

# “Sometimes We Struggle, Sometimes We Push Back:” The Educational Experiences and Aspirations of Youth with Refugee Backgrounds from the Horn of Africa

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Stacey Wilson-Forsberg  
*Wilfrid Laurier University*

Oliver Masakure  
*Wilfrid Laurier University*

Rosemary Kimani-Dupuis  
*Lakehead University*

Suman Mondal  
*McMaster University*

## **Abstract**

This qualitative article focuses on the high school experiences and post-secondary education (PSE) plans of 57 youth with refugee backgrounds from the Horn of Africa living in Ontario. The article is guided by two conceptual frameworks. The first is an anti-op-

pressive approach, which helps us examine the structural barriers at school that prevent, impede, and discourage the youth from successfully transitioning to PSE. We then use Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework to highlight the cultural capital that the youth bring from their homes and communities to navigate the challenges at school and embark on a pathway to PSE. Our findings show that while a significant number of the youth continue to face challenges, some are pushing back on the common narrative that Black African refugees are not capable of attending PSE.

*Keywords:* youth with refugee backgrounds, Horn of Africa region, post-secondary education decisions, community cultural wealth framework, counternarratives, resistance

## Résumé

Cet article est basé sur une recherche qualitative se focalisant sur les expériences scolaires et les projets d’études postsecondaires de 57 jeunes issus de familles de réfugiés originaires de la Corne de l’Afrique vivant en Ontario. Cette étude est guidée par deux cadres conceptuels. Le premier est une approche anti-oppressive, qui nous aide à examiner les obstacles structurels à l’école qui empêchent, entravent et découragent les jeunes de réussir leur transition vers les études postsecondaires. Nous utilisons ensuite le cadre de référence de la richesse culturelle des communautés (*Community Cultural Wealth Framework*) de Yosso (2005) pour mettre en évidence le capital culturel que les jeunes apportent de leur foyer et de leur communauté pour relever les défis à l’école, et s’engager sur la voie des études postdoctorales. Nous arrivons à la conclusion que bien qu’un nombre important de jeunes continuent de rencontrer des difficultés, certains contestent le discours dominant selon lequel les réfugiés noirs africains ne seraient pas capables de poursuivre des études postsecondaires.

*Mots clés :* jeunes issus de familles de réfugiés, jeunes réfugiés, région de la Corne de l’Afrique, Ontario, Canada, décisions en matière d’éducation postsecondaire, cadre de référence de la richesse culturelle des communautés, capital culturel, contre-narrations, résistance

## Introduction

Canada leads the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as the country where the first- and second-generation children of immigrants have higher post-secondary education (PSE) participation rates than non-immigrants (Chen & Hou, 2019; Finnie & Mueller, 2012). Research indicates that among first-generation immigrants from Africa, university access rates are 64%, compared to 38% among non-immigrants (Childs et al., 2012). The difference in post-secondary access is even wider among second-generation immigrants from Africa, who attend university at a rate of 81%, the highest of any second-generation immigrant group in Canada (Childs et al., 2015, 2016; Rae, 2018). This success has tended to lead researchers and policy makers to take for granted that children of immigrants will have a seamless, linear trajectory from high school to university and the labour market (Abada et al., 2008; Hou & Zhang, 2015). However, the reality is more complex. Youth from Africa who arrive in Canada at an older age, have a lower level of English or French language proficiency, and those who arrive as refugees, often struggle academically (Rae, 2018). These youth tend to study in applied streams in high school and enter university in lower proportions (Abada et al., 2008; Bajwa et al., 2017; Kamanzi, 2023; Sweet et al., 2010).

This article focuses on the high school experiences and PSE plans of 57 youth with refugee backgrounds from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan (broadly referred to as the Horn of Africa region). The needs of youth with refugee backgrounds from the Horn of Africa and the barriers to their PSE pathways are complex, requiring specialized training and resources at the secondary school level (Stewart et al., 2011). Studies show that youth from the Horn of Africa are more likely than refugee youth from other regions to have undergone family disruption (Woodgate & Shiyokha Busolo, 2021) and to migrate as unaccompanied minors<sup>1</sup> (Belloni, 2021). They are more likely to have endured extended periods of interrupted schooling due to protracted displacement in refugee camps (Ayoub & Zhou, 2016; Pittaway & Dantas, 2024). Those youth who arrive in Canada with little prior schooling are placed in age-based grades despite having low literacy in their native languages (Ramsden & Taket, 2013) and have often not developed the academic

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1 Since the 2010s, the number of unaccompanied minors from Eritrea has significantly increased and has become the object of international concern.

content knowledge required by the education system (Kanu, 2008). Youth from the Horn of Africa are also more likely to experience anti-Black racism and Islamophobia in school than refugee youth from other regions (Baak, 2019). Furthermore, although families with refugee backgrounds from the Horn of Africa are not homogenous, many face similar challenges that often undermine their capacity for effective and sustained partnerships with schools (Georgis et al., 2014; Wilson-Forsberg et al., 2024).

Stemming from a larger community-engaged study that explores the PSE transition of African youth with refugee backgrounds across Canada, our findings are based on qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with young men ( $n = 34$ ) and women ( $n = 23$ ) ages 16–24 in Waterloo, Windsor, and Thunder Bay, Ontario. As destination communities for a sizeable number of government-assisted refugees,<sup>2</sup> the three medium-sized cities are understudied in the research literature. This article responds to three research questions: What are the PSE and career plans of youth with refugee backgrounds from the Horn of Africa? What school-level barriers do the youth encounter when preparing for PSE? What strategies do they employ to attempt to overcome these barriers? The research questions are framed by a broad anti-oppression approach (Baines, 2011), which allowed us to take an institution-wide view of school experiences. We situated our findings within Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework at the data analysis stage, to move away from the deficit approach to education (Garcia & Guerra, 2004) that reinforces educators’ beliefs and assumptions about racialized refugees as victims without agency (Kyriakides et al., 2018). Derived from Latina/o critical race theory (“LatCrit”) (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), the community cultural wealth framework allowed us to examine some of the under-utilized assets African youth with refugee backgrounds bring from their homes and communities to help them confront challenges at school and open a pathway to college or university. Overall, our article contributes to the scant literature on African refugees in Canada by providing a deeper understanding of the realities of hardship experienced by young people from the Horn of Africa, while highlighting their agency and capacity to accomplish educational goals.

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2 The government of Canada provides settlement and resettlement services through several hundred IRCC-funded service provider organizations in 36 large and small communities across Canada.

