portes and Zhou 1993).

More so than prevailing assimilation models, theories of acculturation provide a lens through which to understand the experiences of refugee youth, yet each is largely unidirectional, with a primary, if not singular focus on the ways in which the newcomer adapts to the inherited country. Despite appeals to acculturation as the interaction of cultures, dominant theories of acculturation offer a partial frame, reinforcing the notion that change only happens to the newcomer (Dinh and Bond 2008). Empirical studies rarely explore acculturation as a mutual process of adaptation (Tseng and Yoshikawa 2008). As a result, we lack theoretical or empirical

understandings about how members of the host country adapt to or benefit from the presence of newcomers. Further, the normative requirements of assimilation or acculturation, predicated on racialized and gendered deployments of the idealized U.S. citizen, often render refugee youth, especially youth of color, outsiders (Falicov 2003, Pernice and Brook 1996).

Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2001) suggest that acculturation might be an outdated concept and that the experiences of newcomers might be better analyzed through the lens of transnationalism and globalization. Haller and Landolt (2005) advance an analytic frame in which second-generation newcomers' "transnational ways of being and belonging intersect with assimilation trajectories" (p. 1203). In this frame, social networks, institutional barriers, and individual resources interact with and are informed by transnational practices (e.g., remittances) and attitudes (e.g., sense of belonging). Kivisto (2001) locates transnationalist practices as potential expressions of assimilation or acculturation, whereas Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) assert that transnationalism offers an analytical lens into acculturative processes obscured by broader acculturation or assimilation models. These acculturative-transnational practices include: newcomers' concurrent engagement with countries of origin and resettlement; exchanges with and across borders and locations; and ongoing, shifting, fluctuating interactions with the country of origin.

My approach to acculturation is informed by Bhatia and Ram (2001), who de-couple acculturation processes from a universalist frame. These scholars specifically call for a process-oriented, post-colonial read of acculturation, one which more fully accounts for constitutive effects of race-based and gender-based power dynamics in the lives of refugees and immigrants. Whereas a universalist frame of acculturation eclipses the race-based history of U.S. immigration policy and current broader social inequalities, a post-colonial approach situates acculturative

processes within these sociohistorical contexts. Further, this post-colonial approach is informed by diasporic, transnational, and hybrid theories of identity, which I address in the following section.

As refugee youth undergo a dynamic process of negotiating identity, they are surrounded by racialized and gendered images in popular culture that valorize whiteness (Lee 2006). Through complex interactions with youth culture, social practices, and social structure, African refugee youth learn to interpret and interact with previously inexperienced inequities; one of the most powerful is racism. In the larger U.S. context, African refugee youth, despite personal markers of identity, are “re-coded as black youth,” an imposed identity largely situated in an idealized urban, American form (Forman 2002:114). Discrimination based on race and ethnicity deeply impact immigrant youth of color, “who are almost always perceived as the ‘other,’ ‘not us’” (Falicov 2003:291). African refugees, perceived as and/or associated with African Americans, face racism, discrimination, and structural barriers (Nesbit 2002, Waters 2001). How are refugee youth shaped by these interactions with dominant culture and social inequalities? I turn now to theories of sociological and post-modern theories identity.

THEORIES OF IDENTITY

Identity has been positioned as a conceptual lens through which other urgent social concerns are conceptualized and analyzed: equality and justice constituted through recognition of identity markers, culture conceived through collective and individual identities, and human rights theorized as identity-based liberties. The concept of identity, first introduced by James (1890/1950), continues to enjoy a central place in various academic discourses, including sociology, philosophy, women’s studies, political science, psychology, cultural studies, and post-

colonial studies. Hall (1992) notes the “discursive explosion” (1996:1) of identity theory and locates three particular constructions of identity premised in Enlightenment rationalism, traditional sociology, and post-modernism. Enlightenment discourse situates identity in the realm of reason and action, premised on an unchanging, essential inner core present from birth. Cognizant of the complexities of the modern world, sociological discourse emphasizes interactions between self and society as mediated by social structures and cultural spheres.

Like sociological approaches, post-modernism de-centers identity from an essential inner core. It also emphasizes fragmented, continuously forming and reforming identities, “transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us” (Hall 1992:277). Drawing from this post-modern frame Anthias (2002) interrogates the analytical usefulness of identity. She critiques both sociological, essentialized identity markers (e.g., race, class, gender, age) and post-modern fragmented identity frames (i.e., ones that critique or try to destabilize essentialized identity markers). Anthias cautions that identity at once encompasses too much and not enough and advocates for theorization based on the concepts positionality and location. Positionality is informed by sets of relations, and stands at the intersection between social structure and individual location. Here, location refers to narrations of self that are:

both a story about who and what we identify with (a story about identification) and... also a story about our practices and the practices of others, including wider social practices and how we experience them. These stories do not necessarily have a beginning, plot or ending; they are composed of fragments whose place in the whole text is emergent (Anthias 2002:499).

Bauman (2009) calls for a conceptual shift from identities to *identification*, an ongoing, universal process undertaken by both necessity and choice. Explorations of identity, located in essentialist notions of race, class, gender, etc., can move the analysis away from context, away from actual

experiences. While the concept of identity possesses social salience, it cannot fully account for positionality, context, and meaning. Drawing from Anthias and Bauman, I conceive of identity as a lifelong process of negotiation, embodiment, and performance.

This study looks at multiple intersections: the gendered African, the inferiorized adolescent, the racialized refugee, the gendered Muslim, among others. To understand the nuances and intersections of identity formation in refugee girls, I address identity formation as both highly individuated and collective processes, embedded in and interacting with particular locations and contexts. Established markers of identity, be they national, ethnic, religious, gender, sexual, etc., provide important points of reference, but do not fully address the ways and the spaces Imani researchers construct and perform various aspects of their identities. Identity negotiation and performance are bound to larger political practices, in complex relationships with broader systems of power (Minh-ha 2010, Lee 2006, Bhatia and Ram 2001). Drawing from Chambers' (1994) notion of the dialogical encounter between self and cultural others, Forman (2002) asserts that refugee youth exist in structures and institutions that require adaptation.

Refugee youth are not unfettered, free to individually construct identity from an infinite range of choices. Rather, their sense of self and the ways they integrate, resist, and reconfigure identity markers are embedded in particular sociohistorical, geographical, and structural locations. In this study, I foreground identity as an open, variable, changing system embedded in particular locations. Self and identity interact with historically specific, socio-cultural factors: structural inequalities, colonial histories, race-based immigration laws, and U.S. state policies. Cognizant of dominant systems, I am interested in ways in which African refugee girls strengthen, erode and reconfigure the terrains of gender, race, class, faith, age, and nation. While I find the greatest theoretical potency in a post-modernist reading of identity, I am also broadly

informed by sociological analyses of the interplay between institutional social structures and the individual. Both theoretical orientations are presented in the subsequent section. I first discuss several sociological identity theories and then turn my attention to post-modern concepts of diasporas, hybridity, and transnationalism.

Sociological Identity Theories

Identity implies both distinction from and similarity to others (James 1950 [1890]). Identities are categories defining who people are and how they relate to others. In its broadest sense, identities are both imposed on and interiorized by individuals. Within the context of the three primary components of identity—personal, social, collective—a more complicated interplay between structure and the individual emerges. Personal identities are predicated on individual incorporation; social identities are based on membership; collective identities are a group-level phenomenon denoting demographic characteristics. Neither social nor collective identities require internalization (Owens 2003). In other words, refugee youth have an imposed refugee identity regardless of their degree of identification with it. Other identities, tied to more localized social networks, are only significant to the extent that refugee youth find them personally salient.

With regard to early theories, role identities were largely the purview of sociologists, while social and collective identities were explored by psychologists (Owens 2003). In social psychology, identity is construed as a socially-constructed concept speaking to questions of: Who am I? Who are we? Answers to these questions are constructed, based on personal and group demographic characteristics (Thoits and Virshup 1997). Below, I highlight several identity

theories that broadly speak to the ways in which Imani research construct and perform identity. They include identity theory, social identity theory, possible selves, and role theory.

According to identity theory, individuals choose from a range of possible identities, but are also constrained by structures and social interactions (Stryker 1968, 1987). Stryker's identity theory highlights the reciprocal interaction between self and structure and contextualizes identity within the context of relationships. The more affective and interactional ties an identity has, the higher that identity is ranked in an individual's identity hierarchy (Stryker 1980). For Imani youth, their identities as researchers, as girls, as refugees, as someday-citizens are salient to the extent that they are reinforced by others.

Social identity theory was initially utilized to explore the nature of large-scale religious, ethnic and political conflicts (Tajfel 1981). With a focus on in-group/out-group classifications, Tajfel was particularly interested in how an individual's self-concept is based in an awareness of social group membership. Tajfel and Turner (1986) posit identity as a cognitive tool for individuals to determine their social positions: as Imani researchers explore their refugee and citizenship identities (Chapter 6), they articulate their location in broader social structures. Deaux and Martin (2003) attempt to merge social identity theory and identity theory by proposing a model that addresses social categories and interpersonal relationships. This integration of categorical membership and interpersonal context speaks to ways in which Imani youth explore their identities within the context of their relationships in a research collective (Chapter 5).

First articulated by Markus and Nurius (1986), the possible selves theory relates to the self an individual either wants to become or fears becoming. These longed for selves and feared selves inform goals, motivate action, and deeply impact self-concept. Possible selves are informed by past selves, oriented to individually salient aspirations and apprehensions, and are

drawn from particular socio-historical moments and individual experiences. In a review of the literature exploring possible selves in adolescence, Osyerman and Fryberg (2006) position youth, regardless of gender, race, and ethnicity, as exploring possible selves within the broader context of identity development processes. Imani researchers determine possible selves—the educated self, the citizen self, the refugee self—within the varied life domains of school, family, and friends.

Rather than social and collective identities serving as a static and imposed group or demographic identity, Killian and Johnson (2006) employ social identity theory to explain immigrant women's resistance to the identity or label of immigrant. McCalls' (2003:19) "Not-Me" is a "self-disidentification" (Killian and Johnson 2006:65) rather than a rejection of a negative identity. Due to the low-status of immigrant women in France, the North African immigrant women in the study engaged in identity work to deny an imposed identity, and in so doing, created a positive identity outside of the immigrant identity. In Chapter 6, I address a number of ways Imani researchers pursue a selective "self-disidentification" with both refugee and citizenship identities.

Role identities provide an interpretive frame for daily experience. Role theory explores how the view individuals have of themselves in particular positions forms an appraisal system for current and future performances of various identities. Whereas roles denote requirements based on social positions, identity relates to individual enactments of these social roles. When faced with conflicting role identities, individuals will activate identities from which they experience rewards, congruence to self-image, and successful enactment. While social interactions and ongoing personal relationships legitimate particular roles, structural forces constrain the scope and possible expression of available identities (McCall and Simmons 1966).

Throughout this study, I have been attuned to the interplay between roles and identities; in-depth interviews included questions related to how roles (student, daughter, researcher) influence and interact with various social and collective identities.

Diasporic, Hybrid, and Transnational Identities

Identity –lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity.”

-Hall (1993:401-402)

Transnationalism refers to the multiple social networks immigrants foster and sustain during movement across international borders (Fouron and Glick Schiller 2002). The transnational approach explores political, economic, and socio-cultural connections among immigrants, their homelands, and the wider diaspora (Horst 2006). The concept of transnationalism initially centered on the experiences of migrant workers. Transnationalism research related to young people initially explored parents’ attempts to secure better employment opportunities for themselves and greater educational opportunities for their children (Tyyskä 2007). Familial roles and individual identity are reconfigured as transnational migrants negotiate social norms, border crossings, and labor force participation. Transnational family forms include matrifocal family, patrifocal family, nonparented households, and transnational extended families in multiple countries (Wong 1997). Levitt and Waters (2002) focus on the relationship between globalization and transnationalism, as global capital and industrial production have reconfigured local and global spheres. Additionally, they point to a post-national approach to transnationalism, as the borders of the nation-state erode or shift and global organizations emerge.

With origins in Jewish experiences of exile, the concept of diaspora more broadly signifies migratory dislocations and relocation processes. As both a discursive and material

frame, the diaspora is no longer tied to nation state (Bhatia and Ram 2001). The diaspora can refer to geographically displaced people who collectively identify through ties to each other and to their homeland. The diaspora also encompasses travel and the flow of commodities in immigrant lives. Finally, the diaspora relates to the ways in which immigrants interact in multiple geographical sites and various social locations (Levitt and Waters 2002, Vertovec 1997).

For refugees, the diaspora begins with the country of origin and the country of resettlement and typically extends to the countries of refugee camps and to the countries where relatives resettle (Van Hear 2006). The concept of diaspora offers the field of refugee studies vital conceptual tools, accounting for both transnational ties and social relations in multiple countries. “Refugee diasporas signify a unique dimension in the arena of transnational practices” (Cheran 2006:5), encompassing the connection to the homeland, the processes of globalization, and social relations in the countries of origin, flight, and resettlement. This understanding of a refugee diasporic identity complicates the distinction between “before” and “after,” an often artificially applied to forced migrants’ identities (Wahlbeck 2002).

Three conceptual approaches to refugee diasporic identities inform this study: Bhatia and Ram (2001) locate diasporas in multiple social and cultural sites, positioning identity negotiation as embedded in fluid, unstable, open, and dynamic processes. Here, historical legacies, social inequities, and the daily microcosms of power are implicit to the experience and expression of identity. For Massaquoi (2004), the diaspora exists as a space separate from dominant culture, where identities can be explored. Patterson and Kelly (2000) reject notions of the inevitability of a static diasporic identity, appealing to the diaspora as an ongoing process. Destabilizing diasporas from universalizing narratives creates alternative spaces to explore paradigmatic

assumptions: Which African, which refugee subject, which youth of color, which Muslim girl, etc. is being appealed to?

In diasporic spaces, hybrid identities emerge. Mason (2007:274) asserts that “identity is always hybrid and relational—it is ever changing and dynamic and shaped by background, everyday experiences.” Hybridity is often cast as in between-ness, multiplicity, emergence, borderlessness. Kapchan and Strong (1999) note the challenge in and importance of fully and accurately articulating what hybridity is: “Under a microscope, the concept transforms before our very eyes. It does not stay still under our gaze. We have the fascination of an alchemist before a bubbling metal, intoning above the fire and heat, relinquishing categories to process, emergence, and liminality. But let us demystify” (p. 239). Drawing from a chemistry-based analogy, Weston (1998) depicts hybridity as a compound, not a mixture. Nilan and Feixa (2006) conceptualize hybridity as an ongoing, creative process drawn from cultural patterns, images, and concepts. Canclini (1995) cautions against a hybridity-as-creativity frame, asserting that hybridity is less about cultural processes and more about how individuals enact and react to power relationships. Narayan (1993) calls for hybridity as an ongoing enactment, a way of troubling insider/outsider narratives which position certain subjects as cultural insiders and outsiders. From these analyses, several themes emerge: the contestation of borders, multi-sphere political engagement, transnational corporate investments, and a shift from an emphasis on the local to the translocal (Vertovec 1999).

The present study explores Imani researchers’ hybrid enactments (Narayan 1993) by employing youth narratives to integrate analysis with storytelling and to address structural barriers and localized relations of power (Canclini 1995). While grounded in an awareness of heightened globalization and shifting nation-states, I anchor this study in part in an analytical

frame rooted in the connections among refugees, the sending community, and resultant social networks and groups (Levitt and Waters 2002). The literature on transnationalism explores how identity is shaped by overlapping and shifting geographies, recognizing that refugee resettlement processes simultaneously occur within and outside the host country. Theories of transnationalism shift the focus from distinctions between “refugee” and “immigrant” to a broader understanding of how migratory flows re-shape the nation-state. Connections to the homeland and the broader diaspora are prioritized as important in their own right, not just as they speak to the integration of refugees in the host country (Horst 2006). Transnational identities contest the long-held assumptions that refugees have primary loyalties and lasting, unchanging ties to the country of origin (Cheran 2003). As identities are shaped by transnational trajectories, the continued presence and shifting salience of the home culture requires careful attention.

In this study, I explore how physical and imagined locations impact identity. Ties to the physical homeland include financial remittances, taken and hoped for trips, and communication with family members. The imagined homeland engages with ghosts and shadows, the hoped for space of belonging, the place not yet reached (Matsuoka and Sorenson 2001). An integrated analysis of imagined and geographic homelands can more fully articulate Imani researchers’ transnational identities.

SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of the history of African immigration, empirical literatures related to immigrant youth, frameworks of assimilation and acculturation theory, and sociological and post-modern theories of identity. I ground my exploration of refugee girls’ identity negotiation and performance in the theoretical and empirical literatures outlined above.

Race, class, gender and other identity markers are contextualized as useful signifiers, but not as complete schemas. For refugee youth, identity is shaped by more than the social markers of race, class, gender, nation, age, faith: In addition, identities are shaped by and mediated through histories and memories, through compounded and enacted hybridity, and through ties to remembered and imagined homelands. As such, identity negotiation is a continued oscillation between U.S. dominant culture, the diaspora, and the country of origin (Massaquoi 2004).

Migration implicitly requires newcomers to engage in meaning-making with new sociocultural structures, leading to a renegotiation of identity. Refugee youth are ~~in~~ a position that demands the re-working and re-telling of “[them]selves” to “[them]selves” (Cohen 2004:129). Tupuola draws from Krebs’ (1999) notion of *edgewalkers*, resilient youth who maintain continuity within multiple identities, navigating the edge of various cultures. In this study, I draw from Cohen’s notion of identity as the “re-working and re-telling” of self to self. I am particularly interested in exploring moments and spaces of edgewalking, through the stories refugee youth tell both to themselves and about their inhabited worlds. I turn now to the collection of these narratives and other forms of data.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter considers youth-centered participatory action research and explores reflexivity and positionality of adult researchers and among the research collective. In order to illuminate the context of the study, I present a history of The Imani Nailah Project. The chapter concludes with the research design, including the interview protocol and the data collection process. One of my goals in this section is to address the more interior aspects of qualitative inquiry: how we know what we know, how we approach our work, how it transforms us, and what it requires of us. To this end, I incorporate excerpts from field notes, outline my understanding of the inherent potential of participatory action research designs, and explore my investment in and approach to this subject.

YOUTH-CENTERED PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (YPAR)

Participatory action research (PAR) is largely informed by popular education frameworks which draw from communities' critical analysis of social problems and hopes for change (Freire 1970). Initially, PAR practitioners addressed adult education and agricultural development (Brydon-Miller 2001). Grounded in a collaborative, emancipatory, and reflexive approach (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000), PAR interrogates issues of power and who benefits from research (Kindon 2003). PAR methodologies privilege indigenous knowing and honor silenced or hidden voices (McIntyre 2000). As Pain (2004) notes: "PAR is designed to be context-specific, forefronting local conditions and local knowledge, and producing situated, rich and layered accounts" (p. 653). PAR incorporates new voices and perspectives into academic spaces, integrating theory and practice (Cahill 2004).

In more recent years, a number of researchers have called for children to be recognized as competent research participants (Alderson 1995; Alderson and Morrow 2004); some have advocated for utilizing youth as researchers (Goodley and Clough 2004). This push for greater inclusion of youth as participants and researchers is largely grounded in New Childhood Studies, which challenged the view of youth as passive actors and highlighted the socially constructed nature of childhood. Youth scholars called for a shift from research on youth's future *becoming* to an interest in youth's current *being* (Qvortup 1994). One of the outcomes of this shift was a substantial increase in youth-focused ethnographies and participant-observation methodologies (Best 2007). While children and youth have been the focus of a significant body of research (Hopkins and Pain 2007), they ~~are~~ largely excluded from the very social processes through which knowledge about them is created" (Best 2007:14). Youth voices and expertise remain underrepresented and undertheorized (Weller 2006). Scholarship is often embedded in traditional relationships of power: academy over community, researcher over researched, adult over youth (Kindon 2003).

Institutional and structural arrangements legitimate adults' greater power by negatively stereotyping youth as biologically determined, socially irresponsible, and hormonally driven (Skott-Myhre and Arthur 2008, Best 2007, Griffin 1993, Foucault 1977/1995). The disproportionate focus on the risk factors of sexual activity, sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy, substance use, and school failure serves to inferiorize youth and to necessitate adult intervention as researchers and practitioners. This focus on risk discursively links young people to a socially constructed, now-reified dualism between youth and adults; As members of the naturalized category of adolescence, young people have not yet arrived, and require adult intervention and institutional surveillance (Lekso 2001). This approach, which characterizes the

majority of youth-related research, reinforces youth/adult binaries and results in voyeuristic, unreflexive, and disembodied research (Kindon 2003). In Chapter 5: “It Means that I am Knowledge: GirlPAR as an Emergent Methodology,” I discuss these power differentials in greater detail.

Recognizing that those with the principal knowledge of youth are youth themselves (Matysik 2000, Shaw 1996), I pursued knowledge production through a youth-centered participatory action design. Young people gain from engagement in youth-centered participatory action research (YPAR), building analytical capacities and developing greater personal efficacy (Cammarota and Fine 2008). Reflecting on her experiences as a youth researcher, one member of the Fed Up Honeys research group characterized her experiences as interconnected eye-opening moments: opening her own eyes to see the world through different eyes, which fostered and reaffirmed a commitment to open others’ eyes (Cahill, Rios-Moore and Threatts 2008). In YPAR, youth and adult researchers collectively address structural inequities as they reveal themselves in various social locations (Green and Kloos 2009). The goal is for youth and adult researchers to pursue a shared vision in which all members of the research collective re-envision their communities and their ability to effect change in those spaces. Ultimately, as youth “reframe and re-imagine the type of world in which we choose to live,” they build a worldview which advances lasting social change (Ginwright 2008:14).

Getting It Right: Strategies Supporting YPAR

This section addresses what YPAR requires of a research collective and how YPAR can transform spaces and relationships. An exploration of issues of power and privilege highlights strategies to push past the youth/adult binary which typically characterizes researcher approaches

to working with young people. Next, a consideration of various inclusion models underscores the importance of providing youth researchers with a range of entry points into YPAR. Throughout, I assert that these YPAR strategies contribute to the production of a youth-honoring, socially-just knowledge base.

By establishing a space that honors youth stories and recognizes youth expertise, new paradigms of power between youth and adults relations can be established. However, YPAR is not a space somehow free of historically oppressive frameworks. This methodology necessitates ongoing awareness and interrogation of embedded power imbalances among all members of the research collective. Given historical and contemporary oppression, YPAR requires youth and adult researchers to recognize that –even before we entered the room [i.e., the research context], power dynamics were already in play, needing to be gracefully deconstructed if we were going to collaborate across zip codes, ethnic biographies, communities, and generations, with trust” (Torre and Fine 2008:26). For me, this means grappling with the realities of my insider/outsider status as the adult researcher. In my relationships with the Imani researchers, I cannot claim insider status, as I have significant access to institutional and structural power bases, or what Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) term the interconnected power blocs of U.S. society. Among other markers of identity, I am an adult, a native-born U.S. citizen, an English speaker, a white person, and an academic. My position in the historically entrenched socio-political binaries of –black/white, east/west, colonial/imperial, developed/developing, and others” (Shah 2004:565) requires continued interrogation throughout every aspect of this study.

While Shah (2004) levels multiple warnings against outsider research, Torre and Fine (2008) uphold the transformative potential of YPAR methodologies. The researcher’s social location does not fully determine insider or outsider status within the research context:

Researchers and participants can work together to discover shared categories of belonging (Oikonomidou 2009). By making issues of power and privilege visible—rather than ignoring various social positions and inequities—youth and adult researchers have a rich opportunity to unpack structural barriers and to begin re-negotiating the youth/adult binary. In discussing adult power and privilege, I am keenly aware how historic and contemporary systems of oppression impact young people. I also have a great respect for adolescents' agency. Youth possess significant agency and enact strategies of resistance in various ways and in multiple spaces. While it is critical to interrogate issues of power and privilege, positioning youth as voiceless victims in need of protection ultimately reifies the youth/adult binary. The following field note, written in May 2008 at the beginning of the research, depicts the agency of youth.

After a couple hours, I was just about to really tell the girls I was ready to take them home, when this magical moment opened up, and Saadiya invited me in to her real world, just on the periphery, but still there, in the life she lives and not the life she presents to adults:

“Wanna see the guy I’m talking to?” I say sure, asking Saadiya what talking to means.

She sends me back into the adult realm, with “You know, just talking.”

I laugh, tell her I know what talking to means, that I just want to know how long they’ve been talking. She insists they’re just friends, she knows him from Ohio. I tell her to go back to the picture, that I want to see his eyes.

“His eyes? Why?”

“Just show ‘em to me.”

She does, I study them, and then look at her and say “He’s sweet huh? And he’s got a temper, but not with you.”

“How you know all that?”

I don’t really. I mean, I maybe sorta do, but I’m also playing big sister-mama, engaging in the kinda girl talk I do with younger women I care about. Sizing up the maybe man. I get to read her MySpace page, her description of herself...I’m thrilled to be given this

kinda entryway into Saadiya's life. I'm tight with her big sister, but this is the first time Saadiya's really let me in.

As an agentic young person, Saadiya initiated the formation of a shared category of belonging/knowing. I enact the “big sister-mama” role by stating that “he’s got a temper but not with you.” However, it is Saadiya who determines my entry into her life by inviting me “to see the guy she’s talking to.” That is, the youth/adult binary and pre-existing power differentials, while present in this early stage of relationship building, are negotiated during our interaction. Heavy/light loads of inequality—based at the intersections of gender, faith, sexuality, and age—are not at the forefront of this excerpt, yet are subtly and deeply embedded. Learning to recognize inequities and power differentials in ongoing dialogues and interactions is critical to the process of YPAR.

