CONSTRUCTING RESILIENCY: THE ACCULTURATION OF REFUGEES AND THEIR COMMUNICATION WITHIN COMMUNITIES

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the participating organization’s staff and students, who provided me with countless memorable moments to write about and constant encouragement. You all give me hope for the future of cross-cultural education. Thank you.
True generosity consists precisely in fighting
to destroy the causes which nourish false charity.

False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the ‘rejects of life,’
to extend their trembling hands.

True generosity lies in striving so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire
peoples—need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become
human hands which work and, working,
transform the world.

--Paulo Friere

*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Constructing Resiliency: The Acculturation of Refugees and Their Communication Within Communities

by

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The ongoing process of acculturation constitutes a significant part of refugee students’ interactions with volunteers. Communication functions to empower and create meaning for each individual in this relationship. My research was designed to investigate the ways that refugee students construct resiliency through their communication with members of U.S. and international communities. The relationship between refugee students and tutors is explored through thirteen interviews with students and tutors, one focus group discussion with students and tutors, and ethnographic observations of students’ and tutors’ communication behavior. Observations before, during, and after tutoring sessions focused on interactions that were designed to assist refugee students in the college preparation and navigation process. The results of this research indicate that refugee students’ construction of resiliency plays a vital role in their adjustment to college, and implicitly, U.S. culture. Through expressions of affiliation, diligence, and connectedness, refugee students and their tutors communicatively construct resiliency. Each of the three expressions offer theoretical implications: affiliation reflects the tenets of social support, diligence exemplifies empowerment in action, and connectedness relates to the intercultural theory of uncertainty reduction. I posit that the findings of this study encourage all educators to communicate in a culturally competent way with refugee students, thus fostering students’ construction of resiliency, and consequently, such students’ smooth transition into the U.S. system of higher education. Future research could focus on a quantitative comparison between refugee students’ and tutors’ language and behavior within and outside of college preparatory programs to show the similarities and differences between students who have and have not received additional aid in their navigation of higher education.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PAGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABSTRACT</th>
<th>vi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER

#### 1 THE COMPASS ROSE

- Passion with a Purpose ............................................................... 5
- Barriers and Bridges ................................................................. 5
- The U.S. School System’s Landscape is Changing .......................... 6
- Differences Exist Between Immigrant and Refugee Students .............. 6
- Refugees’ Acculturation is an Understated Adjustment ......................... 7
- Cultural Adaptation Presents Multiple Barriers ................................. 8
- Refugees Can Respond to Barriers with Resiliency ............................ 9
- Empowering Interactions Play a Key Role in Success ......................... 10
- Each Educator in a Refugee Student’s Academic Life Fills a Particular Role ............................................................................. 11
- Examining a New Research Direction .............................................. 11

#### 2 MAPPING AND MEANDERING

- Walking Shoes .............................................................................. 15
- The Lay of the Land ..................................................................... 16
- Participants ................................................................................. 18
- Procedural Considerations ......................................................... 19
- Exploring with Ethnography ......................................................... 20
- Participant Observation ............................................................. 21
- Interviews .................................................................................. 22
- Focus Group Discussion ............................................................ 23
- Surveying the Scene .................................................................. 24
3 THE JOURNEY ...........................................................................................................27

Affiliation ...............................................................................................................30

Joking/Sarcasm ................................................................................................31
Nicknames/Greetings .......................................................................................32
Play ..................................................................................................................33
Planned Group Activities .................................................................................34

Diligence ................................................................................................................36

Drive/Patience ..................................................................................................37
Support ...............................................................................................................43
Firmness/Flexibility .........................................................................................47
Music ................................................................................................................48

Connectedness ........................................................................................................49

Text Messaging and Phone Calls .....................................................................50
Computer-Mediated Communication ..............................................................51
Food/Culture ....................................................................................................52
Disclosure ...........................................................................................................55

Where Do We Go From Here? ..............................................................................58

4 DESTINATION UNKNOWN .....................................................................................61

Conclusions and Interpretations .............................................................................61

Theoretical and Practical Implications ...................................................................64

Affiliation Reflects the Tenets of Social Support ............................................64
Diligence Exemplifies Empowerment in Action .............................................65
Connectedness Contributes to Uncertainty Reduction ....................................66

Ideological Positioning and Structuration ....................................................66

Cognitive Learning ..........................................................................................68
Behavioral Learning .........................................................................................68
Affective Learning ...........................................................................................68
Pragmatic Avenues ..........................................................................................69

Writing as Healing .............................................................................................70
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Educators, Schools, and Nonprofit Organizations ..........71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations and Future Research .................................................................73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections .......................................................................................................73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................................................77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**APPENDIX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A INTERVIEW GUIDES ..............................................................81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT .................................................86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C CONSENT FORM ........................................................................89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1. Participants</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2. Communicative Expression of Resiliency</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

PAGE

Figure 1. A model of refugee students’ personal growth..................................................63
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Each of you has taught me what it truly means to learn, love, and grow.
CHAPTER 1

THE COMPASS ROSE

The solution is not to ‘integrate’ [students] into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become “beings for themselves.”