## Canada’s Resettlement of Refugees from the Horn of Africa

According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) data, Canada resettles between 8,000 and 12,000 refugees each year from Africa (IRCC, 2023a). Consistent with the participants in our study (see Appendix A: Demographics of Research Participants), data indicate that many families with refugee backgrounds residing in Ontario’s primarily anglophone cities come from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan (IRCC, 2023b)<sup>3</sup>. Most were resettled between 2015 and 2023 through a mixture of three refugee resettlement pathways—government-assisted refugees (GARs), privately sponsored refugees (PSRs), and blended sponsorship refugees (BSRs)—following protracted refugee situations<sup>4</sup> in East and Central Africa (IRCC, 2023a). The Horn of Africa is a significant source region for refugees to Canada. According to data requested from IRCC, from January 2015 to September 2023, Canada resettled 37,165 refugees from Eritrea, 7,165 from Ethiopia, 12,815 from Somalia, 1,270 from South Sudan, and 3,465 from Sudan (totalling 62,150) (IRCC, 2023b)<sup>5</sup>. An estimated 42% of those individuals were children under the age of 18 (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2024), all of whom are expected to integrate into the Canadian education system. Consequently, there is a pressing need to better understand the educational gaps and challenges encountered by youth with refugee backgrounds from the Horn of Africa in Canada. Throughout the article, we refer to “youth with refugee backgrounds” because once their humanitarian claims are accepted, the youth are no longer refugees, but permanent residents of Canada. However, we occasionally use “refugee youth” to shed light on their unique needs and simplify terminology.

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3 Cities in Ontario with larger francophone populations such as Ottawa, Sudbury, and Sault Ste. Marie attract families with refugee backgrounds from francophone Central and West Africa.

4 Defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as at least 25,000 refugees from the same country who have been living in exile for more than five consecutive years.

5 These numbers do not include in-land asylum claims.

## Conceptual Frameworks

Our research questions sought to uncover the broader structural barriers in school environments that might prevent, impede, and discourage Black African students with refugee backgrounds from successfully transitioning to PSE. In this respect, we use an anti-oppressive approach to better understand the extent to which school-level resources meet the needs of these youth while simultaneously bringing to the surface the multiple oppressive structures with which they must interact. Anti-oppressive practice (Baines, 2011) maintains that social structures favour certain groups in society and oppress others through such mechanisms as the normalization of dominant values, and “othering” people by ascribing to them a subordinate status (Dominelli, 2002). While the literature emphasizes challenges related to refugee youth’s pre- and post-migration experiences, our research contributes to recent studies that highlight structural barriers that persist in Canadian schools, which hinder their achievement (Blanchet-Cohen et al., 2017; Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). These include inadequate support to catch up if students are academically behind and to quickly learn English/French (Volante et al., 2017). Moreover, research consistently shows that Black students (especially those with low English language proficiency) are streamed into courses below their perceived academic ability (George, 2023; Heringer, 2023; James & Turner, 2017; Livingstone & Weinfeld, 2017; Wilson-Forsberg et al., 2019), placed in English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes where they feel that they do not belong (Olding, 2017), and endure the production and perpetuation of stereotypical characterizations of Black people as invisible, dependent, and unskilled (James, 2012; Wilson-Forsberg et al., 2018).

Our data collection and analysis were guided by the most recent research, which shows that youth need to acquire a variety of capital to facilitate social mobility, one of which is cultural capital. Specifically, we drew from Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework, which highlights the “various cultural knowledges, skills, and abilities nurtured by youth and communities that influence their persistence, often in the face of significant obstacles” (Burciaga & Erbsstein, 2010, p. 4). The framework is derived from Latina/o critical race (LatCrit) theory, which extends discussions to address the additional layers of racialized subordination that comprise Latina/o experiences, such as sexism, classism, immigration status, culture, language, phenotype, and accent (Johnson & Martínez, 1999; Montoya, 1994), all of which are relevant to youth from the Horn of Africa

who are both racialized and refugees. The framework “reveals and challenges biases in educational systems that implicitly and explicitly determine the value of certain ways of knowing and being by attributing a greater validity to middle-class dominant white cultural values to the detriment of students [of colour]” (Macias et al., 2021, p. 1440). Yosso (2005) argues that children of colour and their families do indeed bring different forms of cultural capital to school and the wider community. However, this capital is not always valued by the education system (Yosso, 2005). She proposed six forms of capital that children of colour bring to the community: (1) aspirational, (2) familial, (3) linguistic, (4) navigational, (5) social, and (6) resistance (Yosso, 2005). Given the specificity of our study’s findings and the parallels to Yosso’s cultural wealth-based perspective, our analysis will outline the structural barriers that youth with refugee backgrounds from the Horn of Africa endure in their schooling, and also offer an anti-oppressive narrative that showcases the forms of cultural capital that allow the youth to challenge the normative educational processes in an attempt to construct a pathway to PSE.

## **Data and Methods**

This article is based on qualitative data from the participation of 34 young men and 23 young women<sup>6</sup> ages 16–24 in three medium-sized Ontario cities: Waterloo, Windsor, and Thunder Bay. We focused on cities outside the Greater Toronto Area to diversify the research literature about African refugees in Canada away from Toronto. The sampled youth have origins in Eritrea ( $n = 7$ ), Ethiopia ( $n = 7$ ), Somalia ( $n = 25$ ), Sudan ( $n = 7$ ), and South Sudan ( $n = 11$ ). Data from IRCC confirms that most of the African families resettled in Waterloo, Windsor, and Thunder Bay are from the Horn of Africa (IRCC, 2023a). The 57 sampled youth (See Appendix A) have lived in Canada for up to 15 years, with most arriving in the past six years and the Thunder Bay participants arriving more recently, within one to three years. Most were resettled with both parents and siblings. While many parents had occupations in their countries of origin or transit, most were still learning English and receiving government support in Canada. Four young men and one young woman arrived as unaccompanied minors. Of the youth sampled, 39 were still attending high school at the time of our interviews, one had graduated from university,

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6 We did not come across youth who identified as being gender-diverse such as non-binary and/or transgender.

three had accepted offers to attend university, five completed or were completing college programs, and six had aged out of high school before graduating.<sup>7</sup>

Our data collection followed the promising practices for conducting community-engaged research with youth found in Adler et al. (2019), Cargill et al. (2016), and Fargas-Malet et al. (2010). As noted by Jong et al. (2023), recruiting teens and young adults to participate in qualitative research is challenging. These challenges include accessing the youth and building trust with them. This often takes time and requires close contact with gatekeepers, including community organizations that deliver continuity of care programming to youth (Cargill et al., 2016). The recommendation is that researchers need to understand the context and be flexible in their data collection exercise (Mendelson et al., 2021; Schelbe et al., 2015). In addition, our research experience is that researchers must be patient and prepared to pivot when conditions in the field change and require different recruiting and interviewing tactics (e.g., Adler et al., 2019; Cargill et al., 2016; Fargas-Malet et al., 2010; Wilson-Forsberg & Beggar, 2024). Following these promising practices, we partnered with one community organization in Waterloo, two in Windsor, and one in Thunder Bay based on their extensive involvement with African refugee youth. All four of the organizations act as important intermediary spaces between school, social services, and home for minoritized youth. The recruitment process occurred over a period of approximately six months. It involved several visits to the organizations to meet with the youth and partake in trust-building activities, as well as fostering a sense of ownership and meaningful involvement and excitement among the community organizations. Once trust was built between the research team and the youth, staff at the four organizations scheduled interviews with them. Each participant was given an incentive of \$20 at the beginning of the interview in appreciation of their time.