From my experiences and reflections—and from all that youth researchers have taught me—I assert that effective YPAR strategies require ongoing engagement with power dynamics. As such, I take Shah’s (2004) cautions seriously, as a number of significant historical and structural power imbalances exist between me and the participants of this study. Grappling with historical and contemporary issues of power and privilege is vital to harnessing YPAR as a vehicle for social justice. YPAR is transformative when adults are willing to unpack the often invisible privileges that come with entry into adulthood. I am emboldened by Torre and Fine’s critical appraisal of both the challenge and promise of eroding power imbalances through YPAR research. Naming and analyzing power differentials provides a rich opportunity to explore and potentially re-envision reciprocal relationships within YPAR frameworks.

Moving Past Tokenist or Idealized Inclusion to Chosen Inclusion

One concrete way to realize an equitable YPAR methodology is to carefully analyze the extent to and ways in which youth researchers are included in the research design. In some YPAR studies, there is *tokenist* inclusion of youth: Youth are invited to participate in studies where adults craft the research questions, select the methodology, and structure the analysis (Kellet 2005). Adult researchers continue to assume that their knowledge base is superior and preferable to young people's (Alderson and Goodey 1996). On the other end of the spectrum, other YPAR practitioners promote an *idealized* notion of inclusion, asserting that for research to be truly participatory, young people must have substantial engagement in every aspect of the research process (Kellet, Forrest and Dent 2004). Still others question the underlying assumption that high levels of participation are more advantageous to or feasible for youth (Chen, Poland and Skinner 2007, Conolly 2008). If we are to move past tokenist or idealized inclusion models, how do we evaluate YPAR strategies to determine which frameworks best incorporate youth researchers?

Dona (2007) outlines four levels of involvement in research: objects, subjects, social actors, and participants/researchers. As objects, refugee youth are examined from an othering perspective by people in positions of power. Youth can also symbolically serve as objects in international, institutional, and legal frameworks. In either context, youth have little to no power to shape the knowledge-production process. As subjects, youth become questionnaire respondents, and while they can potentially limit the information they provide to a researcher, they have very little overall power in the relational dynamic of researcher-subject. As social actors, youth dialogue with researchers, providing expertise in the construction of interview

protocol. As participants/researchers, youth dialogue with researchers to shape the research content and co-produce knowledge by direct engagement with all aspects of the research process.

For Checkoway and Richards-Schuster (2003) youth serve as subjects, consultants, partners, or directors. As *subjects*, youth are “observed, tested, measured, enumerated and analyzed” by adult researchers (p. 24). As *consultants*, youth provide advice on adult-initiated research. Youth may help re-word questions, participate in focus groups, and discuss early research findings. As *partners*, adults solicit the assistance of youth researchers in pursuing intergenerational research. Both youth and adults are engaged in establishing the research design and collecting data, though perhaps not at equal levels of participation. As *directors*, youth initiate their own research project, explore problems addressing their communities, and work towards community solutions.

Dona (2007) and Checkoway and Richards-Schuster (2003) provide two frames to evaluate youth researcher inclusion, as outlined in Table 1 (see page 43). From these two frames, I identify three levels of involvement relevant to this study: youth as subjects, youth as experts, and youth as researchers.

Table 1. Youth Roles in Research

Levels of Involvement	Checkoway and Richards-Schuster (2003)	Dona (2007)
Youth as Subjects <i>No or Tokenist Inclusion</i>	<i>Subjects:</i> youth are “observed, tested, measured, enumerated and analyzed” by adult researchers (2003:24).	<i>Objects:</i> youth are examined from an othering perspective by people in positions of power.
		<i>Subjects:</i> youth are questionnaire respondents in a relational dynamic of adult researcher-youth subject.
Youth as Experts <i>Chosen Inclusion</i>	<i>Consultants:</i> youth provide advice on adult-initiated research by re-wording questions, participating in focus groups, and/or discussing early research findings.	<i>Social actors:</i> youth dialogue with researchers, providing expertise in the construction of the interview protocol.
	<i>Partners:</i> adult initiate research; youth and adults determine study design and collect data, though not at equal levels of participation.	
Youth as Researcher <i>Full Inclusion</i>	<i>Directors:</i> youth initiate their own research project, explore problems addressing their communities, and work towards community solutions.	<i>Participants/researchers:</i> youth co-produce knowledge by direct engagement with all aspects of the research process.

In YPAR, youth are best served when a range of entry points are embedded in the research design. I call this *chosen inclusion*: youth choose when and how they engage as consultants, as experts, as researchers. I join with Punch (2002a, 2002b) in asserting that the differences between youth and adult researchers primarily relate to youth’s marginalization and unequal status in society and from adult appraisals, not from youth competencies as researchers. Given the multiple familial, educational, and occupational demands on youth—and the often limited power to resist or reconfigure those demands—it is important for adult researchers to sensitize themselves to the ways in which youth can authentically and realistically engage in the research process.

I initially approached this study enamored by the director role (Checkoway and Richards-Schuster 2003) and fully committed to the participant/researcher model (Dona 2007). Since then, I have learned that youth researchers do not necessarily desire full engagement in all components of the research process. Many aspects of the research process— transcribing audio tapes, seeking IRB approval, reading and re-reading transcripts—do not necessarily interest Imani researchers. Imani researchers have primarily enacted the *youth as expert* role. In other studies, the *youth as researcher* role may be more appealing to youth participants and more applicable to the study.

This study explores the *process* of youth-centered participatory action research (YPAR). The literature on YPAR typically focuses on how the *outcomes* of participatory action research promote collective action and advance social change (Green and Kloos 2009; Cahill, Rios-Moore and Threatts 2008, McIntyre 2000). As young people research structural inequalities and oppressive social conditions, they respond with collective action: policy briefs, public speeches, direct action (Cammarota and Fine 2008). The youth in this study have done none of the above, yet are pursuing social change by engaging in the *process* of YPAR. I discuss this process more fully in Chapter 5. YPAR both articulates and enhances our understanding of the community issues affecting youth. Ginwright (2008) asserts that YPAR transforms lives, while challenging our assumptions of what comprises scholarship, what constitutes research. Each of these YPAR strategies is ultimately social justice work:

- naming power and privilege
- creating spaces which challenge entrenched binaries (adult/youth, etc.)
- acknowledging agentic adolescents
- positioning youth as experts
- providing multiple modes of chosen inclusion
- connecting through story
- sharing personal and collective experiences
- fostering reciprocal relationships
- engaging in self-reflexivity
- linking personal experiences to structural barriers

Cahill, Rios-Moore and Threatts (2008:90) indicate three transformative “openings” engendered by YPAR: interrogating our own lives and communities, transforming our understandings of self, and creating a vision for new ways of moving in the world. By exploring and honoring the daily, lived realities of youth, YPAR can foster new subjectivities, or what Cameron and Gibson term “a micropolitics of self-transformation” (2004:320). Impromptu storytelling, resistance, and structured brainstorming sessions offer moments in which researchers explore and enact various— and potentially new—ways of being in the world. Once a researcher articulates that she used to feel ashamed of her name and her family size, once another researcher acknowledges that she used to feel too dark-skinned to be pretty, and once those stories are honored by other researchers, acknowledged as a common experience, and linked to various sex- and raced- based stereotypes and processes of othering, a new subjectivity emerges among members of the YPAR collective.

YPAR Matters: Reflexivity in Relationships

I initially approached this study with a keen awareness of how structural barriers and inequitable power dynamics would impact the multiple roles I was attempting to enact. How could this study foster relationships and sustained connections *and* answer a research question? After looking at Saadiya’s MySpace page in the field note excerpt in the previous section, I reflected on my researcher role:

In the back of my head, researcher-me starts thinking about how great it would be to do a paper on the ways African-diasporic refugee youth present themselves on MySpace. Construction of identity. Computer mediated meaning-making. Social networks. Narratives of self. And then I feel conflicted. As I help Saadiya load pictures onto her MySpace page, I wonder how to engage with youth without pimping them out. Until today, Saadiya and her talking-to-boy and her MySpace page would have only been about relationship. Connection. How lucky I am to have such amazing young people in

my life. It's still about that, but there's this other thing now, this (wanna be?) researcher-me. I wonder how to be both.

The role of participant observer can create a double bind, as researchers are neither invisible observers nor full participants in the social worlds they study (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). I pursued a research process characterized by significant self-reflexivity and intersubjectivity with the Imani research collective, placing me in ~~relation~~ "with the living world" (Heron and Reason 1997:276). Recognizing—and in fact, intentionally grounding—in this living world shifted my focus from the observational moment, or *present*, to a broader investment in a collective *presence* (Madison 2005). In presence, youth and adult researchers build relationships, explore how they are variously situated in the research, in their communities, in the multiple spaces youth inhabit. In presence, relationships form.

Hammersley and Atkinson envision researchers being ~~brought~~ "into parallel" (1995:19) with research participants. I interpret this statement to be a parallelism in which knowledge is co-constructed and the researcher is an active, multiply positioned component of the research itself: There is neither the assumption of nor the desire for objective data or an invisible researcher. In the parallel, my multiply positioned self co-constructs knowledge in interaction with other multiply positioned members of this research encounter. I pursue a number of paths to the parallel in this study, including self-reflexivity and connectivity through story. Both are discussed below.

My investment in the lives of marginalized youth, and in particular, refugee youth, is an integral part of who I am, how I think, how I move in the world, and what matters most to me. As Hamm states, ~~the~~ "roots of this inquiry were personal" (2000:5). While this research has broader implications than my personal investment, I recognize that my life experiences and my worldview have shaped my approach to and understanding of the ways refugee girls construct

and perform their multiple identities (Collins 1990). As a feminist researcher, my engagement with Imani researchers is rooted in both a desire for and commitment to learning from the stories and experiences of youth.

I view reflexivity as a core requisite of qualitative research, yet I experience it as a grounding, a rootedness. Best (2007) calls for a “radical self-reflexivity” (p. 9) which interrogates the power dynamics between and among researchers and participants. Savin-Baden (2004) advocates a reflexivity in which researchers come to understand how their stories are connected to the stories of their participants/researchers. Connectivity in story is a particularly fruitful avenue towards locating shared categories of belonging (Oikonomidou 2009). The field note excerpt below introduces Nyanawan, a then senior in high school. This excerpt of Nyanawan’s story speaks to Savin-Baden’s call for connection through story and Oikonomidou’s notions of shared belonging.

“You had two lives,” Nyanawan said. “I’m two people living in two worlds.”

Getting more teary and trying to talk without crying, she said “my mind is still in the past...To me it feels like I’m split in two.”

The tears really started coming, Nyanawan burying her face in her hands, in the puffy black coat she almost always wears. I put my field notes to the side, gently asked Nyanawan what she missed the most. Nyanawan glanced at me, and in a quiet voice said she missed her friends and family the most. I asked her what she wants, and she said to have her family back together again. She remembers them being different there, and admitted that sometimes, it feels like her fault that her parents divorced.

Nyanawan was all kinds of sad. I sat with her for a few minutes, and then I had to go deal with the other girls because tutoring was ending. I didn’t want to leave Nyanawan, but I also wondered if she wanted time alone. I asked her what she wanted, and she said that she wanted some time alone. I offered to bring her her journal, and she spent a few minutes writing. Faduma ended up coming in to talk with Nyanawan, and a few minutes later, I walked in the room, announcing as I entered that I could also leave. Faduma said it was fine to stay, and I sat down, asking Nyanawan how she was. She shrugged, said she was okay.

Faduma looked at me, and asked if I was going to write about this, gesturing to her and Nyanawan to reference the content of their conversation: “For school. For your thing. You’re writing about us, right?” I nodded, asked her what I should write about it. She said “This, what we go through. People should know.” I told her I was going to try.

Faduma said they’d been having a moment, and I asked what kind of moment. Faduma said “like Laura, man, she just knows.” She then spoke in half sentences, taking two fingers to gesture to her eyes, then to Nyanawan’s eyes, finally saying that she wished I’d been around when she was going through what Nyanawan is going through now. I told her she was sweet. Momentarily uncomfortable, I shifted the conversation to light-hearted teasing, asking Faduma if she was ever going to forgive me for moving to N.C. for a couple years.

I am humbled by Faduma’s belief that I “get it,” but I also am somewhat skeptical: maybe I get it more than others she knows, but maybe I don’t. Even if I maybe get a few things right, there is so much left unknown, so much I might not get right. My sense of responsibility to accurately and insightfully portray Faduma and Nyanawan is only heightened by their trust in me.

I experience multiply situated roles in this scenario: I am the former employee of the refugee office with the benefit of long-term histories with both of the youth in this story. Nyanawan and I were engaged as co-researchers when she first started getting sad: I was soliciting feedback on various aspects of the lived realities of refugee youth, seeking her advice on future interview questions. At some point in this encounter, I enacted my previous identity as a mental health worker, doing a brief depression screening. But I am more: I am also the adult. The white woman. The native-born U.S. citizen. The graduate student. Each of these identities is shot through with socially constructed privilege. While recognizing these power imbalances, I have to push further: To assume that Nyanawan and Faduma and I will inevitably have unequal relationships, is to falsely—and patronizingly—position both researchers as needing my protection.

This is the messiness of qualitative research. Qualitative research takes place in multiple, seemingly contradictory worlds. It calls forth multiple roles in varied contexts. It requires a keen understanding of place and self. Another young person, and I would have had another encounter.

Another day, and Nyanawan might not have felt as reflective or as comfortable sharing with me. Another moment, and Faduma might not have walked into the room. Another week, and I might have been too preoccupied in my role as program coordinator to engage as a researcher.

And this is the promise offered by qualitative research: We can see how our stories are connected, not only in some grand narrative, but in real, often minute ways. Nyanawan's story of loss connects to Faduma's memory of struggle which joins with my image of Nyanawan when she first moved to the US and I held her in my lap. These are the moments that become crystallized, transformative: sitting with Faduma and Nyanawan, feeling both inspired and compelled to write the best kind of study I possibly can, hearing Faduma's words echo long past the moment has ended: "This, what we go through. People should know." In this moment, as Savin-Baden (2004) foreshadows, I experience a shift in my professional identity. I feel a heightened sense of responsibility to getting it right, to honoring the lives of the co-researchers. I too connect more deeply with my fellow researchers: Faduma demonstrates her commitment to the co-construction of knowledge because "people should know."

My experiences with Imani researchers have animated and deepened my focus on the relational component of YPAR, particularly as it relates to YPAR as a process. Chapter 5 on knowledge production stemming from more interior spaces in girls' lives, embedded in relationships and achieved through the integration of scholarship and activism. This chapter is informed by my understanding of YPAR as a vehicle of social justice, achieved by accounting for power and privilege, securing chosen inclusion for youth researchers, and pursuing reflexivity and connection through story. I turn now to the history of The Imani Nailah Project to provide more of a context of Chapter 5 and the overall research design.

HISTORY OF THE IMANI NAILAH PROJECT

In this section, I provide the history of The Imani Nailah Project, a history intended to introduce three Imani researchers, to highlight the relational nature of this program, and to position myself as part of a collaborative effort. I founded The Imani Nailah Project (meaning *Faith in One Who Succeeds*) in the summer of 2008. A program for refugee middle and high school girls, The Imani Nailah Project started out of my commitment to be grounded in a larger effort of community engagement, relationship building, and highly collaborative research encounters. I wanted to develop a program that would welcome young people as integral members of their community and would address their self-identified needs and dreams.

Current members of The Imani Nailah Project are aged 12 to 23 years. All are first-generation refugees who have been in the United States from two to ten years. A majority are Muslim. Upon arrival in the U.S., all resettled in a mid-sized city in the South. At the beginning of the study, with the exception of one high school graduate, all of the participants were rising middle or high school students. Currently, there are four middle school students, seven high school students, and four college students. Two of the college students have recently married. One researcher became a mother in the last year. Imani researchers are from Burundi, Haiti, Liberia, Sudan, and Somalia, though several have never lived in their country of origin. Before moving to the United States, Imani researchers lived in Syria, Tanzania, Kenya, Ivory Coast, and Guinea.

The idea for the program first came from my relationships with Fatumata Yarmah and Rahmo Isse, two of the future Imani researchers. On my first day as an intern for an after-school arts-based program, youth were asked to discuss their goals for the year. Fatumata, a then junior in high school, immediately said that her dream was to pass two high-stakes tests at the end of

the school year. At the end of the session, I offered to tutor her, and over the course of the semester, I was repeatedly struck by how very hard Fatumata worked to overcome seemingly insurmountable academic requirements. A skilled advocate, Fatumata's commitment to her education and her oft-repeated, "Laura, I really need help," was a strong motivator in beginning The Imani Nailah Project.

At a community after-school program in Spring 2008, I tutored Rahmo Isse, a middle school student and future Imani researcher. During tutoring, Rahmo, the oldest of the six sisters living in her home, loved reading out loud the most. Every week when I asked her how she was doing, she greeted me with an enthusiastic, r-rolling "great!" It was the same response she gave me after we went to a university presentation that spring, with the addendum that she really had not understood much of the English. As the school year came to a close, I approached the director of the program to explore the possibility of using his building during the summer. Matt Milovich, the director of the program, agreed to the use of space, and then surprised me by asking me what else I needed. Delighted, and perhaps a bit shy, I mentioned that I could use help with transportation. Matt, originally from the South side of Chicago and visibly amused by my hesitancy in asking for anything else, continued to ask what I needed until he'd committed to providing space, transportation, snacks, and program supplies. He later told me that this program was perhaps the most meaningful thing he'd done since becoming director. The Refugee Girls Program, as it was then known, was presented to the community as a partnership between the afterschool program and the local refugee resettlement office.

Program participants were recruited from the arts-based after-school program, as well as from young people I knew from previous employment through a youth leadership program and at the local refugee resettlement office. I went to each participant's home before the summer

program began, meeting with the young women and at least one of their parents or guardians. Faduma Guhad, a then 20-year old, served as the program's young adult facilitator. I initially brought Faduma to home visits intending to mentor her and to demonstrate this component of relationship and program building. In one of those moments I welcome in working with young people, I ended up relying on Faduma's interpretation skills with two of the five families we visited that first day. Faduma employed her impressive cross-cultural expertise in connecting with all of the families we contacted.

In meeting with families, Faduma and I discussed the details of the program and reviewed the consent forms. For youth under eighteen, we collected signed consent letters from parents or guardians and signed assent letters from youth. For youth over eighteen, we collected signed consent letters. In order to facilitate the introduction and consent process, Faduma or youth participants provided verbal interpretation services to parents in all but one of the home visits. Faduma and I presented the program largely as an educational program, telling parents that as a part of the program, we would be going to colleges, learning computer skills, and writing stories. In that refrain I have heard many times, parents consistently stated that they were happy to have their children involved in anything that helped with education. In anticipation of a planned summer oral history project, we also told parents that their children would be coming home and asking questions about their lives and their country, and asked if that would be okay. One mother said that asking those kinds of questions was important, because her daughter did not know what happened "over there" and she really needed to know.

While stating that the program would be held in a church, Faduma and I clarified that the program would be held in a separate location, on a different floor, away from the actual sanctuary. We were careful to state that the program had no religious affiliation. All Muslim

parents indicated comfort with this arrangement, with one aunt asking if we planned to have any dancing. We assured her that there would be no dancing. In three instances, once we met with youth in their homes, we learned of and subsequently enrolled younger sisters who would be attending middle or high school the following school year. In one of the housing complexes where a number of refugee families live, I saw a young person I had lost touch with, but had known since she first moved to the United States nine years previously. We asked her if she wanted to participate in the program as well, requesting permission from her mother. Initially hoping to enroll eight participants that first day, we enrolled twelve. I later enrolled one additional young person the weekend before the program began; two youth were enrolled by a middle school teacher.²

For lack of a better name, the program was initially called the Refugee Girls Group. Early on, I asked Faduma to come up with possible names, in part because I did not like the reductionist tone of “Refugee Girls Group” and in part because of my belief that naming was a way of fostering a sense of ownership. Faduma was on a reading kick that summer, and had been borrowing books, especially those written by African-American authors. After reading *Makes Me Wanna Holler: A Young Black Man in America* (McCall 1994), Faduma selected the Arabic word Nailah, meaning “one who succeeds.” Later, she chose the Swahili word Imani, meaning “faith.” Out of a range of possible names, the group voted on The Imani Nailah Project, which seemed a fitting name for a program that was mix of both languages and countries of origin.

² Eleven of the initial fifteen participants maintained involvement in the program from June 2008 to March 2011. Since the inception of the program, three younger sisters of the original group joined the program upon entry into sixth grade. Three additional researchers were recruited by original members of The Imani Nailah Project, one in 2009, two in 2010. At the time the program began, with the exception of one recent high school graduate, all Imani researchers were in middle or high school. As of March 2011, six Imani researchers are high school graduates. Each is attending college, two of these six are recently married.

In June 2008, we began the first seven-week summer program with fifteen participants, aged 11 to 20 years, from Liberia, Sudan, Somalia, Haiti and Afghanistan. The first two weeks involved visits to local colleges, followed by a five-week program held two afternoons a week. The program was a mix of art projects, self-exploration activities, community engagement, field trips, and oral history training. Community members provided computer classes, study skills tutorials, and career talks. Two former Liberian refugees (now U.S. citizens) met with Imani researchers to talk about their experiences as teenage refugees, college students, and now career professionals.

In August 2008, the program was extended into a year-round program and adopted by the after-school program as one of its three programmatic initiatives. The current program incorporates several components from the summer session, including guest speakers, college visits, career exploration, and community engagement. College students and community members provide an hour of tutoring each week. To date, twenty girls have participated in the program. From the beginning of the program and through all phases of the research, I served in a volunteer capacity as the program coordinator.

We have pursued three research projects, as outlined in Table 2 (page 56). In the Refugee Elders Oral History Project (Summer 2008), youth learned oral history techniques and worked together to craft interview questions about parents' childhoods, memories of home, and dreams for the future. This oral history training was the first formalized inclusion of Imani youth as researchers. In partnership with the local library, Imani researchers were trained in basic oral history techniques. Youth then worked in small groups as well as individually to propose questions; we used a bank of questions from StoryCorps³ as a spring board. Imani researchers

³ StoryCorps is a nationwide project dedicated to fostering storytelling and preserving stories. Three Imani researchers, Saadiya, Rahmo and Faduma participated in this project. See: tinyurl.com/storycorpsimani.

selected questions from StoryCorps or from other members of the researcher collective, yielding a number of similar, yet not identical questionnaires. Imani researchers included questions about childhood, country of origin, education, career, family, and resettlement experiences. After interviewing their parents, each participating Imani researcher received a copy of her audiotaped interview; the interviews are also part of the permanent oral history collection in the local public library.

In Spring 2010, Imani researchers and their tutors explored reciprocity in cross-cultural engagement. The study started with a story, as Rahmo told her tutor Abby stories about life in Kenya. Study components include youth drawings, tutor narratives, and interviews with Imani researchers and tutors. Together, Imani researchers and tutors discussed reciprocal relationships, in which all members are equally recognized as experts. Findings from this study form the base of Chapter 4, “Rahmo’s Pet Tiger: Fostering Reciprocal Relationships between Youth Participants and University Volunteers.”

Our ongoing study of identity, The Identity Exploration Project, addresses ways that Imani researchers construct, negotiate, and perform aspects of their multi-faceted identities. Together, we explore ways of strengthening, eroding and/or reconfiguring the terrains of gender, race, class, religion, nation, and age. Youth are positioned as agentic subjects with insight into how identity is created, negotiated, and performed. Imani researchers shed light on the complex ways structural inequalities and global dynamics get lived out in local communities and in hidden spaces. In collaboration with Faduma Guhad and drawing from three years of this research project, I offer an extension of traditional participatory action research designs by calling for the continued emergence of *girl-centered participatory action research* (GirlPAR). This forms the basis of Chapter 5, “It Means that I am Knowledge: GirlPAR as an Emergent

Methodology.” Finally, I address one component of identity, experiences and expressions of belonging, refugee status, and citizenship identity, in Chapter 6, –Refugee Girls Negotiating Discourses of Othering.”

Table 2. Research in The Imani Nailah Project, May 2008-March 2011

Research Project	Timeframe	Focus	Data	Dissemination
Refugee Elders Oral History Project	Summer 2008	parents’ and grandparents’ childhoods, memories of home, and dreams for the future	(1) audiotaped interviews between Imani researchers and their parents or grandparents	Data part of permanent collection in Roanoke City Main Library
Reciprocity in Service Contexts	Spring 2010	mutual acculturation and reciprocity in service contexts	(1)youth drawings (2)tutor narratives (3) videotaped dialogue between Imani researchers and their tutors	–Rahmo’s Pet Tiger: Fostering Reciprocal Relationships between Refugee Youth and University Volunteers”
Identity Exploration Project	May 2008-present (data for this dissertation collected between May 2008-March 2011)	Identity construction, negotiation and performance	(1) in-depth interviews (2) focus group records (3) field notes (4) arts-based inquiry (including poetry, drawings, collages)	(1) –It Means that <u>I</u> ’ am Knowledge: GirlPAR as an Emergent Methodology” (2) –Refugee Girls Negotiating Discourses of Othering”

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

This study, which began in May 2008 and ended in March 2011, draws from three years of weekly engagement with the youth participants. Data includes in-depth interviews, artifacts (researchers’ writings, art work, video logs), field note observations from planned The Imani Nailah Project events, and field note observations from varied social contexts, including visits to

family homes and individual encounters with Imani researchers. In addition to weekly participant observation, I have observed and interacted with the researchers in various community settings, both in groups and individually. These interactions, initiated by Imani researchers, have included watching school soccer games, attending family functions and wedding parties, providing transportation for job applications and SAT testing, assisting Imani researchers with the college application process, serving as birth coach, and hosting holiday dinners.

Imani researchers participated in a series of pre-interview brainstorming and planning sessions to foster reflections on personal history, identity, and resettlement. Imani researchers collectively engaged in dialogue about personal backgrounds, constructions of youth, identity, culture, and belonging. During the brainstorming and planning sessions, I worked with youth one-on-one and in small group settings to develop an interview protocol and to craft interview questions. For this project, there were no formalized trainings on conducting research; rather, elements of the research were generated from group discussions, informed by my participant observations and by Imani researchers own creativity and insights.