--Paulo Friere
Pedagogy of the Oppressed

I still remember the first time I walked into the building that became my study site. A little over a year ago, following relatively vague directions I had received via e-mail, I wandered up and down a few different fluorescently lit hallways before finding the right office. Aside from signs scattered sporadically on the doors themselves, little guidance was offered to anyone attempting to find their destination. I felt lost and, frankly, a little frustrated. I did not have a map of the building, much less a guide pointing me in the right direction. Like a compass without a rose, the destination lingered in my mind, but I had no idea which way was north. Navigating unfamiliar hallways in a single building, however, must be exponentially easier than navigating unfamiliar hallways in an unfamiliar building on an unfamiliar campus in an unfamiliar country.

Learning is a lifelong process filled with unpredictable twists and turns. Even after leaving the secure walls of academia for the unique challenges of the professional world, I know I will find myself in the role of student, simply in another setting. However, as a teenager preparing for high school exit exams and deciding which college I wanted to attend, I did not think about the future in terms of a lifetime of learning. Instead of a journey of discovery, I saw college as another destination on the map, somewhere I felt I had to go without making stops along the way. Recently, I met a few individuals who look at their education quite differently. At one particular resettlement organization, I built relationships with refugee students who opened my eyes to the transformative nature of education outside the constraints of the classroom. This organization works to equip students with the tools they need to succeed in the college system in the United States.
Resettlement agencies across the country, including the organization in this study, mainly act as a reception site for refugees entering the U.S. each year. In 2010, over 73,000 refugees arrived to the United States (United States Department of Homeland Security [USDHS], 2011). As of January 2011, a total of over 206,000 refugees and asylum seekers were living in the U.S. (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2012a). Of refugee arrivals to the United States each year, recent reports have suggested that people fleeing from Iraq, Somalia, and Burma were among the major populations entering the U.S. in 2011 (UNHCR, 2011). Refugee students in the U.S. school system characterize some of the faces of these facts and figures.

As part of a wide variety of services and resources offered to those fleeing persecution, some resettlement agencies address refugees’ educational opportunities. Though government initiatives (including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Refugee School Impact program) provide educational funds, the services offered are only directed to elementary and high school students (United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement [USDHHSORR], 2011). The demand for educational services tailored to college-bound refugee students presents a quandary deserving of national attention. Entering a U.S. elementary school is difficult for children of refugee backgrounds, but navigation of the college system in this country requires drive and determination on an entirely different level.

Refugee students’ diligence is inspiring. They often educate everyone around them simply by participating in academic activities. Though a part of the nation’s student body, most refugee students are not naturalized U.S. citizens. Unfortunately, the U.S. does not always demonstrate a favorable attitude toward foreign-born individuals entering the country; albeit, newcomers have an abundance of “unique perspectives, skills, and traditions” that could enhance the nation in many ways (Goodkind, 2006). The position of migrants as Other, when such individuals possess the capacity to positively contribute to U.S. society, presents reason to aid refugees in their acculturative process and in the maintenance of their respective cultural identities (Goodkind, 2006). Regardless of cultural background, all individuals equally deserve the opportunity for, and the access to, quality education. The country is setting itself up for a future laden with failure, should it decide not to create school environments that sincerely seek to foster refugee students’ adaptation and learning.
Most refugee students, having faced incredible challenges to their learning from an early age, exude resilient qualities deserving of respect, both from their educators and their peers. Before collecting data for this study, I had narrowly thought of resiliency as endurance of the human spirit. Subsequently, I saw resilience as something reflected in an individual’s overcoming of challenges by virtue of his or her inner strength. However, Richardson (2002) says, “Resilience or energy comes from within the human spirit or collective unconscious of the individual and also from external social, ecological, and spiritual sources of strength” (p. 319). I had not spent much time considering the external forces that could contribute to an individual’s resilience.