Interviews and focus groups took place during evenings and weekends throughout 2021–2023, in accordance with the schedules of the youth and community partners. We found that young women are more likely to attend events if they are convenient and specifically targeted to their interests. Therefore, we made a concerted effort to interview the young women by arranging trips to each city to interview them at their convenience. Each interview lasted approximately one hour, with an additional 15 minutes spent completing

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7 Students typically attend secondary school in Ontario until age 18. After age 20–21, they are encouraged to complete their secondary diploma in an Adult Education program.

a demographic questionnaire at the end of the session. While the research team consists of African scholars, none are from the Horn of Africa. All interviews were conducted in English, with some explanations provided in Swahili. An interview guide was used, consisting of a list of open-ended questions related to topics such as participants' educational histories prior to arriving in Canada, academic supports received, career goals, and their relationships with school staff. The semi-structured format allowed participants to decide the direction of the interview (Kortessluoma et al., 2003; O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017) by spending more time answering specific questions and less time on others.

Initially, we had planned to conduct focus groups in each city after face-to-face interviews. However, we ended up collecting almost half of the data through small focus groups due to the contextual factors cited above. With interviews scheduled during the community organization's activities, we sometimes had to pivot and arrange small focus groups on the spot when too many young people arrived on site to be interviewed individually. Often youth felt more comfortable in a peer environment and requested to be interviewed in small groups. This is quite common in youth studies (Krueger & Casey, 2014; Shaw et al., 2011). Focus groups were the preferred method of young women and younger youth, since they could bounce ideas off each other and be with their friends. They were also useful when the youth were still learning English because peers could interpret for them. Also consistent with published promising practices, we kept genders separate in focus groups to encourage the young men and women to speak freely (Adler et al., 2019). Young women were always interviewed by researchers who identify as women or transgender.

Interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to allow for a more thorough examination of the data. We organized and analyzed the transcripts using NVivo12 qualitative data analysis software beginning with “open” coding, whereby many descriptive codes were gathered and labelled. This first stage of coding largely revealed the challenges associated with accessing resources at school. We then “coded on” in more detail by linking emerging codes with other codes and categories and identifying emerging themes in the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The second stage of coding revealed that many youths were resisting school-level resources. After a third round of coding, we concluded that the youth were attempting (albeit not always successfully) to use all six categories of cultural capital outlined by Yosso (2005) as a resistance strategy. We elaborate on these themes in our findings through the voices of our research participants.

## Findings

### 1. Aspirational Capital

Aspirational capital is defined as the ability to maintain hope and dreams for the future in the face of real and perceived barriers (Yosso, 2005). The 57 young people who participated in this study often referred to “determination,” “putting their mind to it,” “fulfilling dreams,” “inner strength,” “faith,” and “believing in themselves.” When asked about career aspirations, many of the young men responded that they want to pursue post-secondary studies in computer science, engineering, auto mechanics, and the trades, while the young women are aiming for medicine, nursing, dentistry, social work, and law. The youth consistently reported that their aspirations are motivated by factors that often appear in research literature focused on refugee youth. These include a desire: (1) for economic independence (Shakya et al., 2012); (2) to economically support parents who might be struggling (McWilliams & Bonet, 2016); (3) to have a well-paying job to contribute to their new country (Correa-Velez et al., 2010); and (4) to give back and benefit others in their country of origin (McWilliams & Bonet, 2016).

All the interviewed youth were able to conceptualize hope and optimism about their future. However, only a few appeared to know where to get the information and guidance they needed to make such PSE pathways happen through academic credits at high school or adult education programs. For example, only a few participants could describe the difference between college and university and which academic credits are required for each pathway. This finding is consistent with a 2022 youth employment survey conducted in Toronto, which demonstrated that newcomer youth have higher career aspirations than native-born youth but do not know what resources are available to prepare for that career (Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Counsel, 2023). In this respect, there appears to be a disconnect between the resources offered by high schools and the youths’ initiative and capacity to use those resources to make informed decisions. Our findings suggest that career guidance counsellors are helpful when youth are high-performing students with specific career goals, but they lack the resources and training to help newcomer youth struggling with interrupted schooling and low fluency in English who also have career goals but may not take the initiative to connect with them.

Burhaan<sup>8</sup>, an aspiring physician of Somali origin in Grade 12, arrived in Waterloo three years ago from Ethiopia. He described his meetings with the guidance counsellor after time spent in English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes as follows:

I have wanted to be a doctor my entire life. I couldn't understand how learning the ABCs in English would help me become a doctor. I wanted to take high-level academic classes, but the teachers were giving me work that was too easy. Finally, I met with the guidance counsellor, and she put me in academic classes in Grade 10. She listened to my plan for university and, even though my English wasn't terrific, she helped me to get the science and math credits I will need to enter university. (Burhaan, 17, Waterloo)

Burhaan is one of only two male research participants who want to study medicine. He is also one of seven youth interviewed (two male, five female) who were on the path to, or already accepted at, university. All reported that guidance counsellors assisted them to select courses with the necessary academic credits to enter university. However, many of our research participants who arrived in Canada as older adolescents and those still struggling with English reported that they had not visited a guidance counsellor and had little knowledge of their role. Eyob was 17 years old when he was resettled in Thunder Bay as a Government Assisted Refugee, after a two-year journey from Eritrea to Morocco as an unaccompanied minor. He could not remember how many years of schooling he had completed in Eritrea. Eyob was placed in Grade 11 in Thunder Bay, but with little time to learn English and catch up, he aged out of school quickly. At the time of our interview, Eyob was 20 years old, had three jobs, and lived on his own in Thunder Bay: “I work in greenhouses and in a woodlot. I work hard and they like me there. I want to finish school someday and maybe make enough money to send back home, but work keeps me busy.”