I employed Conolly's (2008) technique of co-constructing biographies through "task-based interviewing" (p. 208) to more fully explore identity negotiation and performance. Task-based methods provide additional avenues to engage with the research topic and can foster greater rapport among the research collective (Harden et al. 2000). Task-based methods have the potential to reduce youth anxiety over providing the "right" answer and to diminish power inequities between youth and adults (Punch 2002a, 2002b). Task-based activities also increase youth participants' ownership of the interview process, as youth select both the number of activities to complete, as well as the depth of their engagement in the tasks (Conolly 2008). Activities in Imani included life event timelines, journaling, researcher interviews, sentence

completion tasks, family trees, and photo reviews. These activities occurred in the context of our weekly group meetings.

After an intensive period of working with youth to craft an interview protocol, study participants engaged in-depth interviews, group-based dialogue, and arts-based research. Through these multiple YPAR strategies, Imani researchers explored ways in which their lives—while not reducible to structural inequities—are impacted and interact with these broader forces. With the exception of two pilot interviews in Summer 2009, the interviews occurred between April and August 2010. All interviews were recorded, and most were videotaped. Of the seventeen Imani researchers included in this dissertation, fifteen participated in the interview process. One declined to be interviewed; one joined the program after the interviews were completed. Imani researchers decided where they wanted to be interviewed; interviews took place on sweltering hot afternoons in a neighborhood park, in evenings in the air-conditioned cool of the local refugee office, and on several occasions, in the comfort of the site of our weekly meetings. Interviews took place at a range of times, sometimes before Imani researchers went to work or after a long day of caring for younger siblings at home. Most interviews were completed in one session; some interviews warranted two sessions.

Despite my weekly contact with Imani researchers, I was repeatedly struck by how much more I discovered during our individual time together in the interview process. I learned of a mother's death a mere four months earlier, of an impending and unwanted marriage, and of a rather delightful (and imagined) machine that would transform bombed buildings into the concrete that would build new roads back home in Somalia. At the end of each interview and as a way of underscoring the relational nature of the interview process, I asked Imani researchers to ask me five questions of their choosing.

In addition to interviews, arts-based inquiry is a significant component of this research. Arts-based research is centered in lived experiences, focused on illuminating context and generating discourse (Barone and Eisner 2006). Arts-based inquiry with refugee youth often focuses on the therapeutic function of art in the expression of trauma (as examples: Rousseau et al. 2004, Brunick 1999). While art therapy can play an important role in the lives of refugees, it tends to focus on trauma more than on creative expression or cultural knowledge. This study shifted the focus from art-as-therapy to art-as-capital (McArdle and Spina 2007). By focusing on creative expression, Imani researchers secured a common language to explore identity, biography, and community. Arts-based research in this study included salt dough maps, biography collage, drawing, and a poetry workshop.

As previously stated, I worked with Imani researchers in crafting the interview protocol. Questions marked with (y-1) were written collaboratively with various groups of Imani researchers. Questions marked with (y) were written by Imani researchers. The remainder were written by me, as informed both by the literatures reviewed in Chapter 2 as well as by my intensive engagement in our research collaborative. Following the interview protocol is a rationale of the questions.

Interview Protocol

1. First, will you describe a typical day for you? Tell me as many things as you can think of about what you do, who you see or talk to, where you go. Start from when you wake up.
2. Neighborhood: Tell me about where you live.
Possible Prompts: How many places have you lived in since you moved to the US? (y-1)
Describe your house/neighborhood.
What's your neighborhood like?
Who lives in your neighborhood? (y-1)
Do you have friends where you live? (y-1)
Do your parents have friends where you live? (y-1)
Who do you spend time with in your neighborhood?
How often do you go outside? (y-1)

- Are there other refugee families living in your neighborhood? (y-1)
 What do you like about where you live? (y-1)
 What do you not like about where you live? (y-1)
 Do you feel safe in your neighborhood? (y-1)
3. Gender: Different people think different things about being a woman or a girl. What do you think it means to be a girl? (y-1)
Possible Prompts: What does your mom say it means to be a girl? (y-1)
 What about your dad?
 What do people back home say it means to be a girl? (y-1)
 What about people in the United States? What do they say?
 What does it mean to be a good [faith] girl? (y-1)
 What are some things girls supposed to do? (y-1)
 What do you like about being a girl? (y-1)
 What do you not like? (y-1)
 Who is a woman that you admire? Tell me about her.
4. Faith: What is your religion? (y) Tell me a little bit about what that means to you.
Possible Prompts: What has your religion taught you? (y)
 How important is your religion to you? (y-1)
 How important is being [religion] to your parents? (y-1)
 IF Muslim: Do you go to the local mosque? Do you go for service or for classes or both?
 How often do you get to go? What do you like/not like about the mosque?
 IF Christian: Do you go to church? Which one? How often do you get to go? What do you like/not like about it?
 What are the most important things about being [religion]? (y)
 How is it different to be a [religion] in the US than in [country of origin]?
 What do you think Americans think about being [religion]? (y-1)
 What would you like to tell Americans about being [religion]? (y-1)
 IF Muslim: Some girls and women cover themselves, and some don't. What do you do? Why? [IF YES: Why is it important to cover?] [*For those that sometimes cover:* I notice that sometimes you cover and sometimes you don't. Tell me a little bit about that.]
 What else would you like to tell me about being [religion]?
5. Nationality: Where are you from? [Follow up if needed: what country are you from?] What does it mean to you to be from [country of origin]? (y-1)
Possible Prompts: Do you think of yourself as an American?
 Do you think of yourself more as a [country of origin] or an American?
 How would you describe people from [country of origin]? (y-1)
 How would you describe people from the United States? (y-1)
 Are there differences in people from [country of origin] and Americans? (y-1)
 Are there similarities? (y-1)
 Has anyone in your family become a U.S. citizen?
 Is anyone planning to become a U.S. citizen?
 Do you think you want to become a U.S. citizen?

6. Race/Ethnicity: Many people use different words to describe themselves. Some say black, some say African, some say Liberian or Somali, and some people get really specific and say what country and tribe they are from. What do you say?
Possible Prompts: How do your parents describe themselves?
 What do your parents tell you about your tribe?
 Before you came to the United States, what did you know about America?
 What did you know about black and white Americans? (y-1)
 Do you think people who look at you know that you're from [country of origin] or from Africa? (y-1)
 Does anyone think you're a black American? What do you think about that? (y-1)
 Does being an African-American and an African mean the same thing or different things? (y-1)
 If someone said you were African-American, what would you tell them?
 How would you define the word racism?
 Do you think you've ever experienced racism? Will you tell me about it?
7. Refugee: How would you define the word refugee? Is refugee a word you use to describe yourself? What other words would you use OR What words do you use to describe yourself?
Possible Prompts: Do your parents call themselves a refugee?
 What does it mean to be a refugee? (y-1)
 What do Americans say or think about refugees?
 What do you wish you could tell other people about what it means to be a refugee? (y-1)
 What does it mean back home to be a refugee?
8. Insider/Outsider Status: Many refugee youth say that there are things that they really like about living in the US, and that there are also things they don't like. What do you think? (y-1)
Possible Prompts: What are some of the great things about being from [country] or Africa? (y-1)
 What is one thing you would like to tell the average American about your country? (y)
 About being African? About being a refugee?
 What are things you miss about [country of origin]?
 Do you feel like you belong here in the U.S.? Tell me more.
 Do you want to stay in the U.S. for the rest of your life? (y-1) Why? Why not?
 If no: Where would you go? What would it be like there?
9. Family: What do you want for your family? (y) What are your family's dreams for you? (y-1)
Possible Prompts: When you think about the future, what are things that you want to do for your family? (y-1)
 What do your parents tell you about why they came to the U.S.?
 What does it mean for you to be a part of your family?
 What kinds of things do you do for your family at home?
 What are things that you do to help your family in general?
 What does it mean to you to be a daughter? A sister?
 What are three wishes you have for your family?

10. Age: How old are you? What do you like about being [age]?
- Possible Prompts:* Are [age] year olds in [county of origin] and the US different or the same? Tell me more. (y-1)
- What does it mean to be a child or a teenager in the U.S?
- What does it mean in [country of origin]? (y-1)
- If you could be any age, what age would you be? Tell me why.
- As a [age] year old, if you were still in [county of origin] or [country of resettlement], would you be in school or would you be doing something else?
- As a [age] year old, if you were still in [county of origin] or [country of resettlement], what kind of responsibilities would you have in [country of resettlement]?
- What kind of responsibilities do you have now?
11. I want you to fill in the blank for me. Complete this sentence five ways: “I am.”
12. Okay, now it is your turn. Ask me anything you’d like. I’d like for you to at least ask five questions.

Querying participants about “a typical day” ascertains the various roles Imani researchers enact and the various settings in which identity is negotiated and performed. Questions about neighborhood and experience of family further examine the contextual nature of identity. These questions explore experiences of belonging, rejection, and exclusion in residential spheres and draw from Anthias’ (2002) call to theorize identity through the analytical lens of location and positionality. As Imani researchers live or have lived in low-income housing units, these questions also draw from empirical literature indicating the residential isolation experienced by refugee families (Waters 2001) and tensions between refugee and native residents in low-income housing units (Arthur 2000). In addition, these questions draw from stories Imani researchers had previously shared about bullying, fights, parental messages, and social isolation.

To be clear, these questions do not stand in isolation from each other. In asking about neighborhood dynamics or a typical day, I touch on the experience of race, gender, age, religion, class, and sexuality. As one example: Refugee parent-child dynamics have a significant gendered component, especially in regard to parental expectations for daughters and sons (Tyyskä 2003). Refugee girls report less freedom of movement than their brothers. For sons, parents worry over

involvement with drug or violence. Because girls are often viewed as “cultural vessels” of immigrant communities, parents tend to worry over daughters’ dating practices, keeping young women at home because of a particular fear of premarital sexual activity and unintended pregnancy (Tyyskä 2007, Shahidian 1999).

To date, studies on refugee youth rarely include a gender analysis (Hunt et al. 2001). Questions about being a girl draw from the growing field of girls’ studies which, among other pursuits, attends to the relative absence of theorizations of girls as girls, not as girls as someday women (Jiwani, Steenbergen and Mitchell 2006; Driscoll 2002). Questions about faith center primarily on the experiences of being Muslim in a post 9/11 U.S. context. In U.S. dominant culture, Islam is positioned as an undifferentiated, singular experience. The majority of Imani researchers’ faith is complicated by “gendered Islamophobia,” in which young women experience religious and racialized discrimination (Zine 2006:241). In the U.S. childhood and adolescence as heralded as a naturally occurring maturational process unbound to cultural norms or sociohistorical moments (Vadeboncoeur 2005, Driscoll 2002). Questions about age explore the ways in which Imani researchers, given their varied cultural backgrounds, may experience or analyze cultural constructions of childhood or adolescence in a U.S. context.

I am particularly interested in exploring how refugee youth experience or interpret an outsider identity, in which they are conceptualized or othered as distinct from U.S. dominant norms and homogeneous as refugee girls. These interview questions form the basis of Chapter 6: “Refugee Girls Negotiating Discourses of Othering.” Questions about refugee and citizenship identities as well as insider/outsider status are informed by the ways in which refugee youth of color are typically recoded as black youth, despite individual markers of identity (Forman 2002). Based on perceived race, refugee youth experience being othered (Falicov 2003) in contexts

which valorize whiteness (Lee 2006.) Questions regarding refugee, insider, and outsider identities also draw from the empirical literature highlighting the social isolation and discrimination experienced by refugee youth (Pernice and Brook 1996). Rejection and stigma are often overt, based on racialized notions of refugee as the universal other, or the idea of refugee communities as “homogenized enclave[s] of otherness” Cohen (2004:125).

DATA ANALYSIS

Transcription is a way of presenting knowledge, one which has powerful effects on how study participants are represented and how their contributions are understood (Oliver, Serovich, and Mason 2005). Interviews were transcribed by Alex Schiavoni, a college student who has been involved with The Imani Nailah Project since August 2008. As Alex had long-term knowledge of and connection to the Imani researchers, she was in a unique position to listen to their narratives relationally, as a part of the research collaborative. At the end of each interview, I sought permission from Imani researchers, explaining that if Alex transcribed their interview, she would not be allowed to tell anyone the content of the tapes. I indicated that after the project ended, each Imani researcher would receive a copy of the transcription and a copy of their audio- or videotaped interview. All but one Imani researcher provided consent. I provided Alex with an example of a formatted transcription, asking her to pursue a denaturalized transcription, in which the focus was on the substance of the dialogue and the meaning of the words—and not on capturing pauses or the standard ah, yeah, uh huh, um, etc. in dialogue (Cameron 2001). While accuracy is still valued, denaturalized transcription focuses on shared meaning and ensuing knowledge production.

After receiving the narratives from Alex, I first approached them as I would a novel, reading the stories for general impressions, overall themes, and striking excerpts. I then began to code then narrative based on the interview questions. After this initial coding, I then coded the data based on identity markers: race, gender, citizenship status, faith, and age. In analyzing the data, I employed a constant comparative approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967, LeCompte 2000) by exploring core themes, patterns, and categories as well as ambiguity and variation among and within the narratives. I also employed the zooming/panning approach in life space interviewing (Redl 1982) by zooming-in on micro-contexts of local spaces, individual lives and relational moments and by panning-out to broader structural components and power relations (Hoskins and Mathieson 2004). This zooming/panning approach provides a multi-layered orientation to the coding process.

Imani researchers did not participate in transcribing or analyzing the data, with the exception of Faduma in Chapter 5. I am the primary author of this chapter; Faduma and I worked in collaboration to structure the article, to discuss its contents, and to include her insights. In addition to our multiple email exchanges and face-to-face discussions, Faduma has reviewed and provided feedback on several versions of this chapter, including the one presented here. Chapter 4 primarily focuses on the data collected among Imani youth and their tutors, specifically for that study; data analysis is more fully addressed in the article, including analysis of arts-based methods. In addition to the in-depth interviews and arts-based research, Chapter 5 is largely informed by dialogue with Faduma and by my reflections on The Imani Nailah Project as a research collaborative. In-depth interviews and youth-led focus groups inform Chapter 6, particularly narratives of insider/outsider status, belonging, and refugee and citizenship status.

In March 2011, in order to assure confidentiality and to conform to IRB protocol, I approached each Imani researcher to determine whether she preferred a code name or the inclusion of her real name within the dissertation. Further, for researchers under eighteen, I requested permission from parents/guardians to include their daughter's name in the dissertation. Each Imani researcher declined the use of a code name; parents/guardians provided permission to use their daughters' actual names. I discuss the rationale of using real names more fully in Chapter 5. In some instances in this dissertation, I have elected to not attribute a name to a particular or experience.

In this chapter I have outlined my methodological approach and research design. I provided an overview of youth-centered participatory action research and the history of The Imani Nailah Project. Also included were the interview protocol and an overview of the data collection and analysis. What follows are three chapters which address programmatic, methodological, and theoretical aspects of this study.

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CHAPTER 4: MANUSCRIPT 1

Rahmo's Pet Tiger: Fostering Reciprocal Relationships between Refugee Youth and University Volunteers

The title of this chapter comes from an exchange between Rahmo, a ninth grade student, and her tutor Abby, a first year university student. Rahmo and Abby knew each other through the context of The Imani Nailah Project, a participatory action research collective of African and Afro-Caribbean refugee girls and young women. In one of the first tutoring sessions of the school year, Rahmo did not have any assigned homework. Rather than coming up with some sort of educational busywork to keep her occupied for an hour, I asked Rahmo if she would be willing to teach Abby, who had previously told me of her dream of traveling to Kenya, where Rahmo had lived before migrating to the States. –Rahmo,” I said, –Abby really wants to go to Kenya, but she doesn't know anything about Kenya. She doesn't even know how to say hello! Do you think you could help her?” Rahmo, taking the request quite seriously, stated that she would try. Several minutes later, I found Rahmo and Abby sitting outside, faces close to each other, with Rahmo talking animatedly and Abby taking in every word. I asked Rahmo if she were teaching Abby, and Abby exclaimed, –Oh yeah, she's teaching me about her pet tiger!”

This chapter explores ways in which refugee girls, traditionally positioned as service recipients, can and do engage in equitable, reciprocal partnerships. This study explores ways in which mutual learning occurs between newcomers and host country members. I first address resettlement and intercultural engagement in service contexts. By service contexts, I refer broadly to those spaces in which there are service providers and service recipients: volunteer and service-learning programs, social work field education, and civic engagement initiatives. While

these contexts differ, a core dynamic is the provision of service in response to a social problem or community need. I then briefly discuss The Imani Nailah Project, which serves as the programmatic context of this study. Drawing from youth artwork, tutor narratives, and videotaped dialogue, I explore the mutually constitutive role of relationships in service contexts and the pedagogical promise of honoring refugee girls as experts.

REFUGEE YOUTH: RESETTLEMENT AND ACCULTURATION

Researchers and practitioners who focus on refugee youth typically cast them as war-affected *victims* with significant resettlement needs. The majority of research on refugee youth tends to focus on particular aspects of the resettlement process: educational challenges, psychological trauma, programmatic interventions (Summerfield 2008, Pupavac 2002). These are important considerations, as realities of persecution, torture, violence, and the deaths of family members and close relations significantly impact refugee youth (Yohani 2008, Chatty et al. 2005, Rutter 1999). Still, the predominant focus on war-related trauma and resettlement needs disadvantages refugee youth by creating the perception of victimization or dependency (Ager 1999). Trauma-based approaches limit understandings of refugee youth: “Our gaze can be restricted to transitions in lives rather than whole lives, to victims rather than survivors, to illness rather than health” Brough et al. (2003:194). This restricted gaze obscures the strength and resiliency of refugee youth (Luster, Johnson, and Bates 2009; Watters 2008).

Further, trauma based approaches obscure the impact of the resettlement context itself (Muecke 1992). Refugees face significant challenges as they attempt to integrate into the cultural norms and social networks of their new country. The daily stressors of economic marginalization, limited community support, heightened social isolation, and various forms of

discrimination exact a high toll on refugee youth (Pernice and Brook 1996). For youth with visible minority status, racism and other forms of discrimination present particular, ongoing challenges in which youth must learn to interpret and interact with previously inexperienced inequities (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco 2001). Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or “outsiderness” deeply impact refugee youth, “who are almost always perceived as the ‘other,’ ‘not us’” (Falicov 2003:291).

Refugee youth undergo a dynamic process of resettlement through complex interactions with youth cultures, dominant norms, and social structure. As they interface with peers in neighborhood and school settings, refugee youth often gain a heightened sense of their outsider status. While a familiarity with host country value systems is useful for refugee youth to successfully negotiate public spheres, recently resettled refugee youth often feel stigmatized or isolated in the host country (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, Muecke 1992). A lack of social connection, particularly among peers, is perhaps the single greatest stressor in the lives of recently resettled refugee youth (Bliatout et al. 1985). The lack of significant social roles, combined with a lack of expertise in the new environment, creates a dynamic in which refugee youth may question their role in, or in some cases, their implicit value in their new communities (Goodkind 2006).

Acculturation models explore the ways in which and the degree to which newcomers achieve, resist, or are denied integration in their new country. De Anda (1984) outlines the *dual socialization process* in which newcomers foster competence in the culture/s of origin within the context of their newly inherited culture. Berry’s (1986) four-part model—integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization—focuses on the newcomer’s relationship between traditional culture and the new culture. The segmented assimilation model highlights structural

factors—schooling, employment, and discrimination—which weaken or block newcomers’ integration (Portes and Zhou 1993). The selective assimilation thesis posits that newcomers determine which aspects of the new culture they will adopt (Portes and Rumbaut 2001).

These acculturation models offer a compelling lens to explore the experiences of refugee youth, yet each is unidirectional, with a primary focus on how refugees adapt to the country of resettlement. Dominant theories of acculturation position change and adaptation as occurring in the lives of the newcomer (Dinh and Bond 2008). We lack theoretical and empirical understandings about the ways in which members of the host country adapt to or benefit from the presence of newcomers (Tseng and Yoshikawa 2008). This article seeks to determine whether service contexts can serve as sites of mutual learning between newcomers and members of the host country. I ask: Which programmatic components foster reciprocal exchange? What are ways of evaluating service contexts as equitable or mutual?

INTERCULTURAL LEARNING IN SERVICE-CONTEXTS

I draw from research on service-learning and intercultural engagement in order to more fully analyze the extent to which mutual learning may occur in service contexts. In this article, intercultural engagement extends beyond notions of tolerance or acceptance and refers to those relationships between and among members of various cultures who aim to “forge links based on equity and mutual respect” (Leclercq 2003:9). Intercultural engagement can foster intercultural competence, which is the ability to navigate various cultural norms and values, engage in effective and respectful communication, and understand multiple worldviews. Intercultural competence has three components: affective, cognitive, and behavioral. Affective competence refers to the ability to honor cultural difference, cognitive relates to self awareness of the cultural

identities of self and others, and behavioral competence denotes appropriate and respectful interaction and communication skills (Chen and Starosta 1996). Intercultural engagement is connected to hybrid identities, or those identities shaped by varied cultural backgrounds and ongoing interactions between and among cultures (Mason 2007). Hybridity is a creative *process* in which new forms of identity are created in the context of social relations and through the fusion of new cultural patterns and salient ideas (Nilan and Feixa 2006, Leclercq 2003).

Intercultural engagement and service-learning programs can expose volunteers to various cultures, foster personal growth (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Raskoff 1994), increase awareness of cultural diversity (Saunders, McFarland, and Bartoli 2003), promote effective leadership (Dunlap 1998), and heighten civic responsibility (Myers-Lipton 1998). In many cases, programs fostering intercultural engagement provide participants with their first opportunity to interact cross-culturally or inter-culturally (Tschirhart 2002). With sustained interaction, participants may reject inherited stereotypes, resulting in increased acceptance, more meaningful intercultural interactions, and a desire for future contact (Allport 1954).

Acculturation and resettlement literatures primarily focus on the newcomer; intercultural and service-learning literatures often center on the gains for members of dominant or high-status groups. In service contexts with college and university volunteers, there is a predominant focus on ~~the~~ experiences of white middle-class students engaged with communities from unfamiliar and different socio-cultural, racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds” (Shadduck-Hernández, 2006:1). When service-learning or intercultural engagement is informed by from a ~~do-for~~” rather than a ~~do-with~~” approach (Tschirhart 2002:141), dominant power structures can be replicated (Arches 2001). Critical issues of reciprocity, mutuality, and power can be overlooked

or obscured (Boyle-Baise et al. 2001). The experiences of participants with social privilege may reinforce race- or class-based stereotypes (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Raskoff 1994), just as participants with race, class, or citizenship privilege may avoid grappling with issues of structural inequality (Goodman 2000).

This model of privileged volunteer serving disenfranchised recipient significantly limits opportunities for learning, growth, and ultimately transformation for all members of the service context. “Do-for” charity models can also reinforce native-born, white, or middle/upper class students’ inherited stereotypes of immigrant communities and communities of color, including a value system which posits material resources as having more inherent value than cultural resources. In order to create a socially just service context, The Imani Nailah Project was founded on the premise that refugee girls and tutors alike are facilitators of valuable knowledge.

PROGRAMMATIC CONTEXT

The Imani Nailah Project (“Faith in One Who Succeeds”) is participatory action research collective of seventeen African and Afro-Caribbean refugee girls and young women. I initiated The Imani Nailah Project as a doctoral student. Program participants, hereafter referred to as Imani researchers, are ages 11-23 and are from Liberia, Sudan, Somalia, Haiti, and Burundi. All are first generation students attending middle school, high school, or community college. Imani researchers have lived in the U.S. ten years or less. Together, we have pursued three research projects: the Refugee Elders Oral History Project, the Identity Exploration Project, and this research on intercultural engagement and mutual learning in service contexts.

Participatory action research highlights local spaces, honors community-based expertise, and generates knowledge which can transform theory and practice (Kemmis and McTaggart

2000). In the Refugee Elders Oral History Project, Imani researchers learned oral history techniques and collectively crafted interview questions about parents' childhoods, memories of home, and dreams for the future. As a part of the Identity Exploration Project, Imani researchers examined how dominant value systems in the resettlement country impact their understanding and narration of self. Through focus groups, arts-based inquiry and in-depth interviews, Imani researchers addressed ways that they construct, negotiate and perform aspects of their multi-faceted identities.

Outside of our research pursuits, our activities are varied: We have volunteered at Earth Day and a local nursing home, shadowed college students during university visits, and engaged in community art projects. In this process, participants have carved out a space of belonging, as best expressed by Rahmo: "When I'm here at Imani, I feel like I'm back home in Africa... This program makes me feel like I am at home with my family." Other programmatic components foster and support academic skills, career exploration, community engagement, and leadership development. During the school year, students from two institutions of higher learning—a state university and a private college—tutor Imani researchers for an hour each week. With the exception of one tutor, all tutors included in this article are my former students in either an Introduction to Women's and Gender Studies course or an online Social Problems course.

As both a research collective and an academic enrichment program, The Imani Nailah Project is entrenched in the core values of youth-centered participatory action research (YPAR). Like YPAR, The Imani Nailah Project aims to be collaborative, emancipatory, and reflexive. It honors silenced or hidden voices, privileges indigenous knowing and local spaces, and addresses issues affecting communities (McIntyre 2000). Cahill, Rios-Moore, and Threatts (2008:90) indicate three transformative "openings" engendered by YPAR: interrogating our own lives and

communities, transforming our understanding of self, and creating a vision for new ways of moving in the world. In YPAR, youth and adult researchers foster an alternate space, one which can trouble the child/adult binary and transform entrenched power dynamics.

By exploring and honoring the daily, lived realities of youth, YPAR holds the potential for fostering new subjectivities, or what Cameron and Gibson term “a micropolitics of self-transformation” (2004:320). By privileging relationships and an equal exchange among all members, The Imani Nailah Project offers tutors a shift away from a surface level “heroes and holidays” approach (Gorski 2006:173) in which dominant status groups primarily or exclusively interact with cultural difference through iconic national figures, international street fairs, or one-time cultural events. The relational model in Imani Nailah, as informed by YPAR, offers a space in which refugee girls and their tutors can be border crosser across “coordinates of difference and power” (Giroux 1992:29).

PROJECT DESIGN

This research began with Rahmo’s story of her pet ocelot (tiger). It was only when Rahmo got to enact her role as teacher to her tutor that this story emerged. Stemming from this relational moment, Imani researchers pursued a project exploring mutual learning, namely, what they had learned from and taught their tutors. This study includes youth drawings about their tutors, written tutor narratives, and a series of videotaped dialogues with Imani researchers and their tutors. Ten Imani researchers created a drawing to answer the question: “How would you draw your relationship with your tutor? What do you think you have learned from or taught your tutor?”

Six Imani researchers and five tutors participated in a series of six videotaped conversations about their relationships, tutoring, and overall program. Each Imani researcher determined which type of conversation (if any) to participate in: Some Imani researchers interviewed their tutors. Other videos involve individual Imani researchers or tutors talking about their experiences. Still other videos included Imani researchers and tutors talking together about their relationships and about what they had learned from each other. These videos are unstructured conversations which began with questions about mutual learning in the tutoring exchange and in the context of The Imani Nailah Project. These videos were transcribed through denaturalized transcription, with a focus on the substance of the dialogue (Cameron 2001).

In the narratives, tutors provided typed responses to a series of questions regarding their initial motivations, core learning, and relational experiences. Tutors were also asked to share their favorite stories about tutoring, a description of the program, and any impacts the tutoring experience had had on their worldviews. A total of eight (out of twelve) college or university tutors completed and returned the narrative. An additional five tutors from the community provided a narrative; these responses are not included in this analysis. In analyzing the data, I employed a constant comparative approach, identifying and exploring emergent themes and patterns as well as investigating variation in the data (Glaser and Strauss 1967, LeCompte 2000). Additionally, I analyzed the tutor narratives for learning connected power and privilege and increased intercultural competency. Combined, the youth drawings, tutor narratives, and videotaped dialogue produce a textured account of the ways in which Imani researchers and their tutors engaged in a relational process of mutual learning.

DATA ANALYSIS

Arts-Based Inquiry

By focusing on creative expression, The Imani Nailah Project honored a range of communication styles, more fully engaging youth whose first language is not English. Arts-based inquiry is a methodology centered in lived experiences, focused on illuminating context and generating discourse (Barone and Eisner 2006). Arts-based inquiry with refugee youth often focuses on the therapeutic function of art in the expression of trauma (as examples: Rousseau et al. 2004, Brunick 1999). While art can play an important therapeutic function in the lives of refugees, the predominant focus is trauma reduction rather than on creative expression or cultural knowledge. This study focuses on art-as-capital rather than art-as-therapy (McArdle and Spina 2007). Arts-based inquiry challenges old paradigms and formulates new understandings, thus securing a space to disrupt dominant discourses (Estrella and Forinash 2007, Swanson 2009). I turn now to four drawings which highlight ways in which Imani researchers characterized interactions and relationships with their tutors.

Both Shukuru (Fig. 1, page 194) and Makaissa's (Fig. 2, p. 195) drawings highlight often played conversations in the lives of refugees: Shukuru's "Where are you from?" and Makaissa's "How is life different from where you come from and the U.S?" are part of the "diasporic exchange" (Massaquoi 2004:140). Under the terms of the diasporic exchange, Shukuru and Makaissa, in multiple contexts, have either experienced (or in some cases, had to submit) to a series of standard issue questions: to name where they are from, to pronounce and re-pronounce their name, and to make themselves and their country translatable or easily digestible. In part, these drawings reflect Shukuru and Makaissa's experience of being the refugee or the outsider.

As the newest member of The Imani Nailah Project, Shukuru's drawing suggests that she held herself, and by extension, her biography, as separate from anticipated or experienced questions—and perhaps even from the program itself. Shukuru is willing to answer “Hi, where do you come from? Yes, and what is your name?” by offering: “Hi, I am from Tanzania. My name is Shukuru.” while also remaining separate: An elaborate design separates the questions asked by her unidentified tutor and her answers. Similarly, Makaissa's drawing highlights the extent to which she experienced herself as other, the embodiment of difference from dominant U.S. cultural norms. Her country is not named, “where you come from” is not explicitly named as Liberia, but is merely the place that is not the United States. Further, in depicting her country and culture, she writes “different” in her speech balloon three times.

These drawings do not necessarily capture the fluid nature of relationships, nor are they static representations which can only be interpreted from a singular lens. While Shukuru highlights and distances herself from the diasporic exchange, she also takes the conversation into more of her interior world: “Do you have a sister? Do you go to school? What is your teacher's name?” She demonstrates a willingness or perhaps, a desire to move beyond rank and file refugee questions by including questions about her salient relationships: her teacher at school, her older sister.

In Maimuno's drawing (Fig. 3, p. 196) of her tutor, she is teaching Laura, a first year university student, about a new way to count, based on the popular T.V. show “iCarly:” “So the math laws people added a number called derf and they put it between five and six.” The drawing has some similarities to Japanese anime, one of Maimuno's great loves. Maimuno's drawing suggests that she experiences validation, if not admiration from her tutor, as reflected in Laura's speech balloon: “Hahaha, that's pure genius.” The element of playfulness captured by the

penguin drawing and the “On a scale of one to ten, I am a penguin.” is very indicative of Maimuno and Laura’s actual relationship, one based on a shared love of reading, goofy jokes, and playing Hangman. During their videotaped dialogue, Laura joked: “My name is Laura and I’m not quite sure if I’m a penguin but Maimuno might have convinced me today.” I return to this element of playfulness in the final section of this paper. What is particularly striking about this picture is Maimuno’s self-representation. In selecting math and popular culture as the topic of this drawing, Maimuno distances herself from being the refugee spokesperson who can only teach her tutor about her culture, her religion, or her “refugeeness.” Rather, she presents herself as an anime-reading, joke-cracking, TV-loving high school student.

After Makaissa (Fig. 4., p. 197) finished her first drawing predicated on difference, she decided to complete another drawing. In this narrative with a decorated side column, she wrote:

“When I met my tutor Allie, I taught her a lot about my life and things that she didn’t even know about. Some of the things that I told her were funny and some were amazing and some freaked her out. But it made her realize that all the stories that people say about Africa and what we do and how our country is? It’s nothing like what people say. But that is not all the things that we talk about. She taught me a lot of things that she has been through and how she got to where she is right now. She also told me a lot about college. She told me things about how important college is and things that I didn’t even think that anyone would tell me. Allie is my tutor but is more than that she is like a friend... Allie is the best!”

In my reading of this narrative, Makaissa offers a complicated and nuanced understanding of her relationship with tutor and her life as a refugee. Her experiences of difference and “where you come from” (Fig. 1) are embedded in her acknowledgement that some of what Makaissa told Allie “freaked her out.” There is an added element in this narrative missing in her first drawing: Makaissa is not just difference. She possesses significant cultural knowledge and can teach her tutor that Africa is “funny,” “amazing,” and “nothing like what people say.” Highlighting the relational nature of The Imani Nailah Project, Makaissa also

reflected on what her tutor had taught her, focusing on added cultural capital related to navigating the college process.

Other drawings depicted two faces with speech balloons filled basic greetings. One drawing was a pastel heart, with the words love, life, live, and learn written in the corners of the heart. One drawing depicted the racial difference between an Imani researcher and her tutor. Imani researchers' drawings provide access to a particular and often overlooked approach to understanding and articulating the values in or gains of a service program (Simons and McCormack 2007). These drawings provide one way of conceptualizing the process through which Imani researchers engage with and learn from their tutors. Also highlighted are experiences of being othered (Shukuru and Makaissa) and an understanding of the relational nature of the program (Maimuno and Makaissa).

Tutor Narratives

Tutors' narratives revealed learning in three areas: questioning assumptions as members of a dominant status group, shifting from a helping to a relational perspective, and gaining awareness of issues related to intercultural competency. Tutors first reflected on their initial associations about refugee girls and tutoring. These associations were primarily based on exoticized images of the other or on inferiorized notions of the African or the refugee:

Before I started working with these young girls, I thought, "How cool! African refugee women! They will have so many cool and exotic stories." However, I came to realize that the tutors and the girls have so much in common. Yes, we all come from different parts of the world, and we have had very different experiences, but at the end of the day, we're not so different. – Tutor 1

Honestly, my ignorant self assumed that they would barely speak English. I didn't expect them to be dumb, but I did expect them to be...well...refugees! I don't like to think that I stereotype non-Americans or people from third world countries as being intellectually

less capable than myself, however I fear I do this. Imani Nailah has shown me just how similar we are. –Tutor 2

These initial assumptions about Africa-as-exotic and refugee-as-victim are embedded in a series of broader discourses found in both popular media and academic contexts. Africa is cast as the contrast to Western progress; African refugees are positioned as helpless victims in need of aid (Massaquoi 2004, Okame 2006). In her analysis of newspaper coverage of the Sudanese “Lost Boys” arrival in the U.S., Robins (2003) notes the perpetuation of common assumptions about the backwardness of Africa, the superiority of the West, and the generosity of U.S. Americans: “[T]he media tended to construct the refugees as incomplete, vessels waiting to be filled; the U.S.A. as Promised Land” (p. 35). These discourses uphold the superiority of U.S. Americans and obscure geopolitical as well as U.S.-based structural inequalities (Daenzer 2008; Hajdukowski-Ahmed, Khanlou, and Moussa 2008; Loughry 2008). At the beginning their relationships with Imani researchers, tutors began questioning, if not confronting these broader discourses through acknowledgement of their similarities to Imani researchers.

Another tutor recognized the extent to which she had been isolated by race and social privilege, noting that she was learning how better to interact around social markers of difference:

Despite how interconnected our world is today, people are still able to manipulate their surroundings to some degree to minimize the contact they have with others who are different from them and they miss out on the enriching effects of experience diverse peoples. Not by choice, my upbringing was similar to this scenario. Personally, I wish that had not been the case and I feel socially irresponsible almost when I can’t try to relate or appreciate someone from a different background or even simply of a different race or ethnicity. I appreciate Imani for the way it helps me learn how to do those things more naturally. –Tutor 3

Tutors initially began reconfiguring their understanding of “refugeeness” and gaining concrete skills in intercultural interaction. Through ongoing dialogue and deepening relationships, tutors began shifting their understanding of the nature of service. Whereas new

tutors drew from a helping perspective, established tutors drew more from a relational perspective. Table 3 (p.103) highlights the progression of three tutors' viewpoints. While longitudinal data on each of these tutors would provide a greater understanding of the development of tutors' approach to service, the three narratives presented below do provide a glimpse of a deepening understanding of service through a shift from charity, to connection, and ultimately to friendship.

Table 3. Moving from Charity to Connection to Friendship in Service Contexts

Giving, Helping	Connection	Friendship
2 months in program	2 semesters in program	2 years in program
Elizabeth	Abby	John
<p>[Imani is] a group designed to give girls, who have moved to America during their lifetime, the one-on-one attention and extra help with school-work that they need.</p> <p>The goal is to <u>give</u> these girls a chance to get the education necessary to make something of their lives.</p>	<p>During the first semester...I was still learning everyone's name and I didn't feel like I quite fit in.</p> <p>However, when I returned from winter break, I found myself <u>really connecting</u> with everyone. I truly believe that these relationships will last.</p>	<p>The other day...as a group we got on the topic of "what is love" and sitting there having a discussion with all of them was more like sitting with a group of <u>close friends</u> agreeing, disagreeing, and discussing something that is by no means a light topic for anyone.</p>

Liz draws from a traditional understanding of service, based on what the program will ~~give~~ these girls." Abby acknowledges initial feelings of not ~~quite fit[ting] in~~" while also reflecting on a growing sense of connection. John depicts his experience of tutoring as ~~sitting~~ with a group of close friends." This move away from giving to caring relationships (Kahne and Westheimer 1999) has significant implications for tutors' world views. For John, his relationships in Imani Nailah transformed his understanding of service itself. In this narrative, John resists his former title of tutor, initially calling himself a quasi-tutor and ultimately claiming the collective name of ~~students~~." He reflected:

I think one of the most important things that I have learned is that Imani isn't charity. I always have a hard time explaining Imani to other people because when I say "I tutor in Roanoke" it hardly comes close to describing what I actually do while I'm there. It's really not charity: it's a shared experience. As a quasi tutor I want to be there and the girls want to be there. I guess the best way to put it is that as students we all want to be there.

While tutors' reflections demonstrate a push past associations with refugees and service, the learning highlighted above is largely emotive. Of particular interest in this study is how caring, personal relationships might transform worldviews (Skilton-Sylvester & Erwin 2000) or push tutors to explore issues of power and privilege (Boyle-Baise et al. 2001, Goodman 2000). The narratives revealed four ways in which Imani tutors addressed issues of power and privilege: recognizing the complexities of the refugee experience, learning about faith as a grounding force, developing a more nuanced understanding of home and belonging, and questioning the meaning of citizenship itself. I outline each below.

Alex reflected on the complexities of the refugee experience, shifting away from static representations of "refugeeness" into a more nuanced understanding of the multiple roles refugee youth play in their families:

One thing I have learned about Rahmo is that she takes on a lot of responsibility in her family. Though it often leaves her tired to get up early and help her younger siblings get ready for school, Rahmo has said how much she loves them. Quiet and shy at first, Rahmo is revealing herself to be a very complex person and I am enjoying trying to understand her better.

Alex later reflected that she wished this deep connection to family "was more revered in my culture, to feel so much duty and love for someone who has given you so much."

Laura had previously taken two classes on Islam and through conversation and in her class writings, demonstrated a nuanced understanding of Muslim faith and culture. In becoming a tutor, Laura reflected that she had wanted to use "books as a bridge" to find "some common ground through academics." Reflecting on her experiences as a tutor, Laura indicated that she

had learned far more about religion as a grounding, connecting force from her conversations with Maimuno:

I have learned about why certain women choose to wear a headscarf, as Maimuno does, and its meaning. I understand the deeply personal reason behind this choice. By learning about Maimuno's religious beliefs I realize that this religion, as any, is part of her identity and not only does it give her a forum to reflect, think, and act within, it connects her to a greater whole...It grounds her, gives her morals and purpose, and for no reason should be deemed inherently bad or evil.

John highlighted a growing understanding of home and belonging:

The global perspective for me has been most profound in hearing that the one thing that all of these girls have in common is the desire to go home. You realize that the places they come from, Somalia, Liberia, Haiti and many others, are not just the places that the news portrays them to be: they are people's homes where their lives are, and are beautiful in their own right. That's something that I think we all can feel in our gut, but never really understand until we meet someone from those places who really isn't all that different from ourselves.

Laura linked her learning to broader systems of power and privilege, more fully articulating how discourses of othering are embedded in the lives of Imani researchers:

This is the simplest, but most essential way, of learning. It is understanding issues of race, class, and gender by seeing the way these forces shape these young woman's lives. These faces illustrate the long taught, yet often ignored, consequences of these structures in our society. It has taught me to ask difficult questions about how our societies view those who are different from us, those that initially rely on the US, and consequently the government, for support. It has led me to ask what being an American is and what is belonging. Is it legal citizenship or cultural acceptance?

Alex, John and Laura highlight ways in which they experience adaptation and change in a service context (Tseng and Yoshikawa 2008). These narratives demonstrate tutors attending to issues of power and privilege, faith and connection, home and belonging not as abstract concepts, but as experiences embedded in the lives of people they are connected to. As such, Imani researchers and their tutors are engaged in an ongoing process of border crossing (Giroux

1992) through sustained relationships. Throughout an analysis of the videotaped dialogues, I explore the relational component of this research.

Videotaped Dialogue

For The Imani Nailah Project, the dialogues were a new approach to our data collection process. The conversations were unstructured with a general theme of mutual learning between Imani researchers and their tutors. The goal of these conversations was not to provide a systematic exploration of mutual learning or reciprocity in service contexts. Rather, the hope was that the dialogues would provide glimpses into various relational moments, engendering a particular form of knowledge production based in the enactment of the researcher-tutor dynamic.

Some dialogues reconfirmed elements found in the Imani researcher drawings and the tutor narratives. Makaissa discussed what she had taught Allie, providing more details about teaching her tutor about previous educational experiences in a refugee resettlement camp. As Allie had been to Africa, she shared her initial associations with the continent, and what she learned from her trip. Makaissa commented: “When she was here, people used to tell her stuff about Africa that is not true and when she went there she realized that everything that was said was not always true unless you figure it out for yourself.”

Other dialogues highlighted shared identities: Allie and Rahmo discussed how cool it is to have a female wrestler, Melina, on World Wrestling Entertainment, Rahmo’s favorite T.V. show. Rahmo told an increasingly interested Abby that Melina was “really flexible and stuff. She knows how to beat up other girls. And she doesn’t give in easily.” By valorizing girls who don’t give in easily, Rahmo indicates her understanding of a particular way of being a girl, one that Abby also identifies with and affirms. After discussing bedroom décor, best friends,

grandparents who spoil you, Abby asked Rahmo about her dreams. Rahmo first replied: “If I could do anything, I would go to L.A., and then after that, go to Miami, after that go to Paris and then become a police officer or a wrestler I guess.” She then added: “I want to go to college for six or five years” to which Abby replied: “It’s definitely going to happen someday, I believe that.” This video demonstrated the affirmation of shared identities and hoped-for selves.

As I first began analyzing the videos, I was concerned that the dialogues were not illuminating the relational component of the research or addressing the presence or absence of mutual learning. While bedroom décor and Melina the fierce wrestler were delightful anecdotes, I initially thought they failed to offer new insights about intercultural engagement or mutual acculturation. Maimuno’s commentary during her interview with Laura significantly deepened my understanding of what was occurring in throughout dialogues. Maimuno began by saying that in tutoring: “They teach us stuff and we teach them stuff and we both learn something about each other at the end of the day.” After mentioning that her tutors probably learned something being Muslim from her, she indicated that they rarely talk about Islam: “We usually talk about each other, like what and how the day was, what we did, their day and whatnot.”

Maimuno alerted me to a central component in The Imani Nailah Project: this relational model is based in sustained, equitable interactions. Rather than talking about “refugeeness” or being a Muslim, etc., Maimuno would like to talk about the new number system, that on a scale of one to ten I’m a penguin, and there’s such a thing as The Great Binder of Awesomeness.” Sustained connection embedded in dailyness—and not structured dialogue about various identity markers—has most salience in these relational exchanges. This finding, as revealed by Maimuno, has significant implications for service learning and intercultural exchange, particularly in the lives of young people. While perceived outsidership may have attracted some

tutors to the program, the depth of the relationships stem from far more relational moments. To be certain, power and privilege are still critical issues of the Imani Nailah Project and more broadly, in intercultural exchange and service contexts. Connecting and producing knowledge in the interior may foster a space for Imani researchers and their tutors to interrogate broader discourses as aligned border crossers (Giroux 1992).

Based on this core learning from Maimuno, I analyzed the video transcripts more attuned to those components which might foster a relational exchange and could ultimately advance relational border crossing. I noted three: playfulness, continuity, community. While these are not the standard fare of best practices in youth development research, they offer another way to conceptualize—and perhaps institute and evaluate—programs for refugee youth.

The dialogues demonstrate an element of comfortable playfulness, as when Maimuno interviewed her tutor, Laura: “We’re interrogating the suspect. Spill, speak your full name please.” While not necessarily captured in each of the narratives or dialogues, in my role as participant observer, I have noted the playfulness between researchers and their tutors: researchers trying out new school jokes on their tutors, tutors good naturedly teasing researchers about the state of their book bags, etc. This component may offer a way for researchers and their tutors to reconfigure the meaning of service as well as broader outsider discourses.

Further, the dialogues indicate that the relational moments in the program provide continuity, extending past the tutor hour. Rahmo acknowledged that school is very difficult for her: “I get hard days at school,” and that during the week, she thinks about her tutors Abby and Laura, “that they’re with me, talking to me.” For both her bad days at school and her dream of going to college, Rahmo indicated that she benefits from imagining and remembering her tutors’ continued supportive and affirming presence in her life. In answering the question about what

Abby had learned from her, Rahmo quickly stated: “That when I want to do something I just put it in my mind and just do it right away.” Nyanawan indicated that she had taught her tutor Alex “about myself, that I want to travel and that my dreams weren’t set in school...I taught her about how I don’t like school and she understood that.” For both Rahmo and Alex, they have taught their tutors about themselves. The learning is not tied to identity markers, rather for these two Imani researchers, “I have taught” seems to be another way of articulating “I feel heard and seen and validated.”

Finally, Nyanawan, Laura, and Alex, spoke of Imani as a community, or in Nyanawan’s and Laura’s words, a “family.” For Nyanawan: “I have a family here and I guess every day we invite new people in to become part of our family.” Alex states similarly that Imani is “more of a community than a service activity...I feel like in service you go and you help people and it remains really surface level.” Laura characterized Imani: “It’s really just about a gathering group once a week that you can rely on and that you can have a family with. And that they give you a sense of empowerment when sometimes it’s hard to find that within yourself.” This community, founded on reciprocity, grounded in a theory of acculturation as a mutual process of adaptation, and realized through playfulness, equitable exchange, and ongoing interaction offers researchers and practitioners new insights into effective programming with and for refugee youth.

CONCLUSION

This chapter explored how intercultural service contexts can serve as sites of mutual learning. Youth drawings, tutor narratives, and videotaped dialogue demonstrated Imani researchers and their tutors engaging in a relational process of mutual learning. Youth drawings highlighted Imani researchers’ experiences of being othered as well as their agentic presentations

of self. Tutor narratives revealed learning in three areas: questioning initial assumptions about refugee-as-victim and Africa-as-other, shifting from a helping to a relational understanding of service, and gaining awareness of issues related to intercultural competency and power and privilege. These include the complexities of refugee experiences, faith as a grounding force, a deeper understanding of home and belonging, and the meaning of citizenship itself. Finally, analysis of the videotaped dialogues illuminated the key elements of the context in which mutual learning occurred: through playfulness, consistency, and community.

The aim of the chapter was to explore processes of mutual learning in service contexts; the data most fully addressed tutor gains and the relational processes through which mutual learning occurred. Future studies on reciprocity in service contexts could extend the analytical frame presented in this article to more fully articulate how all members of the service context (those traditionally cast as service recipients and service providers) engage in and articulate a process of mutual learning. Further, future studies could more fully account for issues of power and privilege in intercultural settings and in the context of mutual learning. As refugee girls, Imani researchers are surrounded by messages in the popular culture that valorize whiteness (Lee 2006). Further, they are embedded in complex processes of othering, implicitly placed ~~in~~ a position that demands the re-working and re-telling of “[them]selves’ to “[them]selves’”(Cohen 2004:129). Future studies might address how this dynamic process of negotiating identity and othering interfaces with reciprocity and mutual learning in service contexts.

This chapter does offer some insights into evaluative approaches and programmatic structures that might foster mutual learning and intercultural competency. Evaluating programming through youth drawings and unstructured videotaped dialogue provides a particular vantage point, one which shifts from outcome-based measures to ongoing relational processes in

service contexts. Further, employing core indicators of playfulness and consistency opens up new spaces for program design, implementation, and evaluation. With regard to The Imani Nailah Project, sustained relationships, structured through regular and frequent interactions, offered Imani researchers and their tutors a vehicle through which to pursue reciprocity and mutual learning. The program offers a relational dynamic informed by Imani researchers' claim to their group identity as members of Imani: as mentors, leaders, and researchers; as young people whose lives and value do not go unwitnessed; as storytellers who have found a home for both their stories and their ongoing narrations of self. It is through this frame of belonging that mutual learning is fostered in The Imani Nailah Project.

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CHAPTER 5: MANUSCRIPT 2

It Means that —' am Knowledge: GirlPAR as an Emergent Methodology

Laura Boutwell with Faduma Guhad

Meet Faduma. At 23, she's an avid photographer, a skilled youth leader, and a student at the local community college. A Somali refugee, she and her family of nine moved to the United States when she was ten. She's waiting for Immigration and Customs Enforcement to schedule her naturalization ceremony, and one of the first things she'll do as a U.S. citizen is book a flight to Italy to visit her aunt. She listens to Mos Def, Lupe Fiasco, The Roots, and her dad's old Somali music tapes, which she's memorized all the words to. When she found old pictures of her dad, she realized she inherited her bold fashion sense from him. Her father is her touchstone, grounding Faduma in her Muslim faith, teaching her about Somali history and culture, and encouraging—insisting, even—that she make her own way in the world.

I first met Faduma in 2003 in a youth leadership program I coordinated. In 2008, after several years of friendship, Faduma and I started The Imani Nailah Project, a participatory action research group of African and Afro-Caribbean refugee girls and young women. At the time, Faduma was a recent high school graduate; I was a doctoral student with a background in refugee resettlement and grassroots youth leadership work. In this article, I present The Imani Nailah Project and what I have learned from doing research with girls. Drawing from Faduma's insights and grounded in the belief that girls are the experts in their lives, I call for the continued emergence of *girl-centered participatory action research* (GirlPAR) as a distinct methodology, one anchored in the theory and praxis of girlhood studies.

In the following pages, I first present the girl researchers of The Imani Nailah Project and our research pursuits. I then briefly explore participatory action research, with a focus on youth-centered approaches. Next, I articulate the promise of GirlPAR methodology by highlighting its essential components: eroding discursive and structural barriers and merging scholarship with relational activism. I conclude with strategies that foster GirlPAR.