In two Windsor high schools, Black graduation coaches complement the work of career guidance counsellors. During one focus group, Joslyn, a 17-year-old research participant from South Sudan proudly showed us a University of Waterloo acceptance letter on her iPhone, remarking that she never would have applied had it not been for her graduation coach who walked her through the process and paid the application processing fees. The Black graduation coaches guide students and their parents through possible

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8 Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of research participants.

career paths and help students apply for universities and colleges, as well as scholarships. They also work with students to set goals, build confidence, and balance academics with extracurricular activities. Supported by the Ontario government since 2019 (Government of Ontario, 2022), the Black Graduation Coaches program is now being piloted in the Catholic School Board in Waterloo. Thunder Bay schools have graduation coaches for Indigenous youth but have not, to date, implemented a similar program for Black youth. Finally, while three youth spoke enthusiastically about the daily support and inspiration they receive from the Black principal at their high school in Windsor, no other youth could provide an example of a Black teacher on staff.

## **2. Familial Capital**

Familial capital consists of the values, lived experiences, and stories that youth can draw on from their home communities (Yosso, 2005). Several participants described how their families have shaped their aspirations to pursue PSE as documented in other research (e.g., Shapiro, 2018). When asked about role models, the young men and women consistently responded “parents,” “mother,” and, occasionally, an “older sibling.” Those youth who were following their chosen academic path to college or university were usually the oldest or second oldest in the family. They reported that they want to be role models for their younger siblings. The youth are deeply aware of the potential of PSE for improving the economic status and integration of their families. They described the stories their parents would tell them about their lives before Canada and the refugee camps, and how their parents constantly communicated their desire to give their children educational opportunities that they did not have. As noted in our previous research (Wilson-Forsberg et al., 2024), parents (primarily mothers) with refugee backgrounds from the Horn of Africa face added barriers to initiating and maintaining a high level of involvement with their children’s schools, including language barriers. “My mom doesn’t speak English, so she has never been to the school. She is trying hard to learn English, but she has too much stress,” said Stella, a 17-year-old from Eritrea. However, the youth conveyed that their mothers encouraged them to attend school and get their work done so that they could get a good job in the future.

Charles, a 19-year-old who came from South Sudan at the age of seven, completed a plumbing program at St. Clair College. His mother and grandmother wanted him to

study engineering at university, but he wanted to enter the workforce as soon as possible and go to university later:

My grandma and my mom want to make sure I am educated. For me, personally, I just felt like engineering makes sense, but not right away. My mom, she never was like, “Oh, you must do this, you must do that.” It was more “Ultimately, at the end of the day, it is your decision. So, make sure it’s something you’re comfortable with.” Right. So that put my mind at ease...I mean you need to eat. You need to be in the work world doing that job for a while, a few years, making money, and then you can decide from there.  
(Charles, 19, Windsor)

As illustrated by Charles’s quotation, many of the young men described their impatience to enter the labour market fast to make money. The trades are one way to do that. The young women, on the other hand, enthusiastically described big career plans necessitating more than one university degree. They reported an inclination toward service-related fields, such as medicine and social work, to give back to their families and communities. The young women often balance schoolwork with greater household responsibilities. Zaira, an 18-year-old of Somali background who was entering Wilfrid Laurier University at the time of the interview with the goal of attending law school, described the following:

The other issue was the babies. I was the oldest and my sister was four years younger, then year after year it was baby after baby. I felt like I was a mom to five babies. The babies kept me so busy at home I didn’t do any sports or extracurricular activities until they were older. But they are great kids and I matured really fast with all that responsibility. The experience made me passionate about family law so that I can someday protect mothers and children  
(Zaira, 18, Waterloo)

While the gendered division of household labour is an added responsibility for the young women, Zaira sees it as a positive circumstance that kept her at home with her family and brought her a sense of maturity and drive.

### 3. Linguistic Capital

Linguistic capital is defined as the ability of youth to develop communication skills through various experiences (Yosso, 2005). Language is the basic element for participation and integration in new social spaces and it plays a crucial role in terms of experiencing social mobility (Zchomler, 2019, p. 4). Linguistic capital, particularly fluent bilingualism, has been shown in research to foster optimism and career aspirations among immigrant adolescents (Medvedeva & Portes, 2017). The youth who participated in our study clearly have linguistic strengths that form the foundation upon which new learning is built (Chalmers & Crisfield, 2021). This was evident both in the beautiful articulation of their stories and lived experiences during interviews with our research team and through their ability and willingness to interpret for their friends during focus groups. Some of the youth speak three or more languages and have memorized the entire Quran in Arabic. They are multilingual learners, with skills that can be drawn on to contextualize and enhance their learning of English and the high school curriculum (Chalmers & Crisfield, 2021). However, the youth reported that teachers do not appreciate or utilize the languages that they speak (Chalmers, 2017). Native languages are not valued in the formal education system in the same manner as those students possessing fluent English and French (Devine, 2009).

Since English proficiency and the ability to learn it quickly are of prime importance, youth with refugee backgrounds are often placed in EAL classrooms for up to half the school day until their English is considered fluent enough to join the mainstream curriculum. Unless concrete efforts are made by school staff to nurture relationships with Canadian-born students (Wilson-Forsberg, 2012), the youth become isolated in these classrooms with limited access to a network of peers beyond their immediate immigrant group (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2007). Some of the youth we interviewed reported that they enjoyed the EAL experience and felt cared for by kind teachers (see Heringer, 2023 for a similar finding). Others spoke of EAL classrooms as reinforcing the belief that they were “less than” or “not smart enough.” For example, Abdul Majid, a 17-year-old from Somalia who was resettled in Waterloo in 2018 reported the following:

I think in Grade 10, I realized what was going on. Honestly, when I got in high school, I thought I understood English well, I just couldn't talk much. But in that [EAL] room they made me think that I was not like, qualified to

do stuff that I could easily do. So, I just didn't even try. I became lazy about schoolwork. But then I decided I needed to prove something to the teachers. I had to prove I was smart. So, I got out of there at the end of Grade 10. (Abdul Majid, 17, Waterloo)

Youth who came from former British colonies in Africa or countries with high exposure to English found the EAL placement to be a particularly humiliating and damaging experience, as noted by Aisha from South Sudan:

I was put into ESL [EAL]. Mind you, I didn't speak any other language. I only spoke English and we only spoke English at home. But I was put into an ESL classroom when I arrived in Grade 6, because it was assumed that as a Black immigrant from Africa, that I spoke another language. So, there are certain assumptions that went with not being white in a predominantly white school. (Aisha, 17, Waterloo)

Zhang and Beck (2014) maintain that “in a society where the expectation is that you will speak ‘good’ English as defined by the dominant group, anyone who does not speak ‘good’ English is then positioned as deficient not only in language, but in other ways” (para. 36). In this regard, the quotation demonstrates that low official language fluency is one of multiple assumptions made by educators about the capabilities, motivations, and integrity of Black African children (James & Turner, 2017), who are among the most discriminated groups in Canada in terms of official language fluency (Creese & Kambere, 2015).