THE IMANI NAILAH PROJECT

In pursuing this project, Faduma and I sought highly collaborative research encounters with girls as integral experts in and about their lives and communities. This project is rooted in girls' lives, in lives often lived in obscured spaces. This project is also rooted in lives that have been undertheorized in girls' studies: African and Afro-Caribbean girls, refugee girls, Muslim girls, and girls living in the South. Faduma and I recruited the initial group of girl researchers from an arts-based after-school program as well from young people I knew from my previous employment at a local refugee resettlement office. Since the inception of The Imani Nailah Project, friends and younger sisters of the initial group have joined. Named by the girl researchers, Imani Nailah is a combination of Arabic and Swahili words, and roughly translates as "Faith in One Who Succeeds." In this project, the insights and capacities of u tween girls, teen girls, and young women, ages 11-23, converge. The seventeen researchers are from Burundi, Liberia, Haiti, Somalia, and Sudan. Most are Muslim; all are first-generation refugees who have lived in the United States from two to ten years. Each researcher attends middle school, high school, or community college, and resides with her family in a mid-sized Southern city. Implicitly challenging a listing of country of origin, time in country, age, and educational levels

as sufficiently descriptive of the girl researchers or The Imani Nailah Project, Faduma offers a more personal description:

If I had to paint a picture of Imani Nailah for you, it would be Rahmo and her huge smile and how engaging she is now when she talks. You more than likely will find Maryan and Shukuru in a corner laughing; they fill up the whole space with their joy and laughter. When Nyanawan speaks about peace, you sense peace, you envision peace. You resonate with her. After you notice everybody's presence, you're left with Saadiya and Nakema. Their presence keeps you calm. If you need the latest on all the Gothic stuff or anything to do with vampires, ask Maimuno.

Faduma is so involved in The Imani Nailah Project that she sometimes drives in her car, pretending to have conversations with me so that she can explain more things I should know about her life. We have joked about getting a handheld tape recorder for her car, but the larger point remains: Faduma is fully engaged in The Imani Nailah Project. In addition to shaping multiple aspects of the research design, Faduma has interviewed the younger members of our group and conducted focus-group sessions, some planned, some impromptu. Other girl researchers focus on particular aspects of the project: Mirka wanted to talk about her experience in becoming a citizen; Saadiya was equally interested in recounting her childhood in Somalia and her frustrations with school. In our weekly reflections together, various themes emerge: school bullying, relationships with our mothers, parental expectations of physical modesty, the stupidest questions ever asked about being African or Caribbean. On different days, different researchers take the lead in providing insights and offering their expertise.

We meet weekly in the basement of a large, well-funded Episcopal church, in a room whose walls are painted to resemble marble. Surrounded by photos of ourselves, painted salt dough maps of countries of origin, drawings of imagined or remembered homes, and cutout hearts filled with the names of our loved ones, we have pursued two research projects. The *Refugee Elders Oral History Project* in summer 2008 explored the stories, experiences, and

wisdom of refugee parents and grandparents. Through recorded interviews about country of origin, parents' childhoods, memories of home, and dreams for the future, Imani researchers explored their heritage. Since 2008, the *Identity Exploration Study* has examined the multilayered impact of dominant value systems in the United States, addressing spheres that constrain or support refugee girls and young women. Together, we explore ways of strengthening, eroding, and/or reconfiguring the terrains of gender, race, class, religion, nation, and age.

The Imani Nailah Project privileges multiple modes of knowledge production and research dissemination, merging arts-based methods with semi-structured interviews and focus groups. These arts-based approaches include storytelling, journaling, writing prompts, poetry workshops, art projects, and photography and drawing of various social spaces. Some approaches draw from Imani researchers' cultural knowledge and include translating songs from home language to English as well as learning and teaching native dances. Imani researchers have various levels of engagement with different components of this study: Makaissa and Rahmo are drawn to the storytelling component; Kafiyo and Maryan speak volumes through their drawings and collages. Maimuno and Masagay are often emboldened by holding a video camera; Nyanawan and Christine prefer to write their reflections, either through poetry or in their journals.

These multimodal strategies honor a range of communication styles, more fully engaging youth whose first language is not English. Most significantly, arts-based research disrupts dominant discourses, by challenging old paradigms and formulating new understandings (Estrella and Forinash 2007). Arts-based approaches –provide another gaze...enhance meanings of critical issues, maintain their complexity, and raise them to a more insightful, spiritual, heart-

felt and embodied dimension of human engagement” (Swanson 2009: online). As one example, the poem below, written by an Imani researcher, poignantly explores homeland and memory, belonging and displacement, offering critical analyses stemming from the chosen mode of expression.

“Remember”
Mirka Delnois

I remember back home when I’m always outside
playing with my friends.

I remember when I smell the wet soil when it rains,
and the strong café every morning.

I remember when I always listen to the roosters
ringing every 6 o’clock.

I remember when I thought:
I will always remember where I’m from.

YOUTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Despite the current “explosion” of studies on childhood and youth (Hopkins and Pain 2007:287), the voices and experiences of young people continue to be underrepresented and undertheorized (Weller 2006). Children and youth “are largely excluded from the very social processes through which knowledge about them is created” (Best 2007:14). Girls’ voices and lives are even more undertheorized than boys’ (Driscoll 2002). Scholarship often originates from an adult gaze grounded in entrenched power relationships: academy over community, researcher over researched, adult over youth (Kindon 2003). Can research by and with youth be relational, collaborative, activist, and non-hierarchical?

The research conducted at The Imani Nailah Project represents an emerging trend in girlhood studies: the integration of girls’ knowledge and expertise in the research process.

Participatory action research (PAR) offers a particularly compelling way to more fully incorporate and learn from girls' knowledge about their lives and the broader culture. PAR aims to be emancipatory, critical, and reflexive and to transform both theory and practice (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000). PAR draws from popular education frameworks centered in communities' critical analysis of social problems and hopes for change (Freire 1970). PAR holds the potential to honor silenced or hidden voices, privilege indigenous knowing and local spaces, and interrogate issues of power and the beneficiaries of research (Kindon 2003, McIntyre 2000). PAR offers a way to insert new voices into academic spaces, not as a singular voice, but as a chorus of various perspectives (Cahill 2004). In PAR, co-researchers connect their experiences to broader realities, leading to richer theorizations of intersecting inequalities and structural barriers.

Embedded in PAR's legacy of advancing collective action and social change, YPAR practitioners critically examine the social issues impacting youth (Green and Kloos 2009). Youth participatory action research (YPAR) reframes how research functions in the lives of youth. YPAR challenges the notion of youth as passive actors and shifts the focus from research on youth's future outcomes to youth's present circumstances (Qvortup 1994). In YPAR, youth act as researchers, producing knowledge relevant to their own lives. Youth and adult researchers participate in sustained, collective dialogue concerning youth's daily negotiations with social institutions and structural inequities. All members of the YPAR research team benefit: Youth build analytical capacities and develop greater personal efficacy (Camarota and Fine 2008). Youth teach adults to unpack the power and privilege that comes with entrance into adulthood. In YPAR, youth are not problems requiring intervention. Rather, they are experts, researchers, and consultants (Irizarry 2009).

GIRLPAR AS AN EMERGENT METHODOLOGY

Girls and girlhood studies offer a vital lens to explore and advance PAR as a methodology. *Girl-centered participatory action research* (GirlPAR) deepens and extends the theory and practice of PAR while privileging girls' knowledge and insights. GirlPAR is not a single approach; rather it is a set of strategies clustered around a core methodological philosophy. Projects will vary by the depths of girl researcher involvement, the length of the research project, the approaches to knowledge production, and the types of knowledge dissemination. Below I discuss the essential components of GirlPAR: eroding discursive and structural barriers and merging scholarship with relational activism. A focus on discursive and structural barriers grounds PAR methodology within girl cultures and the lives of girls. An examination of relational activism extends PAR into more intimate and often undertheorized social spaces and stands as GirlPAR's unique contribution to PAR methodologies.

Eroding Discursive and Structural Barriers

In the broader culture, girls, especially teen girls, are positioned as biologically determined, socially irresponsible, and hormonally driven. Girls are inferiorized as at-risk subjects, their bodies constructed as at-risk bodies, by a disproportionate focus on sexual activity, sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy, substance use, mental illness, and court involvement (Schalet 2000, Skott-Myhre and Arthur 2008, Vadeboncoeur 2002). Risk discourse reifies a socially constructed dualism between girls and adults: girls, as liminal subjects, require adult intervention and institutional surveillance for safe passage into the privileged status of adulthood (Lesko 2001). Culturally-specific, historically-bound beliefs about girlhood are naturalized through social, scientific, economic, and governmental discourses (Martin 2001, Griffin 1993). These discursive investments in girls' lives inform the bulk of girl-related studies,

producing voyeuristic, unreflective, and disembodied research (Kindon 2003). Research on the inferiorized girl subject—featuring at-risk, out-of-control, and still-becoming girls—operates as a form of social hierarchy, bolstering inequitable power structures between girls and adults.

Faduma addresses her associations with traditional academic research, addressing multiple intersections of power and privilege:

I think the word research is a little scary, when I come up with a better word I'll let you know. What I mean by this is that sometimes when something is researched, things get lost in translation, or in some instances, molded to fit an already built up image, idea. I am used to the generic questions people ask for their own amusement. They don't leave the conversation with a new idea; it's more like they confirmed what they already thought. Even if they don't say it, I sense it.

Growing up, I didn't feel equal, and that to me seemed okay, because I was young and I was in my country, and that was the norm. But coming here, not only did I sense the inequality that I felt back home, but it was layered with other things. It wasn't just not feeling equal to adults, but it was wondering, "Are you treating me like this because I have a head covering on?" I feel like you can access any point of view easily except a genuine perspective of what an average youth, young adult goes through. Saying what I want to say, my way—there is no better feeling to substitute for that. I am tired of everything coming from an "expert" perspective or interpretation.

Here, Faduma highlights ways in which social inequalities and power dynamics compromise access to and understanding of girl cultures. Indicating that research *about* girls can eclipse ~~a~~ genuine perspective," Faduma addresses the extent to which she has felt inferiorized by adults who asked questions ~~for~~ their own amusement." When Faduma notes that ~~the~~ word research is a little scary" she is sensitizing adult allies to experiences of feeling labeled as inferior, her stories used to confirm existent beliefs rather than to advance new insights. ~~Scary~~" in this context is to risk being de-humanized as the object of research inquiry. Faduma alerts girlhood studies researchers to her embodied experiences of complex intersections of inequality—based on age, culture, race, refugee status, faith—which position her as the opposite of the supposed ~~expert~~." Faduma issues a challenge: How can she say what she wants to say, her way?

How do girls and their adult allies open up supportive and equitable spaces? In GirlPAR, adults must eschew two limiting frames: one which sees girls as victims of oppression in need of protection and one in which girls' agency is framed in simplistic or idealized terms. It is also about addressing moments when adults unfairly benefit from their adult privilege, their adult-based power. GirlPAR holds the potential to erode discursive and structural boundaries by establishing spaces in which girls and girlhood are honored (McIntyre 2000). Forming non-hierarchical, mutually supportive relationships with girls must be an embodied practice, not a spoken ideal. Given historical and contemporary oppression, simply stating that all voices are equally valued is not enough. GirlPAR requires intimate knowledge of the power dynamics that exist outside of and within the research space. Through an ongoing process of grappling with issues of power and privilege, adults can learn from girls. Forthright conversations about power and privilege, held in safe spaces, elicit a deeper understanding of "very distinct situated knowledges, within very differently marked bodies, carrying heavy and light loads of biography, privilege, and oppression" (Torre and Fine 2008:26). Together, girls and their allies can renegotiate the girl/adult binary and challenge the intersecting inequalities embedded in girls' lives.

Addressing adult power and privilege requires a keen awareness of historic and contemporary systems of oppression and of girls' agency. It is important to recognize that girls enact strategies of resistance in various ways and in multiple spaces. While it is critical to interrogate issues of power and privilege, positioning youth as voiceless victims in need of protection ultimately reifies the girl/adult binary. Equally, positioning girls as experts necessitates a deep awareness of the ways in which girls are embedded in multiple social spaces and interact with broader discourses.

Honoring girls as experts requires critical appraisals of girls' lives outside the research settings. As one example: Once a week, Imani researchers leave schools in which their bodies, schedules, and learning are explicitly and intensely structured by adult authorities, and move into a space in which they are recognized as experts, as decision-makers, as co-researchers. Imani researchers have expressed uncertainty about shifting into the role of expert, not due to a lack of interest or knowledge, but based on their awareness of power dynamics outside of the research space. GirlPAR necessitates sustained engagement, or what I am terming *relational activism*. It is those relationships I turn to next.

Merging Scholarship with Relational Activism

In pursuing The Imani Nailah Project, I have witnessed scholarship and activism merging in new ways. GirlPAR is embedded in a social justice framework, one in which relationships hold the potential to erode inequitable power structures, foster supportive spaces, and transform worldviews. GirlPAR challenges structural inequalities and illuminates how social hierarchies and global dynamics are lived out in the seemingly hidden spaces of daily lives. Whereas GirlPAR attends to oppressive conditions and social inequalities—e.g., deportation, abstinence-only policies, sexual violence, limited educational funding—it is also deeply embedded in a relational framework. This is knowledge production stemming from more intimate, often obscured, and largely undertheorized spaces and interactions. Here, scholarship merges with what I call *relational activism*, which can secure the spaces for girls to claim and produce knowledge about their lives, based on their perceptions, experiences, reflections, and feelings. Relational activism is not conventional activism, leading to collective campaigns for change. Rather, the central activist project—and the chief mechanism of knowledge production—in Imani Nailah is our relationships with each other.

GirlPAR is activist to the extent that it is both structured in—and reflective of—equitable, non-hierarchical, and mutually supportive relationships. Relational activist projects reconfigure relationships among girls and adults, one that has significant implications for academia, social structures, and individual lives. As stated above, issues of power and privilege, connected to discursive and structural barriers, deeply impact the types of relationships available to girls and their allies. While GirlPAR adult researchers must attend to markers of social privilege, researchers' varied social locations do not solely determine insider or outsider status within the research context: Girl and adult researchers who grapple with power and privilege can work together to discover shared categories of belonging (Oikonomidou 2009). This is the real potential of girl-centered participatory action research.

INTERSUBJECTIVITY AS KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

I begin this section with a story to underscore this critical component about relational activism: This is knowledge that is rooted in story, in relationships, in individual and collective subjectivities. One afternoon, when two sisters, Maryan and Rahmo, told of a fight at the bus stop and of the bullying they experienced in their middle school, a high school senior, Nyanawan told her own story of being bullied, of fighting back. So ensued an hour of stories: Nyanawan began by recounting her middle school years, sharing the pain of being the only African refugee at her school, the memory of peers' frequent taunts of "African bootyscratcher." Makaissa then described the day she had to fight to defend her younger siblings at the neighborhood playground. Faduma remembered the day she finally fought back, after months of being harassed by fellow students. It was rich data, spanning school and neighborhood, highlighting resistance strategies, exploring the range of insults leveled against African/refugee/other. The knowledge

was emergent, drawn from relationships, from the moment Nyanawan wanted to comfort Maryan and Rahmo. Ginwright (2008) echoes this experience of relationality: “to our surprise, we learned more about each other through stories of local struggle, frank conversations about wanting to give up, and intimate sharing about our fears, hopes, and dreams [instead of in-depth conversation about the research topic]” (p. 21). From a traditional research perspective, this is an interesting paradox, as prioritizing relationships (vs. research questions) yields a significant knowledge base. In GirlPAR, our relationships with each other foster an intersubjective space vital to the research process and ensuing knowledge production. As Faduma notes:

When Nyanawan and I talk, in between our laughing and serious moments, there are moments where she just looks at me and before I finish my sentences she gives a huge sigh, a ferocious nod, and in some instances utters, “Oh my God that is exactly how I feel.” Whether it is me asking my fellow peers questions or an adult inquiring new info, we all gain something out of it. Sometimes we come across what we intended on getting and other times we experience other things. I see it as spiritual. It is like we are all different, but when we get together, we are complete. I see it like forces coming together. These relationships set you up for something way beyond what you thought would happen.

GirlPAR is embedded in these relational moments, or what Hopkins and Pain term “relational knowledge creation” (2007:291). These relationships center on connections between girl and adult ally researchers, between and among girl researchers, and with research members and the chosen research topic. Components of relationality include pursuing ongoing self-reflexivity, privileging relationships over data, and engaging in microlevel activist projects. For adult allies, ongoing self-reflexivity and critical intersubjectivity offers a shift from the observational moment, or present, to a broader investment in a collective, shared presence (Madison 2005). Through presence, researchers build relationships and explore how they are variously situated in the research, in their communities, and in the multiple spaces girls inhabit. In presence, relationships form.

Scholars have pointed out know that maintaining a high degree of reflexivity and exploring mutual areas of connection lead to deeper levels of access to and connections with participants (Delgado-Gaitin 2000, Ladson-Billings 2001). Relationship building is critical to the research process, as it fosters “[a] relationship of respectful togetherness developed independent of, but complementary to, the specific tasks of the research” (Tipa, Panelli, and the Moeraki Stream Team 2009:100). Imani Nailah is grounded in this notion of “respectful togetherness,” as the relationships formed between researchers have value outside of any research outcomes. To be certain, insights offered by girl researchers are an important component, yet not the sole aim. The relationships, in and of themselves, are of great significance.

As I began The Imani Nailah Project with Faduma, I wanted to foster sustained, supportive connection without, as I bluntly stated in my field notes, “pimping out” the young people involved in the project. In the early stages of my research, I sought to make sense of how to enact multiple roles. I was mentor, program coordinator, researcher, tutor, occasional rule-enforcer, friend. But I am more: I am also the adult. The white woman. The native-born U.S. citizen. The graduate student. Each is the embodiment, if not the realization, of socially-constructed privilege. I wrestled with numerous of questions: Could I be genuinely engaged with girls in these multiple roles, as mediated by my socially constructed privilege? How could I build meaningful, authentic, reciprocal relationships knowing I had a research agenda? How would I hold and honor Imani researchers’ stories as more than mere bits of interview data? And most importantly to my vision of social justice and community engagement: Would the research process directly benefit girls’ lives? As the research progressed, I witnessed knowledge production stemming from deepening relationships among ourselves and with the research topic. From the Imani researchers, I learned relational activism.

Here, activism is defined broadly and is embedded in girls' lives, in our relationships with each other. Imani researchers have offered me access to their daily worlds as I attended doctor's visits and graduation parties; shared meals at girls' homes; served as birth coach; provided health information; shopped for cars; collected furniture for a first apartment; assisted with enrolling in college; filled out Free Applications for Federal Student Aid forms, citizenship applications, and federal tax forms; raised money for college costs; advocated for educational services; and secured educational opportunities in the absence of available formal systems. In The Imani Nailah Project, Imani researchers initiate relational activism. While GirlIPAR does not necessitate these microlevel activist projects, it may ultimately lead to them.

Faduma offers a new vision of what is possible through GirlIPAR, embedded in arts-based knowledge production, relationality, and storytelling:

When we made our countries out of salt dough, it was tangible and gave us a sense of where we come from. Teaching each other our dances, it isn't just an exchange between adults and girls; it is between girls and girls. All of it gives a better idea of each other. It makes our stories accessible. It means that "I" am knowledge. When we think of knowledge, we think of it as being logical or one certain way or academic: Math, science, that's knowledge. But when I translated that Somali song to Imani, it built a bridge. It wasn't something that needed hard core statistics or facts, you know? Nothing to me in this program felt like [traditional] research; it was more like an exchange of perspectives. When I say that we are knowledge, I mean that everything we do, everything we say, it gives us a better understanding to us of us.

Faduma precisely captures the essence of GirlIPAR methodology as she asserts that *she is knowledge*, a knowledge enhanced by dialogue, interaction, exchange: *everything we do, everything we say, it gives us a better understanding to us of us.*" As such, knowledge is generative process, one honored and simultaneously produced in relational moments.

LEARNING WITH GIRLS: WAYS OF ACHIEVING GIRLPAR

How can girls and their allies create equitable research spaces? This section highlights five GirlPAR strategies to promote the theory and praxis of GirlPAR in multiple girl cultures and in future girlhood studies pursuits. As girls and their adult allies continue to develop GirlPAR as a methodology, we will develop a greater understanding of effective strategies. Below, I discuss authorship, confidentiality, chosen inclusion, knowledge production, and research dissemination.

Authorship. Including girls as authors in academic publications challenges traditional approaches to authorship and ownership⁴. While girlhood studies is not the first discipline to attribute authorship to multiple and/or non-academic voices—and while this move is still uncommon—I find that including girls’ names, voices, and authority helps redress adult feminists’ early silencing of girls’ knowing. The mainstream feminist movement distanced itself from the supposed “childishness” of girls in an attempt to establish equality with men (Kearney 2009). As girlhood studies inserts girls’ voices and names into formal academic spaces, we not only honor specific girl researchers, but signal to the broader academy that we ignore or devalue girls to our collective detriment.

Confidentiality. Complicating approaches to confidentiality reconfigures traditional power dynamics between girls and adults, as code names assume a universal need to safeguard girls. While assigning code names to girl researchers in academic texts may be essential due to a complex array of factors, it is a question that demands careful consideration in each individual research pursuit. A standard code name approach is a “kind of thin veiling” (Guenther

⁴ Examples of girl researchers listed as authors in publications include Cahill, Areanas, Contreras, Na, Rios-Moore and Threatts’ (2004) analysis of the stereotypes impacting young urban women of color; Lobenstine, Pereira, Whitley, Robles, Soto, Sergeant, Jiminez, Jiminez, Ortiz and Cirono’s (2004) exploration of mother-daughter relationships; and Hussein, Berman, Loughheed-Smith, Poletti, Ladha, Ward and MacQuarrie’s (2006) examinations of racialized and gender-based violence in the lives of girls. Outside of academic texts, the formal attribution of girls’ contributions can be found in the documentary *Desire* by Julie Gustafson with the Teenage Girls’ Documentary Project (2007).

2009:418), one that ultimately serves to protect adult researchers by limiting their accountability to their girl researcher counterparts. In the Imani Nailah study, if I hide behind that thin veil of anonymity, I risk de-coupling personal narratives from the very real people behind the stories. In other words, “Halima” in a mid-sized Southern city is a construct in my head, whereas 20-year old Matenneh and 13-year old Nyama are people with whom I share a personal relationship. I possess a far greater commitment to Matenneh and Nyama, to accurately and respectfully present their experiences and insights, to remove any details that might support my analytical aims but would negatively impact their lives. Further, after affirming the value of the girl researchers’ stories and insights, linguistic expertise, and cultural knowledge, it would be disingenuous to deny ownership of stories to the girls who value public recognition. Although I presented Imani researchers and their parents with a choice to use another name, The Imani Nailah Project study does not employ a standard renaming process⁵.

Chosen inclusion. GirlPAR necessitates moving past tokenist or idealized inclusion models by providing a range of entry points in the research process. In tokenist inclusion, girls are invited to participate in studies where adults craft the research questions, select the methodology, and structure the analysis (Kellet 2005). Adult researchers assume that their knowledge base is superior and preferable to girls (Alderson and Goodey 1996). In idealized notions of inclusion, girls must be substantially engaged in every aspect of the research process (Kellet, Forrest and Dent 2004). GirlPAR instead offers chosen inclusion: Girls choose when, how, and to what extent they will engage in the research. Imani researchers have selected various levels of engagement and modes of expression within different components of this study: Some

⁵ For participants under 18, the IRB protocol for The Imani Nailah Project reads as follows: “If you tell me that you are being abused or that you plan on hurting someone or yourself, I will have to report that information. Otherwise, all the information that you tell me will only be included in a final paper if you give me permission. You will be given a chance to pick another name for yourself to use in any publications. We will talk more about using your name and or picking a new name during the project, so that you can decide what is best for you.”

Imani researchers helped craft our interview protocol; others found it quite boring. For some girl researchers, structured brainstorming sessions rarely elicited important insights. Rather, it was in dialogue, in brief moments, that some girls felt most comfortable sharing their knowledge. As previously noted, Imani researchers pursued various modes of expression within different components of this study. These multiple modes of knowledge production, coupled with chosen inclusion, diminish power inequities between girls and adults (Punch 2002a, 2002b), reaffirming girls' ownership of the research process (Conolly 2008).

Knowledge production. GirlPAR pursues a range of research pursuits: research initiated by girls and/or their adult allies; studies merging art, technologies, and activism; and projects honoring alternative ways of knowing/knowledge production. As adults pursue research with girls, they can learn from girls' available and chosen modes of self-expression. These modes may vary by culture, country, and resources, yet each is situated within girls' lives. Zine-making (Lipkin 2009), documentary work (Bloustien 2003), theatre work (Lee 2006), text messaging, and art projects can each be framed as or contribute to GirlPAR. GirlPAR honors multiple ways of knowing and reframes what constitutes knowledge production, providing various avenues for girl researchers to engage with the research topic (Harden, Scott, Backett-Milburn, and Jackson 2000).

Research dissemination. GirlPAR privileges varying modes of research dissemination. The New York based Fed Up Honeys is a group of girls and young women (aged 16-22) who explored the relationship between limited community resources and the ways young women of color are stereotyped (Cahill 2004). Through community research and personal stories, the Fed Up Honeys articulated and challenged prevailing myths about their lives. The research team has disseminated their findings through an activist sticker campaign, a website (www.fed-up-

honeys.org), and academic articles co-written by girl and adult researchers. The Imani Nailah Project researchers have talked about disseminating our findings through short documentaries, a photography/art exhibit, a poetry reading, a website, an anthology, and academic articles. Although we may not accomplish all of these dissemination strategies, what is vital here is the depth and tenor of girl researchers' commitment to offering their findings and expertise in broader spheres.

CONCLUSION: GIRLPAR IN ACTION

I knew enough to leave Faduma alone at first: Oprah was about to come on, and no one interrupts Faduma when her hero is on. We were at my house, with the plan to work on our article about GirlPAR. Earlier in the month, we had started over email: my questions sent, Faduma's answers returned. Later we met in a coffee shop, reviewing the draft of the article and talking about places where Faduma's insights would be particularly beneficial. Now we were on opposite ends of the couch, Oprah on TV. I stayed downstairs through a couple of TV shows, trying to keep Faduma company and also trying to finish up the article. I finally went upstairs to work, checking in with Faduma about an hour later: "So how are those award winning quotes coming?"

"Yeah, gonna get on that. When do you need them by? End of the week?"

"Uh, no. Soon. Like maybe even tonight?"

"Yeah, I'll get you something."

An hour later, back downstairs, I see that Faduma is firmly planted on the couch and is checking out sandwich shops in New Orleans on my laptop. I tease her: "How's your masterpiece?"

She gives it right back: “Yeah, it’s coming.”

Faduma is seriously not into our project and even less into my deadline to submit. I’m kinda amused by it, and I’m also really wanting her voice in there. Thirty minutes later, I’m back with what I think is a great compromise:

“Okay, what about just a description of Imani? Just that for tonight?”

Faduma hardly looks up from the screen, but I do get a distracted half-nod. Suddenly, I’m restructuring the paper in my head, thinking that maybe I won’t get to include Faduma’s insights in the way I had hoped to. I read the draft through and try one last time:

“Okay, baby girl. I’m getting the computer. I’m asking you questions. All you gotta do is talk. I’ll type. Sound okay?”

Faduma’s eyes light up for the first time all night:

“Oh, this is my favorite thing. I love it when we do this.”

To be honest, I did not know that we did this. For the next hour, I type furiously. I ask questions. We laugh a lot. We talk over each other, we brainstorm ideas for Imani, we cover more ground than we could ever fit in one article. We’re both energized, excited, having fun. We’re interacting, our best selves have shown up, and the article is suddenly so much stronger.

This is GirlPAR. It’s Faduma’s resistance against fashioning her insights until she is ready. It’s me sitting on the floor by the couch, hurriedly saying, “Wait, wait, oh that’s really good! Hold on,” while typing as fast as I can. It is the insight that for Faduma, her words have more power to her when they are heard. It’s the moment when she reminds me that if we’re going to talk about how GirlPAR is relational, perhaps it is better to have a conversation instead of writing in isolation? More than anything, it’s later, after I’ve read the whole article aloud and

witnessed Faduma's satisfied smile, when I look at her and say: "Thank you again for teaching me."

I hope that girls and girlhood studies scholars will add to our understanding of GirlPAR as an emergent methodology. GirlPAR is not merely a linguistic turn, or an additive approach, attaching girls to an already established methodology. Rather, as adults continue to explore how to work with girls as researchers, GirlPAR can offer a unique and critical vantage point leading to broader theorizations within girlhood studies and qualitative inquiry. GirlPAR seeks to erode discursive and structural barriers through a series of interrelated moves: examining issues of power, the adult/girl binary, and the beneficiaries of traditional research; challenging discourses which cast girls as passive actors and at-risk, liminal subjects; and fashioning relational research spaces in which girls' voices are honored and incorporated. GirlPAR reframes how research functions—in the lives of girls, in the academy, as a feminist project—illuminating the intersecting ways that girls' lives are multiply positioned, variously located, and structurally and discursively constructed. GirlPAR is deeply intersectional: race, class and gender meets sexual orientation, gender identity, citizenship status, disability, and that vital yet oft ignored category: age. GirlPAR grapples with difficult, entrenched power dynamics and culturally constructed assumptions about who girls are, addressing structural systems that minoritize girls.

As an intersectional, relational methodology, GirlPAR interrogates and transforms traditional relationships of power and significantly augments forms and expressions of knowledge. GirlPAR is not a girls' empowerment project in which adults shepherd girls through the perceived rocky road of adolescence and at-risk behaviors. It is not a unidirectional relationship in which adults include girls largely out of commitment to develop girls' capacities. Rather, GirlPAR is about girls, their adult allies, and the transformational potential of sustained,

reciprocal relationships. As I envision it, GirlPAR's unique, vital contribution to PAR methodologies is embedded in its relational approach. Girls and their adult allies engage in collaborative and equitable research spaces; data stems from deeply interactional, intersubjective research moments.

Ultimately, GirlPAR can be a vehicle for broader social change. I offer this call for the continued emergence of GirlPAR deeply cognizant of the inequities experienced by girls who live at the margins: refugee and immigrant, of color, lesbian and bisexual, undocumented, transgendered, working class, with disability. I hope that as we learn from girls, we can more fully grasp the ways in which girl-centered participatory action research offers a space for marginalized girls in marginalized communities to continue pushing towards social justice, as they carve out spaces of belonging, interact with broader systems of power, and pursue lasting personal and political transformation.

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CHAPTER 6: MANUSCRIPT 3

Refugee Girls Negotiating Discourses of Othering

–Well, I want be citizen here because I can be citizen here. If I be citizen here I will also be citizen in Liberia because that’s where my parents are from. And then I can also be a citizen of Guinea because that’s where I was born.”

Makaissa

–I hate when people think I’m American because I don’t want claim America.”

Saadiya

–I wouldn’t say I’m whole American, I’m whole citizenships, because I don’t want to be whole citizenships.”

Mimi

This paper explores refugee/citizenship and insider/outsider narratives in the lives of refugee youth, as illuminated by a group of African and Afro-Caribbean girls and young women living in the United States. Of particular interest are ways in which broader discourses of othering construct the *refugee girl* subject. This *refugee girl* is a fiction, a cultural construction. It is tied to an ever shifting, always othering sociohistorical moment and deployed in service to broader systems of power. As a way of interrogating the constitutions of this *refugee girl* construct, I utilize feminist and poststructuralist theory to investigate how actual refugee girls are deployed as the other. I seek to understand how refugee girls’ varied experiences of this *refugee girl* construct shape their ongoing, shifting, and localized enactments of their sense of belonging, refugee status, and understanding of citizenship. Further, I explore how refugee girls foster and conceptualize citizenship, focusing on insider the insider/outsider narratives and ~~multi-~~dimensional geographies of belonging and citizenship” (Tastsoglou’s 2006:205). Drawing from in-depth interviews and youth-led focus groups, my central aim is to complicate, localize, and extend citizenship narratives by incorporating the insights and experiences of refugee girls.

This article is based on a larger study called The Imani Nailah Project, a participatory action research project with a group of African and Afro-Caribbean refugee girls and young women⁶. The seventeen girl researchers in Imani Nailah, who range in age from 11-23, have lived in the U.S. from two to ten years. Imani researchers⁷ are from Haiti, Somalia, Sudan, Burundi and Liberia, though several have never lived in their country of origin due to war or regional conflict. Imani researchers attend middle school, high school, or college. Two are recently married. Each has experienced refugee resettlement in a medium-sized city in the South with their families. Through the Imani Nailah Project, Imani researchers and I have pursued a study about identity construction and refugee resettlement. The data presented in this article stems from three years of engagement with youth co-researchers through arts-based research, group projects, and in-depth interviews which have explored experiences related to constructs of gender, class, race/ethnicity, religion, age, and citizenship status.

Research on African refugees remains quite limited in scholarly discourse, especially with regard to children and adolescents (Amarapurkar and Hogan 2009). African refugees, given both their numerical presence⁸ and their relatively recent recognition as refugees, are not typically part of demographic trends and large-scale cross-cultural analyses. Further, refugee youth are often rendered invisible in studies of U.S. American culture, as studies of youth cultures fail to examine the experiences of refugee youth (Best 2007). When refugee youth do receive attention in recent studies, the focus is psychological trauma or the challenges of resettlement (Pupavac 2002).

⁶ Most are African and under eighteen years of age. Because of this numerical predominance and the particular themes this study addresses, I primarily refer to the study participants as “African refugee girls” except where I refer to Haitian study participants or participants over age 18.

⁷ Throughout, I employ term Imani researchers to refer to the youth participants in the Imani Nailah participatory action research project.

⁸ In 2000, there were eight million Mexican immigrants and 900,000 African immigrants (Bossard 2007). Since 1980, roughly 200,000 African refugees have resettled in the U.S. (U.S. State Department 2009).

Refugee girls both draw from and are shaped by array of personal, cultural, and global contexts (Tupuola 2004) as they construct and perform their sense of belonging and their refugee/citizenship status. Refugee girls live at the nexus of some of the most hotly contested issues of our time. Their very identities are embedded in complex processes of othering: as young people labeled at-risk, as girls who lack legal rights and/or citizenship status, as Muslims in a post-9/11 U.S., as refugees in increasingly contentious debates over who belongs in the nation-state. Identity markers—connected to race, gender, faith, and citizenship—are hybrid, shaped by cultural backgrounds, social structure, and daily interactions (Mason 2007). Hybridity is a creative *process* bound in culture, in which new forms of identity emerge through existing social relations, cultural patterns, and salient ideas (Nilan and Feixa 2006). Hybridity directly informs this study as it situates citizenship, refugee status and outsidersness/insider narratives in multiple spheres and in particular socio-historical moments.

In this article, I first explore how the *refugee girl* is discursively constructed through race- and gender-based immigration policies and four discourses of othering—developing the African/Afro- Caribbean woman, saving refugee youth, fixing at-risk girls, and liberating the Muslim female. I then turn to the youth involved in this study, asking: Do the refugee girls in this study experience belonging in the United States? Do they want to? Is being a refugee a salient identity? Is citizenship desirable or fully attainable? How is citizenship enacted or reconfigured by refugee girls? This chapter seeks to extend narratives of citizenship by exploring them in the lives of a largely undertheorized population.

CONSTRUCTING THE (AFRICAN/AFRO-CARIBBEAN) (YOUNG) (FEMALE) (MUSLIM) REFUGEE GIRL

[Refugees are] persons outside their country of origin who are unable or unwilling to return "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion"

— 1951 UN Refugee Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees

Women share the protection problems experienced by all refugees... In addition to these basic needs shared with all refugees, refugee women and girls have special protection needs that reflect their gender: they need, for example, protection against manipulation, sexual and physical abuse and exploitation, and protection against sexual discrimination in the delivery of goods and services.

— 1991 Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women

U.S. state-sponsored immigration policies⁹ are embedded in racialized and gendered discourses tied to the broader aims of the U.S. nation-state (Daenzer 2008). U.S. immigration policy situates the *refugee girl* construct as part of a two hundred year process in which immigrant bodies and labor are deployed in service to broader U.S. economic and political interests (Mohanty 1991). Race-based exclusionary laws are entrenched in the founding of the U.S. and the U.S. history of immigration. Immigration remains—and immigrants, regardless of legal or political status—deeply contested, especially in relation to post-9/11, highly racialized notions of secured national borders. The earliest discourses of citizenship were predicated on whiteness—namely, who was deemed white enough to pass over the threshold of “other” to the promised land of “citizen” (Lopez 1996). The first governmental policy requiring whiteness for naturalization was written by Congress in 1790 and remained in effect until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952. Despite the fact that the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act replaced

⁹ According to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (2000), refugees are subcategory of immigrants who receive their classification based on U.N. criteria of a well-founded fear of persecution. Despite distinct legal categorizations, immigrants and refugees often have similar backgrounds and contexts of resettlement. U.S. interests—as informed by legal guidelines and political rational—may be the largest determinant in who is classified as a refugee or a non-refugee (Portes and Rumbaut 1996).

race-based laws with nation-based quotas, a gendered and racialized logic continues to pervade immigration policy (Chomsky 2007).

The experiences of war, flight, resettlement and acculturation are undeniably real. However, the construct of “refugee” is imposed, a status either extended or denied by the State, and tied to particular, shifting nationalist projects. In the first one hundred years of the U.S., people escaping wars were not considered refugees. The first emergency-based refugee admissions program, embedded in U.S. Cold War policy, offered sanctuary to Eastern Europeans escaping Communism: Although one in seventy-five Africans met the criteria for refugee status, refugees from the former Soviet Union benefited from a quota 1000% higher than their African counterparts in fifty-three countries (Lapchick, Hooks and Williams, 1982). Not until the Refugee Act of 1980 were African refugees first legally classified as refugees (Roberts 1982). Currently, an estimated 1.2 million African immigrants live in the United States (Grieco 2004). African refugees represent one-fifth of the growth in overall African immigration rates in the last twenty years (Lobo 2006).

The *refugee girl* submits to a particular gender-based discursive logic framed in protection and pathologization. For girls and women, the bulk of refugee discourse “is one of pity...it is not one of justice and responsibility” (Razack 1998:21). The classification of refugee, as defined by the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention, was informed by the realities of men fighting in wars. Women primarily received refugee protection based on their familial relationships to or dependence on men. Women could also be granted refugee status if they experienced persecution, torture, and capture: experiences typically associated with men during times of war (Daenzer 2008). This construction of the *refugee* subject made women politically invisible (Greely 1996) as well as further securing women’s experiences of war to the private

domain (Pearce 2003). The 1991 Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women recognized that “refugee women and girls have special protection needs that reflect their gender: they need, for example, protection against manipulation, sexual and physical abuse, and exploitation.” This provision made girls’ experiences of war and conflict more visible, by shifting sexually-based violence from the private sphere to a discourse of rights violations. The discursive assumptions underlying these guidelines pathologized girls, inferiorized cultures, and shored up the proclaimed superiority of the United States and the West. I turn to these discourses now.

The discursive logic of United States as the source of liberation, freedom, and modernity is deeply implicated in gender-based refugee policies (Grewal 1999). To be granted refugee status is to be protected by international law. As a woman, to be granted to refugee status is to also submit to processes which pathologize and victimize, rendering women both protected and powerless (Daenzer 2008; Hajdukowski-Ahmed, Khanlou, and Moussa 2008; Loughry 2008). Refugee status may be a “violent gift” (Walker 1996: 598) premised on capitulation to an imposed (inferiorized) identity at the expense of complex lives, allegiances, and abilities. Below, I briefly address four discourses of othering—developing the African/Afro-Caribbean woman, saving refugee youth, fixing at-risk girls, and liberating the Muslim female—which construct the *refugee girl*. While contradictory and fragmented, these discourses inform and shape refugee girls’ understanding of self, citizenship, and belonging.

Both the African continent and diaspora continue to be cast as the essentialized other, ‘the stark contrast to Western progress and culture. African immigrants are typically portrayed as “poor wretched beings” or reborn Western-development success stories (Okame 2006:30). African refugees, in particular, are deployed as helpless victims. The dominant culture must rush in to salvage and develop the African/Afro-Caribbean woman. African and Afro-Caribbean

women and children are cast as passive victims in need of aid (Massaquoi 2004). These colonialist and imperialist legacies have particular implications for how African/Afro-Caribbean refugee girls are discursively constructed. According to this discourse, the African/Afro-Caribbean woman or girl must be developed: salvaged from poverty and illiteracy, saved from religious extremism and oppressive conditions, and rescued from their reproductive bodies, which would otherwise overpopulate the planet. As females, Imani researchers arrive in the United States as a development project.

Before they can fully become African or Afro-Caribbean women under development, the participants in this study are first refugee youth needing to be saved. This discourse positions refugee youth as war-affected victims with significant psychological trauma (Summerfield 2008, Pupavac 2002). Trauma deserves careful attention and research, as refugee youth often experience or witness persecution, torture, violence, and deaths of family and close relations (Yohani 2008, Rutter 1999). This pathology-based focus on war trauma and resettlement can limit, if not largely shape, perceptions of the experiences and realities of refugee youth. Refugee youth are inserted into discourses of dependency and victimization (Ager 1999) rather than strength and resiliency (Watters 2008). Refugee youth are discursively constructed as transitional; tied to victimization, illness, and need; and secured as the inferiorized other for native-born citizens, who are the imagined embodiment of wholeness, survival and health (Brough et al. 2003).

Discourses surrounding the “becoming woman” and the “for-now adolescent” are perhaps the most obvious, but they are layered with and embedded in multiple discourses of othering. In the United States, refugee girls are ushered into a particular construction of adolescence, one which positions them as moody, out of control, and hormonal (Schalet 2000,

Skott-Myhre and Arthur 2008, Vadeboncoeur 2002). Their very bodies are constructed as at-risk bodies, due to the perceived threats of pregnancy, STIs, substance abuse, and sexuality itself. These bodies at-risk require programmatic interventions and careful surveillance in order to usher youth into the privileged status found in adulthood (Lesko 2001, Griffin 1993). Though adolescence contains all young people, discourses surrounding this age-based cultural construction target and more fully inferiorize particular girls, including girls of color, Muslim girls, and refugee girls.

Just as African and Afro-Caribbean women must be developed, Muslim girls and women must be liberated. Most youth in this study have left countries and contexts where “Islam was part of the rhythm of life” embedded in a complementary relationship between the religious community and the larger society. They have moved into a gendered space where Islam is code for male terrorism and female oppression (Lewis 2007: xvii). In these discourses Islam is cast as an oppressive, undifferentiated experience for women. One prevailing discourse in the post-9/11 era is the need to liberate Muslim girls and women from themselves and their religion. The broad symbolic and material range of the *hijab* is reduced to a “single negative referent” (Zine 2006: 241), a source of oppression crying out for (Western) liberation.

Muslim as other is secured by racialized and hierarchized discourses: us/them, American/“foreign,” empowered/victim, citizen/non-citizen, savior/oppressed (Maira 2004). This rhetoric is tied into gendered, racialized, nationalized projects, but is rarely contextualized in discussions of systematic, global inequities. The Western world may want to save Muslim women from the burka, but not from heightened surveillance at airports (Minh-ha 2000), oppressive multinational corporations, or U.S. fighter jets (Abu-Lughod 2002). For the majority of girls in the study, expressions and experiences of faith are complicated by a “gendered

Islamophobia” (Zine 2006: 239) in which—as Muslims or as perceived Muslims—they experience religious and racialized discrimination largely coded in the rhetoric of liberation.

These discourses of othering exist at both the cultural level and in girls’ individual lives. In different spaces, in different moments, these discourses have particular and often shifting salience. Multiple contradictions exist within and among these discourses, particularly in relation to age-based discourse: African women can be redeployed as Western success stories (Okame 2006), but adolescence is inescapable, youth bound to their developmental stage. Though refugees must acquire legal status to gain admittance in the United States, youth under eighteen are largely denied legal rights or standing because of their age. Being an adult is ~~not~~ something we can simply claim for ourselves” (Blatterer 2007:782).

Regardless of their contradictions or their sociohistorical context, these four discourses of othering serve broader systems of power. The *saving refugee youth* discourse valorizes developmental models of adolescence, effectively masking structural inequalities and the ensuing ~~stigma~~, isolation, and rejection of being irretrievably out of phase with the host society and its values” Muecke (1992:520). Under the logic of *liberating the Muslim female*, the *refugee girl* simultaneously receives protective classification and is rendered powerless by the Western world. Upon arrival in North America, Muslim girls must then be saved by the West from the powerlessness imposed on them not by the State, but by Muslim men, including their fathers and brothers. The United States’ exploitative role in perpetuating global injustice against girls is eclipsed (Murdocca and Razack 2008) in the broader discourses of *saving refugee youth*, *developing the African/Afro-Caribbean woman*, and *liberating the Muslim female*.

The *saving refugee youth* discourse locates trauma and pathology in the individual refugee girl, obscuring dominant race-based paradigms and inequitable social structures. The

discursively constructed *refugee girl*, while not always of color, is always a racialized construct. She is categorized and coded as the other (Miles 2002), the contrast to the native-born. A focus on mental health needs is not only reductive, but is a form of “psychological imperialism,” a way of colonizing the non-Western mind by “setting out to instruct, regulate, and modernise, presenting as definitive the contemporary Western way of being a person” (Summerfield 2008: 992).

Inferiorized and pathologized, the *refugee girl* construct shores up the legitimacy of military-based humanitarian aid. Once the country of origin is classified as dangerous, once the *refugee girl* is a victim to be rescued, once the rhetoric of the liberatory West is unleashed, then military and economic investments are legitimated by a benevolent United States imparting more civilized ways of being to refugee populations. Whole countries can be pathologized, large-scale populations rendered vulnerable, traumatized, and dysfunctional, incapable of self-governance (Pupavac 2002). As sovereign nations are redeployed as problematic cultures (Bhatia and Ram 2001), the sexual and physical violence refugee women experience is discursively linked to “inferior” countries, cultures, and faiths, while the United States is upheld as the source of freedom and liberation. Here, a “colonial mythology” is at play: “We are developed; they are not. We know how to live; they do not. We know how to respect women; they do not” (Murdocca and Razack 2008: 260).

Immigration history and these discourses of othering suggest that regardless of the sociohistorical context, the *refugee girl* is a gendered, racialized, nationalized project that serves broader systems of power. Drawing on these literatures, I now turn to the *refugee girl* construct. The particular dimensions of this construct are not typically considered in the literature. As such, I draw from disparate literatures to analyze and name the particular fusion of narratives that

construct the *refugee girl*. As a construct, I assert that the *refugee girl* is/was a victim, liberated from an oppressive religion and culture by the benevolent West. She is (quietly, uncritically) grateful for the opportunities available in the host country. The *refugee girl* is passive, eager, receptive—a fecund space to impart the cultural norms of the valorized West. The *refugee girl* is homogenized, a repository for exoticized imaginings and continued reterritorializing.

The *refugee girl* is a colonized subject. This has particular implications for what kind of citizen she can become. Hegemonic notions of citizenship, embodied by these discourses of othering, suggest that in order to fully assimilate the *refugee girl*, she must be developed, saved, fixed, and liberated. The West can salvage the *refugee girl*, offer her a place of belonging, so long as she will be another and serve as the blank slate for Western imaginings. Above all else, the *refugee girl* is always becoming, never fully realized. I turn now to actual refugee girls to explore their relationship with this *refugee girl* construct.

LEARNING FROM GIRLS: NEGOTIATING BELONGING AND REFUGEE STATUS

In turning to Imani researchers, I seek to understand how individually and collectively, refugee girls interact with insider/outsider narratives and the implications of these narratives on avenues to and expressions of citizenship. Two data sets were used in this study: in-depth interviews and a youth-led focus group. The interviews were designed in a participatory action research framework in which Imani researchers and I collectively determined a series of interview questions related to the identity markers of gender, race, faith, age, and nationality. The fifteen interviews, which typically lasted between 90-120 minutes, were completed after two years of in-depth engagement with participants. Interviews were either audio or video taped at the place of youth's choosing: researchers' homes, a neighborhood park, the local refugee office,

and the location of the Imani Nailah program (a church basement) all served as interview locations.

The youth-led focus group occurred approximately four months after all interviews were completed. At the beginning of our focus group brainstorm, I asked three Imani researchers if they would be willing to lead our group that day, explaining that I wanted to learn more about what refugee girls think about being a refugee and a citizen. Drawing from the data collected in the in-depth interviews, I selected belonging, refugee status, and citizenship as three components of identity that warranted further exploration. Maimuno, Rahmo, and Kafiyo, all high school students from Somalia, began by discussing their sense of belonging and by collectively recording their associations with the words refugee, American, and citizen. After completing their word association exercise, the three Imani researchers led our entire group in a similar activity. The three leaders began by introducing the topics of belonging, refugee status, and citizenship. After four small groups completed a word association exercise, the large group discussed the salience of refugee status, citizenship, and belonging in their lives. At the conclusion of the hour, Imani researchers collectively crafted definitions of the words citizen, belonging, and global citizen.

Drawing from life space interviewing (Redl 1982), I employed a zooming/panning approach to code the data. This approach offers both a zooming-in on the micro-details of subjectivities, context, and moment as well as a panning-out to broader sets of power relations, structural inequalities, and sociohistorical contexts (Hoskins and Mathieson 2004). This zooming/panning approach provides a multi-layered orientation to structural inequalities, discourses of othering, the interior of refugee girls' lives, and the interrelatedness of these spaces. The in-depth interviews more fully explore how actual refugee girls interact with the

refugee girl construct, conceptualize citizenship, and navigate insider/outsider narratives. During the youth-lead focus groups, Imani researchers considered their individual and collective understandings of belonging, citizenship, and refugee status. Combined, these two qualitative approaches offer a compelling glimpse into how refugee girls may “do” citizenship, both now and in the future. Learning how refugee youth navigate being othered, articulate belonging, and frame their refugee status has particular implications for what kinds of citizens they can, will, or may want to become. I turn first to belonging and the salience of a refugee identity and then localized enactments of a counter-narrative of citizenship, broadly understood. Central elements of this counter-narrative are affirmation of a sense of belonging, reinterpretation of refugee status, and expansion of conventional definitions of citizenship.

—“GIRLING”¹⁰ CITIZENSHIP AND BELONGING

I position these counter-narratives in light of a burgeoning literature on citizenship in context of globalization, one which extends the boundaries of citizenship outside of a narrow legal rights-based definition (Croucher 2004, Lister 1997). Globalization, in particular, global migration, has disrupted citizenship regimes predicated solely on legal rights and the relationship between the citizen and the nation-state (Pinson, Arnot and Candappa 2010). Cognizant of the transnational ties in refugee girls’ lives, I draw from Yuval-Davis’ (1997) notion of multi-layered citizenship, which decouples citizenship from attachment to the nation-state and links citizenship to a series of simultaneous rights and obligations in a range of political communities. I consider the embodied dimensions of citizenship, involving subjects differentially situated in terms of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, age, or citizenship (Lister 1997). Girls’ claims of

¹⁰ Switzer (2009:7) employs the term “girling” to both denote and call for analytical frames which highlight the ways in which girls interact with or shape dominant systems of meaning.

citizenship are affected by their position within these social categories as well as their locations within various political projects which can be local, regional, national, or transnational in scope (Yuval-Davis 2007).

Citizenship is often deployed as a mechanism to distinguish between “~~us~~” and “~~them~~,” a primary way to extend, establish, or revoke belonging to or within the nation-state (Croucher 2004).

These frames of “~~us~~” and “~~them~~” and “~~the other~~” are particularly invoked in contexts of involuntary migration, undocumented persons, and secured national borders (Pinson, Arnot and Candappa 2010). The migrant, “~~embodied and imagined, condenses our concerns with race, space and time, and the politics of belonging~~” Westwood and Phizacklea (2000:3). In this context, refugee girls’ belonging is a status contested and extended by the nation-state, a form of boundary-maintenance (Crowley 1999). Yet those who are denied formal citizenship rights within a particular nation-state can claim belonging through the enactment cultural citizenship. Cultural citizenship encompasses activities through which groups and individuals name their communities, claim space, and claim rights. Further, cultural citizenship secures the right to claim membership to the nation-state and to maintain cultural distinctiveness which can fosters or uphold a sense of belonging (Flores 2004).