#### **4. Navigational Capital**

Navigational capital refers to the youths' skills and abilities to navigate social institutions, including educational spaces (Yosso, 2005). Our findings indicate that many of the youth either lack the confidence and initiative to ask for help when they need it, or they want to navigate school on their own. As noted, at the school level guidance counsellors and, in some cases, Black graduation coaches are there to facilitate decision making around PSE, but the youth do not necessarily know how to navigate their way to them. Some of the youth also reported not receiving adequate support from teachers when they needed it. Outside of school, however, the youth often seek acceptance and belonging at community organizations. Through after-school and weekend continuity of care programs,

these organizations endeavour to support youth in accessible and culturally appropriate ways to engage in pro-social activities, and foster confidence, self-efficacy, resilience, and hope. Their after-school programs offer a safe space that is generally more accepting and supportive of the youths’ aspirations and conduct than school. Many of our research participants described their experiences at the community organizations in Waterloo, Windsor, and Thunder Bay. According to Lamine, a 17-year-old from Eritrea:

I feel like my teachers weren’t always the best people to go to when I needed help. If I needed help or needed to finish homework, I would always just come to the Neighbourhood Hub and ask for help. Because there you don’t need to love homework. You just need to get it done. (Lamine, 17, Waterloo)

Fara, an 18-year-old from Somalia, reported that staff at the Sandwich Teen Action Group (STAG) encouraged her PSE pathway, while the school guidance counsellor deterred her:

It was a staff member at STAG who made me believe I was more capable than I thought. The guidance counsellor at school rejected every program I showed her and told me I couldn’t get into any of them. So, I went back to the [STAG] staff member who went through the list of programs and said I could do any one of them and she would help me apply. (Fara, 18, Windsor)

The youth are also able to build social relationships with adults and peers at these organizations. For this reason, we found that navigational capital and social capital are often interconnected.

## 5. Social Capital

Social capital consists of how the youth utilize peers and other social contacts to navigate social institutions (Yosso, 2005). It was evident during focus group discussions that many of the youth are close friends. At the conclusion of one session in Thunder Bay with a group of young men from Eritrea, the participants announced that they were going fishing together. During individual interviews in Windsor, participants were rushing each other to make it to the cinema in time to see *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*. The youth also reported having friends at school from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Many of the young

men we interviewed are involved in, and encouraged to participate in, soccer and basketball. The data suggest that sports act as “equalizers” when it comes to race and socio-economic status and are an important tool for the integration of newcomer youth (Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, 2022). “Well, I fit it in a sense of, obviously a tall Black person plays basketball. I wanted to fit in, and I was good at it,” said Mohammed (age 18, Waterloo). Similarly, Hugo (16, Thunder Bay) from South Sudan explained, “When I’m playing soccer, like I’m in different environments, and I’m kind of a leader in soccer.” Only four young women mentioned involvement in sports, with one citing transportation issues as the reason for not playing soccer. Jana (17, Thunder Bay) stated, “Gosh, I tried to do soccer. Okay, my parents don’t have a car. They said, ‘You have to wake up at five to get a bus.’ It was winter, so I wasn’t going to do that.” The young women tended to connect participation in sports with their navigation of education spaces, endeavouring to use sports as a springboard to university. Zaira illustrated this point:

I finally made the [basketball] team in Grade 11. I was self-taught and never played on an actual team. Somalis don’t want their daughters playing sports. I put leggings under my shorts and wear long sleeves, but my aunties still didn’t like me playing. My mom told them to mind their own business [laughing] and now I coach kids in the Somali community. Since I am from a low-income family, Jumpstart [a charity organization] paid for everything. I improved so much once I was coached. I’m one of the best players on the team now and Laurier University has offered me a scholarship to play there. (Zaira, 18, Waterloo)

## **6. Resistance Capital**

Consistent with work by James and Turner (2017), some youth who had been in Canada for long enough to understand how academic credits work reported that they were streamed into applied classes in high school with little consideration of their career aspirations. Mahad, a 20-year-old of Somali background who attends a police foundations program at St. Clair College in Windsor, remarked that, “I think when I was going to high school, I kind of thought I would not do anything because the guidance counsellor just made me think that I was not smart enough to do anything.” Feeling like “the dum-

best kid in the school” was an experience that was reported consistently throughout the interviews; a symptom of deficit thinking, which blames alleged deficiencies within the students’ families, homes, and cultures rather than examining how schools are structured to prevent certain students from excelling (Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Valencia, 1997). In this respect, one of the most consistent themes running through our data is resistance. The need to prove that they were smart and capable of attending post-secondary education was described repeatedly by our interview participants. Mohammed, an 18-year-old of Somali background residing in Waterloo, reported that his school performance improved when “somewhere along the way, I decided to prove I was capable.” Leya, a 17-year-old from Ethiopia who also resides in Waterloo—and who was expelled for the remainder of the 2023 school year for fighting—said, “if they let me go back, I will scream the responses from the back of the room. I’m going to be at the top of the class.” Akulu, a 19-year-old of Ethiopian background residing in Windsor, reported: “I didn’t listen to the guidance counsellor who said I should take applied subjects. I spent the next two years proving I could get into that engineering program.” Selma, a college student of Somali background, elaborated on her experience with guidance counsellors:

I feel like as a Black person you must fight for recognition and be like, “Yes, I am smart, I’m not a dumb person.” Because when you go to your counsellor, they’re like, “I think you want to be in applied. It’s better for you.” That’s how I got placed in applied. I was only in Grade 9, so I didn’t know the difference. But I’m glad some of my Black friends [who also participated in this study] got through academic courses. They aren’t listening to the counsellors: “Oh yes, I wanna do academic, I’m not going to follow your advice even though you think that’s what I want.” (Selma, 19, Waterloo)

Our findings indicate that many of the youth are not following the advice of career guidance counsellors, appearing determined to complete enough academic courses to enter college or university and embark on their chosen career path. Those youth who have been in Canada long enough demonstrated that they are aware that certain processes and procedures at school are not benefitting them and, in some cases, are attempting to navigate academic credits on their own without adequate supports.

## Discussion

Youth with refugee backgrounds from the Horn of Africa residing in Waterloo, Windsor, and Thunder Bay, Ontario, aspire to pursue post-secondary education. However, of the 57 young people interviewed for this study, only 12 could describe the steps they are taking to enrol in college or university. The remaining youth were constrained by other factors. For example, we found, like in other studies (Cahan et al., 2001), that some of the youth who arrived as older adolescents were more likely to age out of their grades, which potentially would affect their school performance and plans for PSE. In addition, some of the more recent arrivals in Thunder Bay were disengaged in school and barely understood how the Canadian education system works. Several of them were in EAL classrooms and did not know what grade they were in. We also found that young women are outperforming young men academically and are more able to articulate their PSE pathways. Yet, despite their use of cultural capital and school-level resources such as Black graduation coaches, these youth are still led to believe that they are not smart enough to attend college or university.