In citizenship theory, belonging has emerged as a way to explore—and in some cases, supplant—prevailing frames of identity and citizenship (Croucher 2004). Belonging relates to both *who* belongs, who has the power to determine or extend belonging, and who is allowed to achieve or enact belonging (Bell 1999). Belonging can exist beside or within a profound experience of uprooting, in which refugees may feel “~~separation from their true place in the world~~” (Matsuoka and Sorenson 2001:3). Hill (2006) linked belonging to a sense of connectedness, asserting that belonging is a dynamic process tied to larger social systems, with

broader implication for the well-being of individuals, families, and communities: Belonging is simultaneously tied to mental health and resilience, equally linked to psychosocial outcomes as to the perpetuation of culture, socioeconomic status, spirituality, and acculturation, embedded in discourses of citizenship and identity.

Outside of citizenship theory, research on belonging often frames it as an emotive experience, intimately tied to support networks. Hagerty et al. (1996) conceive of belonging as personal engagement in a support system in which members share particular characteristics and feel valued, if not integral to the social network. Kohut (1977) suggests that relatedness, a core component of belonging, is critical to an individual's present well-being and future growth and development. A sense of belonging is associated with an increase in healthy behaviors (Acton and Malathum 2002) and a decrease in depression, both in the general population (Choenarom, Williams and Hagerty 2005) and within immigrant and refugee communities (Almedom 2004). In a qualitative study of belonging and adaptation among Bosnian refugee women, Keyes and Kane (2004) highlighted four components of belonging: feelings of empathy, experiences of reciprocity, acquisition of the host country language, expression of salient identity markers and cultural memory.

Drawing from Hill (2006) and Forman (2002), I frame belonging as embedded in both local spaces and in national discourses. There is an emotive, intangible quality, one which speaks of how belonging is often rooted in relatedness, connection, and shared worldviews. There is also a determinative component based on power relations: Belonging is intricately tied to the relationship to the nation-state (Croucher 2004). Belonging equally addresses who is framed as a would-be citizen, who can be ushered into the nation-state as a legitimate subject:

To belong, an individual or community both accepts the dominant values and meanings of the nation while proving their worthiness (and personal worth) so that they will, in

turn, be accepted into the nation... Belonging is also related to the hegemonic relations between the immigrant and the State and the battle for consent that precedes one's induction as a "naturalized" immigrant or citizen. (Forman 2002:111)

These hegemonic relations are constitutive, shaping how Imani researchers connect with—or distance themselves from—the *refugee girl* construct and the identity markers of refugee and citizen.

I turn now to Imani researchers' narratives of belonging, refugeeness, and citizenship. Through Imani researchers' narratives, I consider several dimensions of refugee girls' citizenship: rights-based citizenship, multi-layered citizenship, cultural citizenship, as well as the affective dimensions of belonging as citizens. I am particularly interested in the ways and the spaces in which Imani researchers mobilize various components of citizenship to counter pejorative insults levied against the *refugee girl* construct. In light of the *refugee girl* construct, actual refugee girls are bombarded with various discourses that threaten erasure or disempowerment. How do they mobilize or interact with narratives of belonging, refugee identity and citizenship? Which counter-narratives are enacted and in what spaces?

Belonging

When asked "Do you feel like you belong here in the United States?" only Rahmo professed a strong sense of belonging: "Now that I'm in U.S.A. five years? Yeah, pretty much!" The majority of Imani researchers indicated that they feel, at best, a partial sense of belonging in the United States. Christine's "yes and no" Fatumata's "50/50," Kafiyo's "sort of," and Mirka's "not all the way" offered the strongest claims of belonging, and were joined with Mimi's "I would say not technically," Makaissa's "not really," and several pointed no's. For a number of researchers, not-belonging or partial belonging spoke to their feelings of being othered, of not fitting in with peers, and with not possessing valued cultural capital. Imani researchers

approached belonging from three overlapping frames: belonging for resources, belonging as emotive, belonging through knowledge.

Several Imani researchers conceptualized belonging in the United States through the lens of how their educational and employment opportunities in the United States will garner resources for their home country. Kafiyo asserted: “I belong here because I’m meant to have a good, successful life. Then when I’m done with college and stuff here, I can go back and help my country.” Similarly, Christine wanted to become a United States citizen in order to have a job as a foreign diplomat, so that she may in turn provide humanitarian aid to her country. Belonging in this sense is to recognize both personal attributes and available resources, to value their usefulness within the context of the home country. Belonging becomes a transnational exchange: I belong here because it benefits my country of origin, to which I also belong.

For other youth, belonging is an intangible, emotive experience. For Makaissa, belonging meant “[y]ou’re somewhere where you think you’re supposed to be.” Nakema connected belonging to a place of safety, which she suggested she was more likely to find in Miami where more Haitians live. Mirka proposed that belonging signifies “you’re not alone there.” This emotive conceptualization of belonging was most prevalent in youth who articulated a strong connection to their country of origin. Mimi offered: “I don’t really like feel comfortable sometimes in America because I really miss my other half of the family. They’re still people out there in my other country that want us back over there.” For some youth, a fractured sense of belonging in the United States reinforced the longing for home. For others, an emotive, partial sense of belonging was tied to an entrenched and valued way of being, the pull of childhood memories, and the longing to return.

A number of youth experienced belonging as tied to their linguistic and cultural knowledge of the United States. Rahmo and Makaissa felt a greater sense of belonging after learning English. Fatumata experienced belonging as the recognition that she knows more about the United States than Liberia, where she is from, but has rarely lived: “Even if I’m saying I’m Liberian, it would be hard for me to go in Liberia and settle there. It would be really, really hard because when I go there, I don’t know what I’m doing.” Masagay connected her feelings of not belonging to her lack of knowledge: “If you wasn’t born here, you don’t really know a lot about here, like the presidents, all that stuff. You didn’t know what happened... they talk about presidents and wars, Civil War stuff and you didn’t really know what happened that time, so.”

For some youth, partial belonging seemed to be a conscious choice, animated by loyalty to the home country. Makaissa purported that she does not really belong in the United States because “I like living in the United States but I also like being in Liberia too.” This sense of loyalty is filtered by a fear of forgetting: As she prepared to leave for the United States, friends and family issued a warning: “They just say you’re going to the United States. You gonna forget about everybody here. You just gonna go, you gonna be one of them. You’re not gonna come back to your people. You gonna forget about your people.” Partial belonging may be an adaptive strategy, a way of maintaining loyalty and connection to home.

In individual interviews, youth drew from multiple facets of belonging for resources, belonging as emotive, and belonging through knowledge in articulating their experiences with insider/outsider narratives in the United States. In the group brainstorm, Imani researchers linked belonging to its emotive component: “Belong means a place you are, you come from, and you want to be, with people you love around who care about you. It makes you feel at home and like you can carry it with you because it is in your mind and heart.”

Refugee Status

In this section, I address ways refugee girls interpret or experience their refugee status. Here, conceptualizations of refugee status serve as a bridge between a sense of belonging reviewed in the previous section and embodied practices of citizenship, which will be discussed in a subsequent section. It is through their experiences of “refugeeness” that Imani researchers link their sense of belonging to the salience of citizenship. Embedded in this analysis is the recognition that refugee girls interact with and reconfigure broader discourses, while at the same time being shaped by them.

Few Imani researchers claim “refugee” as an identity, although it is their primary legal classification in this country. Several distance themselves from the term, while others engage in a purposeful “not knowing.” As a protective measure, youth also deploy linguistic turns or demonstrate a nuanced understanding of immigration history. While several stated that they did not know what the term meant, the majority associated refugee with the other. Makaissa indicated that refugee is neither a good nor a bad word, but “when you think about it, you’re different from everybody.” The sense of being the other also occurs in more localized discourses. Masagay had no problems with the word refugee, but wished her teachers did not refer to her as an “ELL” (English Language Learner): “The teacher always saying like, ‘ELLs.’ Some people, some kids can be embarrassed. They always saying, ‘ELL students’ or stuff like that.”

Other youth reject the refugee label in order to more fully align themselves with their country of origin. Mirka was quick to clarify that she does not call herself a refugee, preferring to say: “I’m a Caribbean girl. Always. Or I’m Haitian. Whichever.” Several youth suggested that their parents were refugees, but that they were not. Kafiyo indicated that she is not a refugee, but “someone that came to the U.S. because my parents had to leave Somalia.”

Several youth professed a dislike of the term based on other people's associations with it. Kafiyo critiqued the word itself: "I just don't like the word refugee... I don't know. I just don't like the way it sounds. It doesn't sound nice." She expressed a preference for the term "involuntary immigrant," stating: "I don't know, refugee, like I know we seek refuge but it sounds like they just added a second e." After stating that refugee is a "weird word," Kafiyo insisted that it was not her fault that she was in the United States. For Kafiyo, her frustration with that extra e is her critique of Somalia being primarily associated with war: "[J]ust because the war happened, and our country is messed up now... [people are] not supposed to blame it on all Somalians."

Imani researchers typically defined refugees as people who had to leave their country because of a war. As Fatumata noted: "Refugee is people that [is] excused from their country because of the war... which means they have to fight. You are not really safe, possibility you can die." For some, the definition was more broadly based: Makaissa associated refugee with "someone who needs help," while for Masagay, refugees are simply "people from [a] different country." These more vaguely worded definitions are in part a protective strategy. Mirka suggests that she often refuses to name herself as a refugee or immigrant, telling would-be questioners: "I'm just here" because otherwise they may "turn out to say something stupid I don't like and I just stop it there."

During our interview, in an attempt to determine whether Maryan names her country of origin (Somalia) or her country of birth (Kenya) as her home, I asked: "If I didn't know you and I said, 'Oh! Where are you from?' What would you say?" Maryan is one of several Imani researchers who have never lived in the country they are from; I wanted to explore how her imagined homeland informs her understanding of home, place, and belonging. Maryan initially

grimaced, replying: “Well, I would be saying, ‘I don’t know you,’ first. Yeah, I mean there’s some people they ask me that question and I don’t really know. Probably they are strangers. I mean you shouldn’t tell them where you came from first. I mean you have to learn them and stuff like that.”

I then asked Maryan if she would tell me where she’s from after we’d known each other for three months. She replied: “I would be like, ‘I don’t know.’ I mean you just learn the person that you can’t even tell them yet. You have to learn them more and more and stuff like that.” As the conversation progressed, Maryan decided she would tell me she is from Kenya after six months. She then demonstrated how she manages her peers when they ask her where she is from. Her eyes lit up as she recounted an oft-replayed conversation: “They can say, ‘I wanna know where you came from.’ I say, ‘You want to know where I came from?’ ” Maryan leaned in, beckoning me with her index finger, saying encouragingly: “Come here! Come here.” Enunciating every word for maximum effect, she announced: “I say, ‘My mom’s belly.’ ” Maryan and I both began laughing as she remarked: “I’m so silly.”

I continued asking Maryan about having to answer questions about being from Kenya or more typically, from Africa. She wanted to tell people to “just leave it there and drop it,” because otherwise, people start thinking pejoratively about her, asking uninformed, intrusive questions about her country, her family, or Africa. Like Mirka’s “I’m just here,” there is a sense of weariness and wariness about these anticipated exchanges, a mixture of feeling both protective of and distanced from imagined and actual homes. With a big sigh, Maryan reflected: “Sometimes you[re] like: ‘I’m just too tired to talk about it.’ ”

In the “diasporic exchange,” refugees are asked to name where they are from, locate the country on an imaginary map, and spell or slowly re-pronounce their names, after which they are

praised for their excellent English (Massaquoi 2004:140). Saadiya enacted her experience of the diasporic exchange:

Laura: When people ask you where you're from, what do you say?

Saadiya: I get tired. It's like I say East Africa. I say East Africa and they look at me. If I say Somalia don't nobody know where that at. And there's no map on my phone and I don't have nothing to show, you know? So I'm like you know what? Africa, Africa, Africa, so it is what it is.

Laura: And then what do people say after you say Africa?

Saadiya: And then they be like, "Oh you don't look like you from Africa." You know like, "You don't act like you from Africa," or "Your English is so good." You know I'm like, it's so many Africans that you haven't seen.

In my role of participant observer, I have seen multiple versions of diasporic exchange enacted countless times by well-meaning community members. Sometimes, they are private conversations between young people and school staff or peers. Other times, the othering is quite public, even comical. A man strumming a guitar on the sidewalk once enthusiastically proclaimed "Welcome to America!" as several Imani researchers walked past him on their way to visit a local arts studio. Some girls were wearing scarves, some were wearing both jeans and a long skirt, and some would have individually "passed" as U.S. American. Collectively, Imani researchers were instantly rendered as the other. As the man burst into a patriotic-sounding song, we scurried upstairs away from him, some girls laughing, others looking embarrassed, some taking the phrase and stripping it of its power by repeating it over and over again. Five Imani researchers had been in the country almost a decade; only one was a relative newcomer. In that moment, all were reissued as the other, the stranger, the fresh off the would-be boat.

Several of the Imani researchers reflected on what U.S. Americans think about what it means to be a refugee. Mimi articulated her experiences with native-born youth: "Yeah, they will say, 'Why are you [an] immigrant? Why can't you just be American? Why can't everybody in

the world just be American?...They mean [W]hy didn't you just come from, why didn't your family only just be from here and [then] more people would like you [and] not make fun of you." Mirka has experienced U.S. Americans who "feel sorry" for her, while Makaissa asserted that U.S. Americans think refugees are "helpless," "like someone who can't do anything on their own." Makaissa demonstrated a deep discomfort with U.S. Americans believing that refugees are "trying to come take over our place." Rahmo's neighbors have told her and her family that they were "taking over the world" and "bringing disease."

Both Makaissa and Rahmo suggest that U.S. Americans do not fully grasp the realities of the refugee experience or of U.S. immigration history:

"But they don't really understand what's really going on before we got here."
-Makaissa

"But they have some people who understand what it means to a refugee and what it's like. And those people who don't understand, it [is] just that they were one time a refugee, but they don't wanna think about it. Because you are the new one. They know that you are a refugee and [think] they should say things about you."
-Rahmo

Rahmo's words are particularly powerful: "You are the other because you are the new one" and native-born citizens do not want to think about when they were "one time a refugee." What kind of citizen can you be if you are discursively constructed as the *refugee girl*, the always-arriving newcomer, asked to continually participate in the diasporic exchange? I have witnessed the performative component of the *refugee girl* construct in these diasporic exchanges, a performance that is at once agentic and limiting. In the face of the "Welcome to America" exchange, Imani researchers grow quiet, terribly polite, typically reducing their English to the perfunctory greetings learned in a basic conversation class: "I am fine." "Thank you." "Nice to meet you too." In this local enactment of broader discourses of othering, refugee youth, braced

for the seemingly unavoidable questions, translate themselves as requested, making themselves knowable only as the other.

Imani researchers demonstrated a creative range of strategies designed to resist or reconfigure the term refugee: Kafiyo's frustration with that extra *_e* in refugee, Mirka's pointed "I'm just here," and Maryan's mom's belly all stand as purposeful reconfigurations of the *refugee girl*. These redeployments have particular implications for what forms of citizenship refugee youth may embrace and/or fashion. While agentic, these desired or achieved distances from refugee status and the *refugee girl* construct are intertwined with full, fractured, and partial experiences of belonging. I turn now to narratives of citizenship, with a particular eye towards unpacking which forms of citizenship are available, appealing to, or fostered by refugee girls.

REFUGEE GIRLS AND CITIZENSHIP

The limited research on youth and citizenship, grounded in sociological and developmental psychological theories, tends to narrowly define what constitutes political citizenship (Maira 2004). Within this frame, youth are typically (and inaccurately) cast as apathetic or apolitical (Henn, Weinstein and Wring 2002). Here, I offer a localized, gender-based account of how a group of refugee girls construct, negotiate, or perform citizenship. Interrogating citizenship-as-rights discourse offers a broader conceptualization of citizenship, one which accounts for the impact of structural inequalities, the reach of the nation state, and the experiences of discursively constructed and variously positioned youth. Drawing from literatures which frame cultural citizenship as a lived experience occurring in local spaces and is embedded in global contexts (Yuval-Davis 2007, Flores 2004, Siu 2001), I outline three approaches to girls'

citizenship: linking rights and belonging, rejecting a reconfiguring citizenship, and fashioning a counter narrative of citizenship.

Linking Rights and Belonging

While some Imani researchers highlighted legal privileges and increased opportunities (voting rights, job opportunities, the right to sue), most contextualized rights within broader insider/outsider narratives. For Nyanawan, “if you’re not a citizen, you’re considered an alien or something like that. You can’t—you don’t have the opportunities that other people have.” In individual interviews, Imani researchers connected citizenship to belonging. Two poignant examples were from two middle school students: Mimi mused that she might get invited to more parties as a citizen. Nakema was certain that her mother would finally be able to get a car, because as a citizen, “You can have anything you want to have... So we don’t have to call anybody, everybody to give us a ride. So we just gonna take a car and go wherever want.”

During their youth-led focus group, Imani researchers collectively defined citizenship as “a person who can vote, is dedicated to the country, calls a place home, and gets every right and more opportunities. A citizen is someone who is not lost.” Imani researchers’ group definition of citizenship was grounded in rights discourse and intricately tied to belonging: “A citizen is someone who is not lost.” Citizenship is cast as a deeply collective experience, embedded in a network of relationships “with people you love around who care about you,” while also being transferrable across contexts: “You can carry it with you because it is in your mind and heart.”

Several Imani researchers located citizenship rights as a path to belonging in their country of origin. One of Faduma’s first acts as a U.S. citizen was to contact her aunt in Italy to arrange a long-awaited visit. Masagay and Fatumata’s primary rationale in applying for

citizenship is to secure the means to safely return to Liberia. Without the protective reach of U.S. citizenship, both have been unable to visit their homeland. Fatumata excitedly anticipated the day when she will become a U.S. citizen and will ~~be~~ able to go see my home... See the family, because there's a thousand, thousand, thousand of family members I don't know." The legal rights bestowed by U.S. citizenship is reconfigured as a path to belonging in Liberia, as it will allow her to rekindle familial relationships and to immerse herself in her Liberian roots. Outside of discourses of rights and belonging, citizenship has varied salience in the lives of the Imani researchers. I turn to these negotiations and extensions of citizenship now.

Rejecting a Reconfiguring Citizenship

Refugee and immigrant youth conceptualize citizenship as both inclusive and exclusive, as rights associated with traditional citizenship have been eroded under neoliberalism and in a post-9/11 U.S. (Hayes 2009, Maira 2004). As a would-be citizen, the *refugee girl* stands at the heart of multiple contradictions. She is at once part of a sweeping, assimilationist nation of immigrants discourse while also positioned as the shadowy, suspect other: adolescent, African, Caribbean, female, Muslim, black, foreigner, victim. She can only belong as a citizen if she can be altered, if she will only become a Western success story, the latest installment of the great American dream (Okame 2006). Some Imani researchers *rejected a reconfiguring citizenship*, in which they would be recoded and deployed as second-class citizens. In the two excerpts below, Saadiya reflects pride in her country as well as her ongoing discomfort in being renamed and reconfigured by the State and within a U.S. American context:

my somalian pride i will not hide
my somalian race i will not disgrace..i am somalian and PROUD

so step aside and let me through cause it's all about my BEAUTIFUL somalian people!!
Saadiya, Facebook post, January 15, 2011

Happy new year everybody nd happy birthday to all my somali people stay safe
Friend: ain't it your bday too? lol...
Saadiya: lol hell nah it my bday but if yu look at my page it's abt 22 somali people
who have a birthday lmao well happy birthday to africa
Friend: not everyone in Africa has their bday on the 1st lol...
Saadiya: they will when they come to America
Saadiya, Facebook post, December 31, 2010

Saadiya's birthday is no longer her own—like many African refugees, she was reassigned a birthday of January 1 during the refugee claimant process. Similarly, her name is mispronounced in school so often that she has shortened it to “-Diya” among her peers. Other young people have similarly renamed themselves or experience being renamed: Smygouka much prefers Mirka, Nyanawan goes by Susan. As a middle school student, Rahmo decided to go by Anna because she was tired of being called “-Rambo.” Even now as a sophomore in high school, she refuses to pronounce her name, repeatedly insisting that she “-doesn't know how to say it. My mom doesn't even know anymore.” One of her coaches calls her Sophia; Rahmo has no idea why.

These are reconfigurations at the most interior, intimate level: the day of birth, the name given by parents. Some Imani researchers critiqued these reconfigurations of self (Saadiya's: “-they will when they come to America”) while others attempted to secure some measure of inclusive citizenship by adjusting to hegemonic norms and insider narratives. Some Imani researchers rejected a purely American citizenship because of a deep identification to their country of origin. During our interview together, Saadiya acknowledged: “-hate when people think I'm American because I don't want claim America.” On the surface, Saadiya's assertion might suggest a dislike or rejection of the United States. Rather it reflected Saadiya's sense that claiming an American identity meant rejecting her Somalian identity and ultimately, herself: “-

wanna claim my country...because I feel like if I claim America I'm making myself feel bad. Like I'm not accepting myself.”

Christine characterized citizenship as a status either extended or denied, long after legal citizenship is granted. If she becomes a success story, her positive accomplishments will secure her to a U.S. American identity: “[I]f you do something great, you’ll be an American.” However, if she breaks the law or fails to succeed, she will be instantly redeployed as Haitian: “[I]f they do something wrong, no [they are] Haitian or wherever, wherever you came from.” Maimuno did not experience the sweeping reach of citizenship as distinct from her former refugee status, because “even if you are a citizen, you get treated the same [as] you were when you were not a citizen.” Mirka simultaneously associated U.S. citizenship with a loss of Haitian citizenship rights and compromised standing in her Haitian peer group: “when you become a citizen you don’t get to do everything in Haiti... You don’t get to vote. They treat you differently. You can’t vote and stuff. I don’t want to [become a citizen].” To become a U.S. citizen is to lose the right to select—or become—the leader of Haiti. It is equally to be further distanced from peers who may devalue her knowledge base or question her cultural capital in Haiti. Mirka recounted conversations when Haitian friends positioned her as the hegemonic American without Haitian roots. Mirka concluded she prefers her Haitian citizenship: “That’s what I wanna be...I just wanna be what I am: a Haitian.”

Fashioning a Counter-Narrative of Citizenship

Migration implicitly requires refugee youth to engage in meaning-making with new sociocultural structures, leading to a renegotiation of identities. Refugee youth are placed “in a position that demands the re-working and re-telling of [them]selves’ to [them]selves’”(Cohen

2004:129). This in-betweenness is both an uprooting and a valuable vantage point; existing on the margins makes the often unseen visible (Matsuoka and Sorenson 2001). Tupuola draws from Krebs' (1999) notion of *edgewalkers*, resilient youth who maintain continuity within multiple identities, navigating the edges of various cultures. I draw from Cohen's (2004:129) notion of identity as the "re-working and re-telling" of self to self in exploring how refugee youth may construct their own citizenship narratives or engage in edgewalking.

In her study of Cambridge-area Muslim immigrants, Maira (2004) explores flexible citizenship (Ong 1999) in the lives of youth. Whereas dual citizens maintain legal status in two countries, flexible citizens engage transnationally in order to access cultural, political, and material resources in multiple nation-states. Youth who pursue flexible citizenship approach their citizen-selves as variable, strategic, and embedded in a range of relevant systems of meaning (Maira 2004). This youth-specific notion of flexible citizenship, combined with edgewalking, informs my understanding of how Imani researchers fashion counter-narratives of citizenship.

Multiple and fragmented—yet daily and constitutive—interactions with gendered and racialized parameters of citizenship may ultimately distance refugee girls from the rhetorical reach of the nation-state. In making this assertion, I do not deny the nation-state's power or its constitutive capacity. As Ong (1999) contends: "the nation-state—along with its juridical-legislative systems, bureaucratic apparatuses, economic entities, modes of governmentality, and war-making capacities—continues to define, discipline, control, and regulate all kinds of populations, whether in movement or in residence" (p. 15). Certainly, extending or fashioning a citizenship is also the purview of the nation-state.

Kafiyo embodies the complexities and contradictions of citizenship through her discursive practices and her embodied performances: a member of her school's ROTC program

(because she ~~likes~~ the uniform”), she is one of the most politically aware and astute member of our group, most recently demonstrated by her analysis of the 2011 Egyptian protests. Still, she proudly declares that ~~on~~ a scale of one to ten” she is ~~about~~ one million percent Somalian” and will not vote in the United States because she ~~has~~ a lack of interest.”

Nyanawan envisioned securing a half U.S. citizenship by claiming dual citizenship: ~~Me?~~ I was thinking earlier that I want to do dual citizenship...I don’t wanna lose my other [Sudanese] citizenship.” She expressed concern that she will return to Sudan having denied both herself and her birthplace: ~~I~~ don’t wanna go home like you’re not who you are anymore ... Like your birth place, you’re no longer born from there. It feels like you’re not born from there anymore. It feels like [you’re] from a different country.”

In one of most compelling moments in the interview process, Mimi announced: ~~I~~ wouldn’t say I’m whole American, I’m whole citizenships, because I don’t want to be whole citizenships.” Rather, Mimi selected to pursue a ~~half~~ citizenship,” because otherwise, ~~you’re~~ giving up your whole other life ... when you’re not a [whole] citizenship, you can do what your country does, like [what] your religion does, like what you do, what your family does.” Mimi’s notions of ~~half~~ citizenship” have an added dimension, one intricately tied to belonging: she does not want to devalue her linguistic expertise or her family living in Sudan. Further, she does not want to abandon her immigrant friends. In her mind, if she is solely a U.S. citizen, she cannot defend her Mexican best friend from bullies. As a ~~whole~~ citizenships” she would lose her claim to a broader immigrant culture.

Several youth spoke to this element of citizenship, which connected them to multiple others. As a group, they characterized global citizens as people who ~~can~~ call anywhere home, more resilient and adaptable, wiser because they know more about culture and traits. A global

citizen can be from many places but represents the world; anybody can relate to you. Global citizens carry on the culture where they come from.” Similarly, Makaissa fashioned a counter-narrative of citizenship based on multiple, claimed homelands: “Well, I want be citizen here because I can be citizen here. If I be citizen here I will also be citizen in Liberia because that’s where my parents are from. And then I can also be a citizen of Guinea because that’s where I was born.” Kafiyo’s one million percent Somalian identity, Nyanawan’s dual citizenship, Mimi’s “half citizenship,” and Makassia’s multiple locations of citizenship converge: each girls moves beyond a bounded nation-state to fashion a citizen-self informed by homeland, localized spaces, global allegiances.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have addressed complex negotiations of citizenship as embedded in discourses of othering, markers of belonging, and the salience of a refugee identity. Throughout, I highlight ways in which refugee girls construct the citizen-self while being constituted by the nation-state (Ong 1996). Refugee youth are often characterized as disenfranchised youth struggling to bridge two worlds, two nations: the world of family and country of origin, and the world inherited in resettlement. The discourse of struggle fails to recognize the inherent capacity of youth to aptly negotiate their various worlds (Poynting et al. 2004). The two-world metaphor creates a false binary which limits refugee youth to two worlds or nations. Day-to-day realities are comprised in multiple, shifting, local spheres. While some scholars have suggested a multiple worlds approach, immigrant youth speak of one—albeit complex—world (Nilan and Feixa 2006). While the multiple worlds approach may have analytical potency, it too may be an imposed construct. Imani researchers’ counter-narratives are grounded in one complex world in

which they live and move in the margins and at the center.

Imani researchers highlight ways that they grapple with, trouble, and destabilize traditional claims of citizenship. They connect citizenship to longing and imagined/remembered places. They also contest the extent to which they, as refugee girls, benefit from or position themselves in relation to the nation-state and the constitutive claims of the *refugee girl* construct. While this research is intimately tied to the specific location and lives of Imani researchers, it opens up a space to continue exploring a less bounded sense of national identity, particularly as it relates to girls' citizenship.

I close with Rahmo's description of her identity as a citizen, as it highlights her sense of being from many places. What stands out Rahmo's sense of wanting to learn the world, to claim the world as something that she belongs to and that belongs to her:

Laura: Do you wanna stay in the United States for the rest of your life?

Rahmo: Yeah, I wanna stay in the United States for the rest of my life.

Laura: Why?

Rahmo: Because I wish there was peace all around the world. Well, the most safest place to be in is USA right now and that's why.

Laura: What would you do if there was peace all over the world? Where would you go?

Rahmo: I would move to Paris or Tokyo or somewhere in London.

Laura: Tell me why?

Rahmo: Well, Paris I only wanna see the Eiffel Tower.

I: Yeah.

RI: And Turkish, I wanna speak Turkish.

I: Yeah? Why Turkish?

RI: Because I think that it's fun to learn people like their language and how— the way of their life, culture, and stuff like that. And in England, the only thing I wanna speak is French and you know the accent? I think that's really cool [laughing]. That's the only reason I wanna move to England.

I: So if you moved to England or to Paris, would you tell people that you were from the United States or that you were from Kenya? Or would you say both?

RI: I would say both. It's because they both are where I belong. And they do care about me. That's why I will say both.

I: Yeah.

RI: And then after that I get from France, if I came back to USA, I would say, I am from Kenya, USA, and France [laughing].

I: You'd say you were from all over.

RI: Yeah.

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CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This study examined ways in which refugee girls construct, negotiate, and perform identity in varied social contexts. The research occurred in the broader context of The Imani Nailah Project, a program I initiated for refugee middle and high school girls in May 2008. To better understand how African and Afro-Caribbean refugee girls and young women negotiate and perform identity, I pursued a three year, youth-centered participatory action research project with seventeen refugee girls and young women, ages 11-23, from Somalia, Liberia, Haiti, Burundi, and Sudan. This youth research collective and I investigated gender, race/ethnicity, nationality, age, religion and citizenship status, as well as the intersections among these multiply-located identities. Through in-depth interviews, youth-led focus groups, and arts-based inquiry, this study explored a wide range of identity negotiations and performances, from micro-level interactions to macro-level impacts of dominant culture.

The three preceding chapters pursued a range of entry points to more fully understand various components of identity construction in refugee girls. My initial research questions explored strategies refugee youth employ in constructing identity, with a particular focus on the interplay between identity negotiation and performance and the dominant culture. As stated in Chapter 1, during the course of my research, my orientation shifted to the local enactments of identity work. The articles explore multiple layers and enactments of identity: Imani youth as researchers, as afterschool participants, as Africans and Haitians, as would-be citizens, as refugees, as girls. Further, the articles highlight Imani researchers' negotiations with imposed identities: as refugees, as the other, as the victim, as the young person, as the youth of color.

–Rahmo's Pet Tiger: Fostering Reciprocal Relationships between Youth Participants and University Volunteers" (Chapter 4) explored how positioning refugee youth as experts can

subvert a charity model and foster a reciprocal exchange in a service context. Youth drawings, tutor narratives, and videotaped dialogue offered insight into processes of mutual learning between Imani researchers and their tutors. The chapter highlighted how reciprocity and mutual learning served as a vehicle towards tutors' deepened awareness of structural barriers, global issues, and the nature of service. It concluded with observations on replication of the program design. The chapter contributes to the literature by offering new evaluative strategies based on youth drawings, playfulness, and consistency and by considering the role of reciprocity and mutuality in service contexts.

–# Means that I' am Knowledge: GirlPAR as an Emergent Methodology” (Chapter 5) was written in collaboration with Faduma Guhad and drew from three years of engagement with Imani researchers. This chapter extended traditional participatory action research designs by calling for the continued emergence of girl-centered participatory action research (GirlPAR). The essential components of GirlPAR include eroding discursive and structural barriers to youth-adult egalitarian relationships and merging scholarship with relational activism, which stands as GirlPAR's unique contribution to PAR methodology. In The Imani Nailah Project, our central activist project and the chief means of knowledge production was our relationships with each other. The chapter concluded with strategies that foster GirlPAR: authorship, confidentiality, chosen inclusion, knowledge production, and research dissemination. In relation to conventional understandings of PAR, this chapter offers new approaches to merging scholarship and activism through sustained relationships with girls.

–Refugee Girls Negotiating Discourses of Othering” (Chapter 6) considered refugee/citizenship and insider/outsider narratives in the lives of refugee girls. This chapter addressed how the *refugee girl* is discursively constructed through race- and gender-based

immigration policies and four discourses of othering—developing the African/Afro- Caribbean woman, saving refugee youth, fixing at-risk girls, and liberating the Muslim female. Data for this chapter included in-depth interviews and youth-led focus groups; both contributed to a deeper understanding of refugee girls' ongoing, shifting, and localized enactments of a counter-narrative of citizenship, broadly understood. Central elements of this counter-narrative are affirmation of a sense of belonging, reinterpretation of refugee status, and expansion of conventional definitions of citizenship. This chapter extended narratives of citizenship by exploring how a group of refugee girls (a largely undertheorized population) complicate, localize, and enact citizenship in local spaces and in direct refutation to broader discourses of othering.

Connecting these three chapters is a common methodological and theoretical framework, informed by feminist, participatory action research designs and by post-modern conceptualizations of identity. The literatures of transnationalism and hybridity illuminate programmatic considerations of mutual learning in service contexts (Chapter 4) and theorizations regarding discourses of othering and the salience of citizenship (Chapter 6). Both of these chapters are animated by a commitment to the co-construction of knowledge in a relational activism framework (Chapter 5). Undergirding this research is a sustained commitment to honoring the agency and voice of refugee girls as they claim self and narrate identity.

The programmatic, methodological, and theoretical components of the research intentionally spoke to various audiences. By analyzing the research findings in relation to different audiences and sets of concern, I hope to disseminate the knowledge and insights of Imani researchers in multiple locations. Chapter 4 offered the fields of social work, service-learning, and youth development a replicable programmatic structure designed to foster reciprocity and mutual learning among all members in a service context. I plan to submit this

chapter to the journal *Intercultural Education*. Chapter 5 is grounded in women's and gender studies and the emerging field of girls' studies. As an analysis of a feminist scholar-activist project, this chapter offered girls and their allies a methodology to more fully integrate girls' knowledge and expertise in the research process. It is in press as a chapter of the forthcoming book, *Difficult Dialogues about 21st Century Girls*, edited by Donna Johnson and Alice E. Ginsberg. Chapter 6 offered the fields of women's studies, sociology, and youth studies an analysis of a specific discourse of othering, the *refugee girl*, and extended and complicated narratives of citizenship by exploring the counter-narratives of Imani researchers (who are themselves "refugee girls"). This chapter will be submitted to the *Journal of Girlhood Studies*.

In terms of future research, I will continue to follow the Imani researchers for at least the next five years. I am particularly interested in further developing my understanding of the qualities, practices, and outcomes of relational activism. I hope to continue to narrate Imani Nailah as an activist space, to contribute to an understanding of identity construction as an ongoing, fluid process, and to explore how Imani researchers—as women, college students, workers, refugees, wives, transnational subjects, mothers, citizens, etc.—may incorporate new roles, narrate self in multiple local spaces, and experience structural barriers to inclusion. I anticipate annual interviews with as many Imani researchers as possible, and will continue to seek ways to work collaboratively in a participatory action research structure. As a component of this larger research project, I hope to accompany three Imani researchers to their country of origin to better address the interplay of imagined/remembered homelands within the context of identity negotiation and performance. I intend to develop a book based on this long term research project.

In the short-term, I envision three manuscripts in addition to the three chapters of the dissertation that I will seek to publish as articles or book chapters. One manuscript will address a series of research moments stemming from the summer 2010 interview process. I am particularly interested in exploring ways I negotiated my power and privilege as I pursued the co-construction of knowledge. The second manuscript will address the interplay between identity negotiation and performance and the dominant culture, with a particular focus on ways refugee girls may interact with, resist, reshape, or adopt cultural constructions of various identity markers. Finally, the third manuscript will address best practices in doing research and programming with refugee youth. This article is intended for social work researchers and practitioners. The current study and all future studies are deeply informed by a primary commitment to integrate scholarship and community engagement, to honor refugee girls as experts in their lives, and to insert the knowledge and insights of Imani researchers in multiple academic and practitioner contexts.

APPENDIX A

Figures 1-4 for Chapter 4

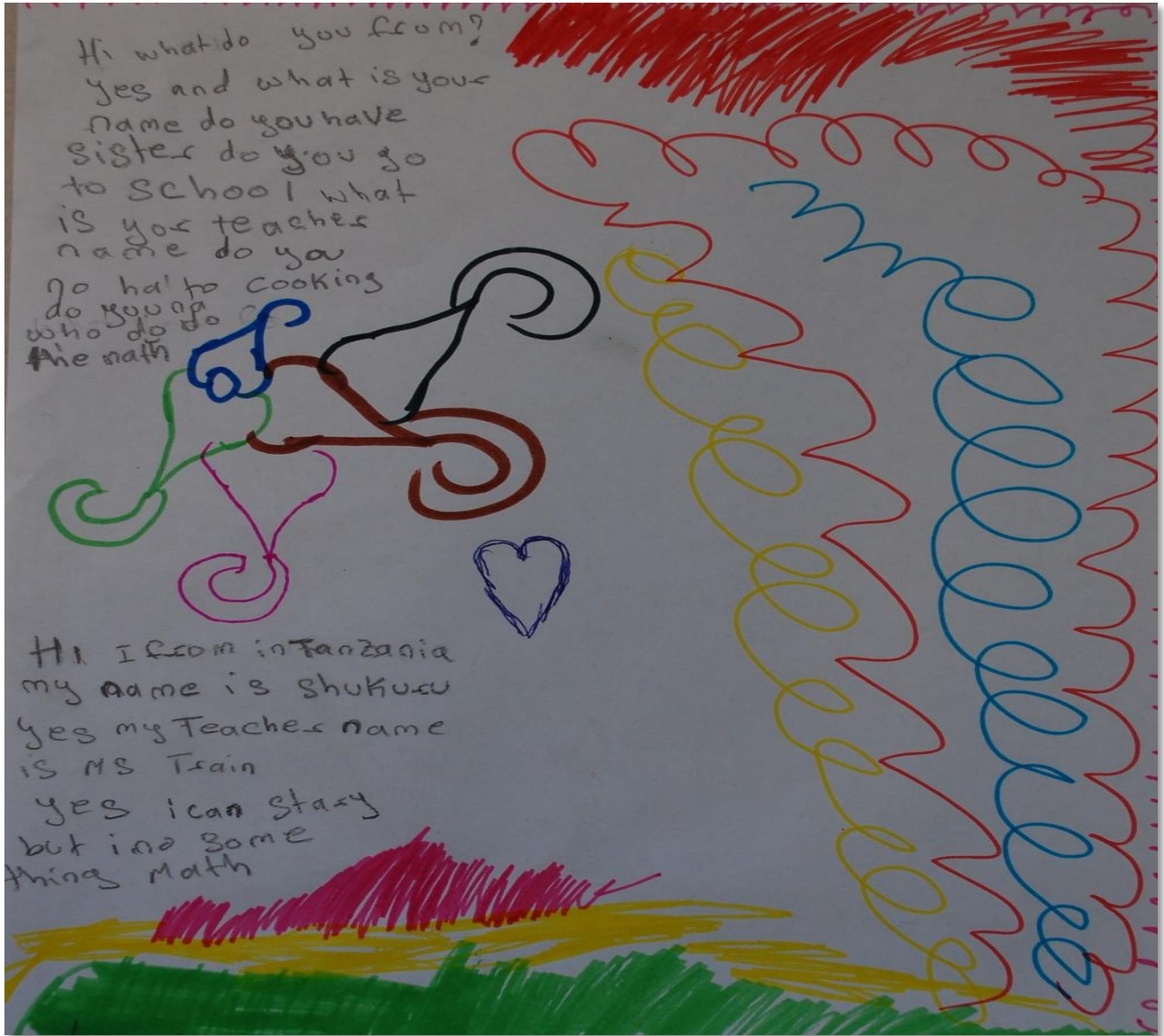


Fig 1. Shukuru's Drawing



Figure 2. Makaissa Talking to Allie

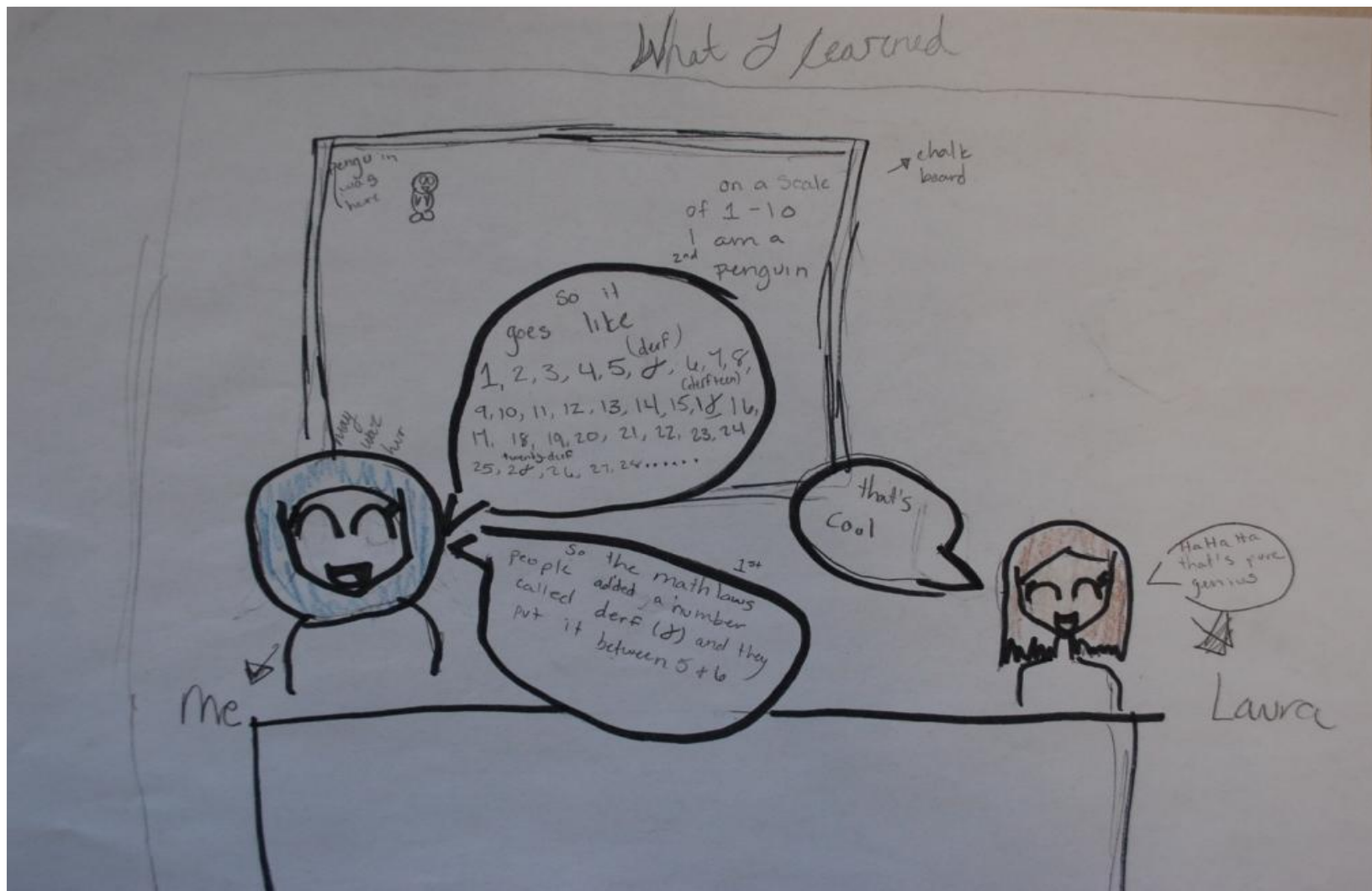


Figure 3. "One a scale of one to ten, I am a penguin."

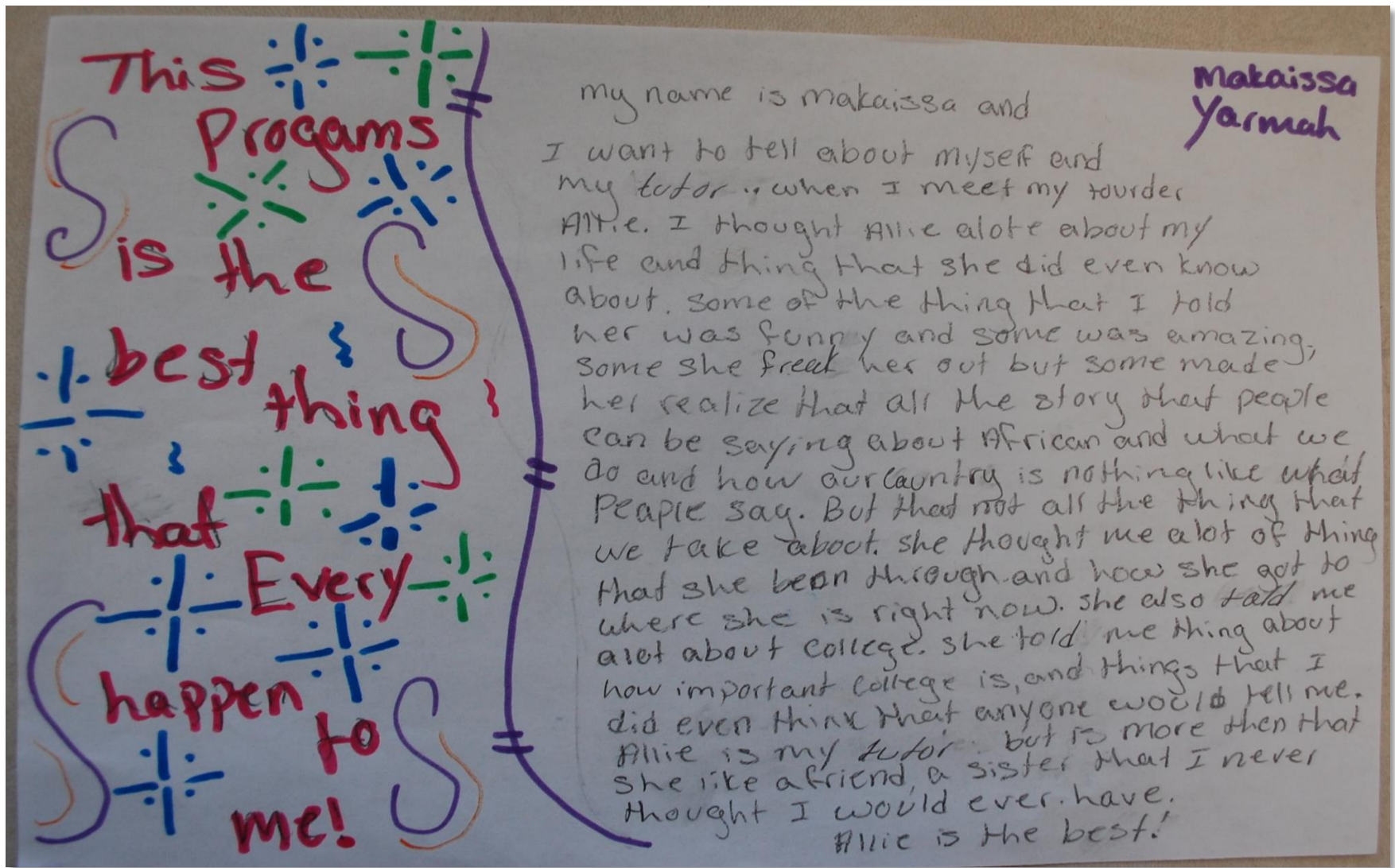


Figure 4. Makaissa_s Narrative

APPENDIX B

Concept Map for Article 3

Initial Categories			
Typical Day			
Neighborhood			
Gender			
Faith			
Race/Ethnicity		<i>Emergent Themes</i>	<i>Emergent Sub-Themes</i>
Nationality Refugee Insider/Outsider Status	→	Sense of belonging	→ <i>belonging for resources belonging as emotive belonging through knowledge</i>
	→	Saliency of refugee identity	→ <i>definition of refugee acceptance/rejection of label protective strategies diasporic exchange</i>
		Saliency of citizenship	→ <i>rights and belonging reconfiguring connection to country of origin</i>
Family			
Age			
Typical Day			

Initial Categories were derived from the interview protocol beginning on page 59.

APPENDIX C

IRB Permission, Youth Consent Letter, Tutor Consent Letter



MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 26, 2010

TO: Carol A. Bailey, Laura Boutwell

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires June 13, 2011)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Identity Formation among Refugee Youth

IRB NUMBER: 08-281

As of April 30, 2010, the Virginia Tech IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore, approved the continuation request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at <http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm> (please review before the commencement of your research).

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved as: **Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 6, 7**

Protocol Approval Date: **4/30/2010**

Protocol Expiration Date: **4/29/2011**

Continuing Review Due Date*: **4/15/2011**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals / work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Date*	OSP Number	Sponsor	Grant Comparison Conducted?

*Date this proposal number was compared, assessed as not requiring comparison, or comparison information was revised.

If this IRB protocol is to cover any other grant proposals, please contact the IRB office (irbadmin@vt.edu) immediately.

cc: File
Department Reviewer: Theodore D. Fuller



Dear Study Participant,

I am writing to ask if you would participate in a study. I am trying to learn more about you and about your life and experiences as a refugee. I will interview you two times. The interviews will begin in December 2009. They will take about 90-120 minutes and will take place in a quiet, safe location. I will ask you questions about your country, language, family, and friends and about their experiences as a refugee. You can also participate in group activities and discussions about these topics. The interviews and group discussions will be audio taped or videotaped.

You will not receive a gift or money for participating in this study. One possible benefit of this study is that you may help others learn more about refugee youth. You don't have to agree to be in this study if you don't want to. You may always stop being in the study at any time. If you tell me that you are being abused or that you intend to hurt someone or yourself, I will have to report that information. You will be given a chance to pick another name for yourself to use in any publications.

You can always ask any questions that you have about the study. I can be contacted at 540.354.6444. Signing your name on the next page means that you agree to be in this study. You will be given a copy of this form after you sign it. If you have any questions about this study or problems with this study, before, during, or after your participation, you may contact:

Carol A. Bailey, Principal Investigator	(540) 231-2247	baileyc@vt.edu
David Moore, Chair	(540) 231-4991	moored@vt.edu

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Identity Formation among Refugee Youth

This research project has been explained to me and I understand what is going to be done, and why. I agree to be a part of this study. I understand that I will be given a copy of this form to keep after I sign it.

I give my permission to participate in this study.

_____	_____	_____
Participant's Name	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Researcher's Printed Name	Signature	Date

Invent the Future



February 2010

Dear Volunteer,

I am also a graduate student in the sociology department at Virginia Tech. I am writing to ask your consent to participate in a study. I am trying to learn more about refugee youth, and about their lives and experiences.

I will interview you in person and/or via email. The interviews will begin in February 2010. Should I interview you in person, I will interview you in a quiet, safe location. I will ask about your experiences as a volunteer and what you have learned about youth study participants' experiences as refugees. The interviews will be audio taped or videotaped.

You will not receive a gift or money for participating in this study. One possible benefit of this study is that you may be helping others learn more about refugee youth. You don't have give your permission if you don't want to. Your may always stop being in the study at any time.

You can always ask any questions that you have about the study. I can be contacted at 540.354.6444. Signing your name on the next page means that you to be in this study. You will be given a copy of this form after you sign it.

If you have any questions about this study or problems with this study, before, during, or after your participation, you or your child may contact:

Carol A. Bailey, Principal Investigator	(540) 231-2247	baileyc@vt.edu
David Moore, Chair	(540) 231-4991	moored@vt.edu
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research		

VOLUNTEER CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Identity Formation among Refugee Youth

This research project has been explained to me and I understand what is going to be done, and why. I give my consent to be a part of this study. I understand that I will be given a copy of this form to keep after I sign it.

I give my consent to participate in this study.

Printed Name

Signature

Date