As of September 2022, students entering high school in Ontario are no longer placed in applied or academic courses (Government of Ontario, 2022). However, streaming still occurs in the senior grades. From the youths' perspective this is problematic if they are not given the choice, or their parents cannot have a say. However, youth who are at risk of aging out of school (i.e., turning 20 before completing the academic credits needed to graduate), suggested that placement in applied subjects may afford them a realistic chance to graduate. At the administrative level, we found that guidance counsellors and teachers still conflate a lack of English fluency with a lack of capability. This is in part because school staff are not trained on how to tap into the linguistic capital of students from other cultures and, in our context, the Horn of Africa. Students who are cognitively capable of learning grade-appropriate academic content should not be held back from thinking at their ability level due to language differences (Gonzalez, 2022). Guidance counsellors, as reported by the youth in this study and our previous research (Shizha et al., 2020; Wilson-Forsberg et al., 2019, 2024), also fail to understand that PSE decisions by youth from the Horn of Africa are often collective family decisions. As a result, guidance counsellors struggle to effectively communicate with parents when advising students on their course selections. In this respect, our study demonstrates the disadvantages that youth with refugee backgrounds from the Horn of Africa face in Ontario

schools. Guidance counsellors and EAL teachers are institutional agents in schools with the capacity to directly transmit institutional resources and opportunities such as assistance with language learning, career decision making, and university preparation (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Instead of putting the structures in place that value the youths’ cultural assets, our findings consistently suggest that unexamined deficit thinking around race and refugees is used to sustain and produce new forms of everyday precarity for these youth.

However, the young people who participated in our study are not passive bystanders in school. Our findings demonstrate that some of these youth can effectively access and utilize the six forms of capital outlined in Yosso (2005) to help them overcome barriers and make informed decisions about PSE. Whether they are high-achieving students who have been in Canada since they were young children or recently arrived newcomers who struggle academically, the youth aspire to pursue successful careers. In this respect, the data suggest that the youth are engaging not only resistance capital, but also the other forms of capital to navigate and resist the disadvantages they face in school (Yosso, 2005). The youth demonstrated that they are capable and able to contribute meaningfully to their communities. Whether consciously or unconsciously, effectively or not, the youth are continuously pushing back on the common narrative that African refugees are needy and lack skills (Kyriakides et al., 2018). They have adopted the counternarrative of capability, agency, and resistance.

Within the critical race theory framework, Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) define “resistance that is motivated by a desire for social justice” (p. 319) as Transformative Resistance. In our data, the youth are using different forms of capital to navigate the disadvantages they face in school (Tuck & Yang, 2011). They are not engaging in overt strategies such as student walkouts and protests, though we did record several incidents of students being expelled from school for fighting. Instead, the youth are involved in more subtle or silent acts of internal resistance in that their behaviour appears to conform to cultural norms and expectations, but they are engaged in an act of resistance (Delgado Bernal, 1997, p. 324). For example, the youth reported that they are not following academic and career advice that they perceive as unhelpful to their career goals. They use linguistic capital to act as interpreters for their fellow students and to tell their stories, and they access community organizations and sports for some of the support they do not get at school. They are also learning resistance from the “counter stories” (Delgado, 1989) told to them by their parents about their lived experiences. Furthermore, many of the

young women and some of the young men reported that they want to give back to their families and communities by becoming lawyers, doctors, nurses, and social workers. These aspirations are consistent with recent research by Shapiro (2022). On the surface it looks like they are merely conforming to parental expectations, but in fact they have a social justice agenda to fill a void in their communities in Canada and their countries of origin. Finally, as Yosso (2000) suggested, succeeding in education is, in itself a form of resistance. This form of “resilient resistance” leaves “the structures of domination intact, yet [helps] the students survive and/or succeed” (Yosso, 2000, p. 181).

In conclusion, our research contributes to the growing literature on the experiences of African refugee youth in Canada. Specifically, it highlights their educational experiences in three medium-sized cities that are seeking to attract and retain immigrants for population and economic growth but are still building and improving the physical and social infrastructure to support their settlement and integration. While we collected rich data from the youth and feel honoured to have documented their stories, this study is not without limitations. Focusing on young people from the Horn of Africa region (dominated by Somalia) resulted in similar stories being collected. This circumstance is positive because the similarities validated our findings, but it is also a limitation because the data became saturated quickly. In addition, the youth who participated in the study regularly attend the activities offered by our community partners, and in this respect know how to navigate their way to at least one resource: the community organization itself. Many more youth whom we did not reach do not use or are unaware of this resource. Their stories may be different. Our ongoing national research project will build on these findings by comparing the transition to PSE experienced by youth with refugee backgrounds from other parts of Africa.

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### Appendix A: Demographics of Research Participants

Identification (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age/Grade	Country of Origin	Languages	Religion	Country of First Asylum	Length of time in Canada	Province and City	Family Members	Parents' Occupation Pre-and Post-Migration
#1 Lamine	M	18, Grade 12  Interested in carpentry	Ethiopia	Afar and Amharic	Muslim	Canada	5 years	Waterloo, ON	Mother, 1 older brother, 2 younger sisters	Unknown
#2 Adonay	M	21, aged out of school, pursuing GED while working in furniture warehouse	Ethiopia (Habesha Eritrean)	Tigrinya, English Arabic	Christian	Sudan	8 years	Windsor, ON	Parents separated, lives with mom and 1 little sister, 2 younger brothers	Dad was a mechanic, mom stayed home/Dad retired post-migration
#3 Burhaan	M	17, Grade 12, wants to go to medical school to become a surgeon	Somalia (Ogdenia)	Somali, English	Muslim	Ethiopia	3 years	Waterloo, ON	Parents, 4 brothers, 2 sisters	Dad was a medical assistant, mom was a teacher/ Both parents learning English post-migration
#4 Dalmar	M	18, Conestoga College student, studying construction	Somalia	Somali, Arabic, English	Muslim	Uganda	10 years	Waterloo, ON	Parents, 3 brothers, 2 sisters	Dad owned business, mom stayed home/Dad is a truck driver post-migration
#5 Leeban	M	18, Grade 12	Somalia	Somali, English	Muslim	8 years in Kenya	4 years	Waterloo, ON	Parents, 5 brothers, 3 sisters	Dad owned business/ Dad is unemployed and mom stays home post-migration
#6 Abshir	M	21, aged out of school, works in a warehouse	Ethiopia	Tigrinya, English	Muslim	Sudan, left Ethiopia at age 15	6 years	Waterloo, ON	Unaccompanied minor, now lives with aunt	Unknown
#7 Kaz	M	17, Grade 11	Eritrea	Afar, Amharic, Arabic, English	Muslim	Father took family to Ethiopia, then Canada	5 years	Waterloo, ON	Parents, 2 brothers, 2 sisters	Dad was a commander in the Eritrean army, defected, was jailed, then fled with family to Ethiopia

Identification (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age/Grade	Country of Origin	Languages	Religion	Country of First Asylum	Length of time in Canada	Province and City	Family Members	Parents' Occupation Pre-and Post-Migration
#8 Cumar	M	16, Grade 10	Somalia	Somali, English	Muslim	Uganda	9 years	Waterloo, ON	Parents, 2 brothers, 1 sister	Dad ran a business in Uganda, mom stayed home/Dad is a truck driver post-migration
#9 Selma	F	19, Conestoga College student, studying early childhood education	Somalia	Somali, English	Muslim	Kenya	10 years	Waterloo, ON	Parents, 12 siblings (3 born in Kenya, the rest in Canada)	Unknown
#10 Esme	F	18, was accepted to George Brown College but taken back to Somalia before she could attend	Somalia	Somali, English	Muslim	Kenya	10 years	Waterloo, ON	Parents, 12 siblings* (2 born in Kenya, the rest in Canada)  * Sibling of #9	Dad works and mom stays at home post-migration
#11 Shiloh	F	24, graduated from Wilfrid Laurier University	Ethiopia	Eritrean, Amharic, Tigrigna	Baha'i	Sudan	10 years	Waterloo, ON	Mother, 2 siblings	Unknown
#12 Dina	F	19, Grade 13	South Sudan	English	Christian	Sudan	6 years	Waterloo, ON	Mother, 7 siblings	Unknown
#13 Abdul Besad	M	19, Grade 12	Somalia	Somali	Muslim	Kenya	5 years	Waterloo, ON	Parents, 11 siblings	Unknown
#14 Abdul Majid	M	17, Grade 11	Somalia	Somali, English	Muslim	Kenya	5 years	Waterloo, ON	Parents, 11 siblings*  * Sibling of #13	Unknown
#15 Aziz	M	17, Grade 11	Somalia	Somali	Muslim	Kenya	4 years	Waterloo, ON	Mother, 4 siblings	Parents farmed

Identification (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age/Grade	Country of Origin	Languages	Religion	Country of First Asylum	Length of time in Canada	Province and City	Family Members	Parents' Occupation Pre-and Post-Migration
#16 Leya	F	17, Grade 11  Didn't attend school until arrival in Grade 6  Currently doing school online; expelled from in-person classes for fighting	Somalia	Somali, Swahili, English	Muslim	Ethiopia	6 years	Waterloo, ON	Mother, 7 siblings	Mom kept house, dad worked in Somalia until dad was killed
#17 Bridget	F	16	South Sudan	French, English	Christian	Cameroon	9 years	Waterloo, ON	Father and 1 younger sibling in Canada, more siblings in Cameroon with mother	Dad owned business/ Dad works in construction post-migration
#18 Zaira	F	18, Grade 12  Started at Wilfrid Laurier University in fall of 2023	Somalia	Somali, English	Muslim	Turkey	9 years	Waterloo, ON	Parents, 7 younger siblings	Dad works long hours, mom at home
#19 Nafisa	F	17	Somalia	Somali, English	Muslim	Kenya	4 years	Waterloo, ON	Mother (dad died in war), 8 younger siblings	Unknown
#20 Mohammed	M	18	Somalia	Somali, English	Muslim	Kenya	5 years	Waterloo, ON	Parents, 4 siblings	Unknown
#21 Aisha	F	17  Accepted offer from University of Ottawa to study civil engineering	South Sudan (born in Canada)	Nur, English	Christian	Canada	17 years	Waterloo, ON	Mother, 6 siblings	Dad is a truck driver, mom stays at home

Identification (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age/Grade	Country of Origin	Languages	Religion	Country of First Asylum	Length of time in Canada	Province and City	Family Members	Parents' Occupation Pre-and Post-Migration
#22 Daniel	M	19, St. Clair College student in the customs officer program	Ethiopia	Afar, English	Christian	Kenya	8 years	Windsor, ON	Parents are separated, lives with mom and 1 younger sister	Mom was a teacher in Kenya/Works for newcomer settlement services post-migration
#23 Diana	F	16, Grade 10 Wants to be a dentist	Sudan (Darfur)	Masalit, English	Muslim	Chad, then USA	4 years	Windsor, ON	Parents, 3 siblings	Parents were farmers/ Now learning English post-migration
#24 Angelina	F	17, Grade 12 Wants to be a hair stylist and go into real estate	Sudan (Darfur)	Masalit, English	Muslim	Chad, then USA	4 years	Windsor, ON	Parents, 3 siblings* * Sibling of #23	Parents were farmers/ Now learning English post-migration
#25 Mayam	F	17, Grade 12 Wants to study graphic design	South Sudan	English, Dinka	Christian	Chad	6 years	Windsor, ON	Mother, aunt, 2 female cousins, father was white	Unknown
#26 Fara	F	18, Grade 12	Somalia	Somali, English	Muslim	Ethiopia (8 years)	4 years	Windsor, ON	Parents, uncle, 2 brothers, 1 sister	Parents learning English
#27 Sabiba	F	17, Grade 12 Wants to study medicine	Somalia (Somali mother, Eritrean father)	Somali, Tigre, Arabic, English	Muslim	Kenya and Sudan	3 years	Windsor, ON	Mother, 4 brothers (1 disabled), 3 sisters	Mom learning English
#28 Esmael	M	16, Grade 10	Ethiopia	Afar, English	Muslim	Kenya	6 years	Windsor, ON	Parents, siblings unknown	Dad had a restaurant in Kenya/Parents are not working post-migration
#29 Arhamed	M	17, Grade 11	Somalia	Somali, English	Muslim	Uganda	5 years	Windsor, ON	Parents, 2 siblings	Parents are not working; former occupations are unknown

Identification (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age/Grade	Country of Origin	Languages	Religion	Country of First Asylum	Length of time in Canada	Province and City	Family Members	Parents' Occupation Pre-and Post-Migration
#30 Jabir	M	17, Grade 11	Eritrea	Afar, Arabic, English	Muslim	Ethiopia	4 years	Windsor, ON	Parents, no siblings	Father worked as a mechanic/Parents currently not working
#31 Akulu	M	19, Grade 13	Ethiopia	Amharic, English	Orthodox Christian	Kenya	1 year	Windsor, ON	Father (mother and siblings remain in Ethiopia)	Father was a teacher, mother in Ethiopia is a nurse/Father drives taxi post-migration
#32 Limaan	M	17, Grade 12	Somalia	Somali, English, French, some Arabic	Muslim	Djibouti	4 years	Windsor, ON	Parents, 6 siblings	Father ran a business in Djibouti/Parents are learning English, not working post-migration
#33 Shermake	M	16, Grade 10	Somalia	Somali, learning English	Muslim	Kenya	1 year	Windsor, ON	Parents, 4 siblings	Unknown
#34 Taban	M	18, Grade 13	Somalia	Somali, English	Muslim	Kenya	4 years	Windsor, ON	Parents, no siblings	Parents work together, not clear where
#35 Musa	M	17, Grade 12  Wants to study aerospace engineering	Sudan	English, Arabic	Muslim	Kenya	8 years	Windsor, ON	Parents, 4 siblings, 2 are in university for engineering  All athletes	Father was an engineer in Sudan
#36 Duka	M	16, Grade 11	Sudan (Darfur)	Arabic, English	Muslim	Kenya	9 years	Windsor, ON	Parents, 3 brothers, 1 sister	Parents work in restaurant, pre-migration dad worked in a greenhouse
#37 Tahiiil	M	21, currently works at a hospital	Somalia	Somali, English	Muslim	Kenya	10 years	Windsor, ON	Parents, 4 siblings	Parents were business owners in Somalia/Parents are business owners in Windsor

Identification (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age/Grade	Country of Origin	Languages	Religion	Country of First Asylum	Length of time in Canada	Province and City	Family Members	Parents' Occupation Pre-and Post-Migration
#38 Mahad	M	20, St. Clair College student in the Police Foundations program	Somalia	Somali, English	Muslim	Uganda	5 years	Windsor, ON	Parents, 3 siblings	Unknown
#39 Jane	F	18, Grade 13 Wants to go to medical school	South Sudan	English, Dinka	Christian	Kenya	4 years	Windsor, ON	Parents, 1 sibling (#40)	Father was a physician in South Sudan, current occupation unknown
#40 Joslyn	F	17, Grade 12 (accepted to University of Waterloo for the Social Development Studies program)	South Sudan	English, Dinka	Christian	Kenya	4 years	Windsor, ON	Parents, 1 sibling (#39)	Father was a physician in South Sudan, current occupation unknown
#41 Myassa	F	18, Grade 12 Wants to study dentistry	South Sudan	English, Dinka	Christian	Egypt	5 years	Windsor, ON	Mother, father	Father was head school-teacher in South Sudan
#42 Naomi	F	18, Grade 12	South Sudan	English, Dinka	Christian	Kenya	3 years	Windsor, ON	Mother, 3 sisters	Mother was a nurse/ Mother is now a PSW post-migration
#43 Mariane	F	16	South Sudan	English, Dinka	Christian	Kenya	3 years	Windsor, ON	Mother, 3 sisters* * Sibling of #42	Mother was a nurse/ Mother is now a PSW post-migration
#44 Charles	M	19 (finished the plumbing program at St. Clair College, now works at a retirement home)	South Sudan	English, Dinka, Swahili	Christian	Kenya	8 years	Windsor, ON	Mother (remarried in Windsor), 1 baby sister from new marriage	Mother is a teacher in Windsor
#45 Hugo	M	16, Grade 10	South Sudan	Neur, English	Christian	United States	5 years	Thunder Bay, ON	Parents, number of siblings unknown	Unknown

Identification (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age/Grade	Country of Origin	Languages	Religion	Country of First Asylum	Length of time in Canada	Province and City	Family Members	Parents' Occupation Pre-and Post-Migration
#46 Kareem	M	23 (aged out of school)	Sudan (Darfur)	Masalit, learning English	Muslim	Uganda	4 years	Thunder Bay, ON	Arrived as an unaccompanied minor with 3 younger sisters, now lives with an aunt	Parents were farmers in Darfur
#47 Amanuel	M	18	Eritrea	Tigre, Learning English	Christian	Ethiopia	3 years	Thunder Bay, ON	Aunt, 3 cousins	Unknown
#48 Bilen	M	17, Grade 11	Eritrea	Tigrigna, learning English	Orthodox Christian	Djibouti	1 year	Thunder Bay, ON	Mother, 1 brother	Mother is Somali, father is Eritrean, father was supervisor in government/Mother still learning English post-migration
#49 Eyob	M	20	Eritrea	Tigrigna, Amharic, Arabic	Christian	Ethiopia, South Sudan, Libya, Algeria, Morocco	3 years	Thunder Bay, ON	Arrived as an unaccompanied minor after journey from Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, Libya, Algeria, Morocco, now lives with a friend	Mother was a secretary, raised by grandmother along with 3 sisters
#50 Alexandre	M	19, aging out of high school	Eritrea	Tigre, Arabic, learning English	Muslim	Sudan	3 years	Thunder Bay, ON	Unaccompanied minor, raised by grandmother, has only seen photos of siblings  Parents left for Saudi Arabia when he was a baby	Unknown
#51 Othman	M	24, aged out of high school	Sudan (Darfur)	Masalit, Arabic, English	Muslim	Chad	5 years	Thunder Bay, ON	Parents, 2 sisters, 1 brother	Father was a farmer, current occupation unknown
#52 Hidaya	F	16, Grade 10	Somalia	Somali, English	Muslim	Saudi Arabia	4 years	Thunder Bay, ON	Parents, 1 brother	Unknown

Identification (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age/Grade	Country of Origin	Languages	Religion	Country of First Asylum	Length of time in Canada	Province and City	Family Members	Parents' Occupation Pre-and Post-Migration
#53 Naima	F	20, attending an adult learning centre for GED (married with a 2-year-old son)  Wants to go to college to study business administration	Sudan	Arabic, learning English	Muslim	Chad	3 years	Thunder Bay, ON	Arrived with 1 older brother and 1 older sister, husband was scheduled to arrive week of interview	Unknown
#54 Ali	M	18, Grade 13	Somalia	Somali, learning English	Muslim	Kenya	2 years	Thunder Bay, ON	Mother, 1 sister	Unknown
#55 Jana	F	17, Grade 12	Somalia	Somali	Muslim	Kenya	5 years	Thunder Bay, ON	Father, aunt, cousin, 5 siblings (mother chose to stay in Somalia with 2 oldest daughters)	Unknown, father just arrived and is looking for work
#56 Stella	F	17, Grade 11  Wants to go to medical school to be a pediatrician	Eritrea	Tigrigna, Amharic  * Interview done through interpreter	Muslim	Djibouti	1 year	Thunder Bay, ON	Parents, 3 siblings (all boys)	Unknown
#57 Jordan	M	18, Grade 12	Somalia	Swahili, Somali	Muslim	Kenya (born there)	5 years	Thunder Bay, ON	Aunt, 8 siblings (scattered)	Unknown