Whether from within, outside, or both, resiliency involves perseverance that transcends a basic will to survive. Richardson (2002), in discussing “reintegrating from disruptions in life,” defines “resilience theory” as “the motivational force within everyone that drives them to pursue wisdom, self-actualization, and altruism and to be in harmony with a spiritual source of strength” (p. 309). Additionally, then, resiliency is a communicative phenomenon because it involves the demonstration of inner strength through adaptation. Says Buzzanell (2010), “human resilience is constituted in and through communicative processes that enhance people’s abilities to create new normalcies” (p. 9). Thus, resiliency is a fitting term to describe the focus of this study.

I have witnessed the resiliency construction of a handful of refugee students through my participation in one resettlement agency’s education resource programs. After a semester of volunteering for the organization’s high school tutoring program, and a summer educating high school students about the characteristics of refugee populations, I have developed a love for working with refugees, volunteers, and nonprofit staff members. I noticed while volunteering at this organization an inconsistent cohesion among many of the volunteers. In the tutoring program, volunteers participated in friendly “small talk” on occasion, but tended not to engage in many full-length conversations with each other before, during, or after sessions. This sparked my curiosity as to how volunteers encourage expressions of resiliency and empower the students they work with when they do not interact extensively with other tutors. Hence, the basis for the present study began to form. In the pages that follow, I uncover how—through communication between tutors, nonprofit staff members, and refugee
students—volunteers educate in a way that facilitates and/or constrains the students’ construction of resiliency.

Organizations, such as the one that is the focus of this study, have education programs partly because schools across the country are often inadequately prepared to adapt to the refugee individuals entering their classrooms. Some states may have a higher percentage of refugee students than others, but the need for systemic adaptation remains. Faculty and staff are often ill-equipped to serve the refugee population because they sometimes see their efforts to accommodate immigrant students as sufficient for all newcomers. However, immigrants and refugees often have different concerns, which implicates that they be treated as distinct populations. The acculturation process for refugees requires heightened social support and empowerment, especially in the educational setting. Volunteers at nonprofit organizations, including the participants in this study, have the capacity to provide such support and empowerment.

Each chapter of this thesis highlights the factors that facilitate and constrain refugee students’ construction of resiliency amidst their cultural adaptation and their communication with their surrounding communities. From encouragement and empowerment to boundaries and barriers, this collection of viewpoints regarding the education of refugee individuals provides a portrait of how, in view of the unique adjustments and challenges of students and staff, educators can encourage culturally competent language and behavior and work to foster students’ diligent pursuit of higher education.

First, I will discuss this research as a “worthy topic,” citing the relevance of competent intercultural communication for America’s educators (Tracy, 2010, pp. 840-841). Second, I will review relevant literature to bolster the claim that this particular study is well-suited for scholarly inquiry about empowering communication. Third, I will outline the methods used to collect and analyze data from participants. Fourth, I will share stories and anecdotes from the tutors and students themselves, weaving my own experience with what they have told me. A discussion of the implications will follow this sequence of stories. Finally, I will explain the limitations of my study and will suggest future research directions.
PASSION WITH A PURPOSE

Intercultural communication scholars have examined refugee populations increasingly “since the massive movements of people during and after” World War II (Mortland & Ledgerwood, 1987, p. 286). According to the UNHCR (2012b),

... a refugee is someone who “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [or her] nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself [or herself] of the protection of that country.” (para. 3)

This definition, commonly accepted among government and non-governmental organizations alike, describes the students my study focused on. Many educators are unaware of how to best meet the dynamic needs of America’s refugee student population. According to Kanno and Varghese (2010), refugees—a part of the English as a second language (ESL) student population—have previously only been studied in terms of their “academic writing, leaving larger issues of their college access and success unexplored” (p. 310). Though intercultural academic circles have generally discussed refugee populations in their literature for several years, the experience of refugees in educational settings has remained relatively under-studied by Communication scholars, presenting an “intrinsically interesting” (Tracy, 2010, p. 841) endeavor. The nature of the U.S. classroom has significantly diversified over the past few years, calling for educators to construct and espouse culturally sensitive understandings of different student populations.

Understanding refugee students’ backgrounds includes gaining knowledge of the barriers they face. The need to pass the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) is one large barrier for many refugee students. This test often keeps individuals from following dreams of college simply because it prolongs the process of obtaining a certificate of completion (California Department of Education [CDE], 2011). Educators’ and tutors’ awareness of such challenges is integral prior to encouraging refugee students to attend college.

BARRIERS AND BRIDGES

In addition to passing the CAHSEE, the following review of literature details some other main barriers refugee students face, as well as communication methods for competent
intercultural interaction between educators and students. First, I discuss how the communicative landscape of America’s schools is changing. Next, I outline the important distinction between refugees and immigrants. Then, I explain how refugees’ adjustment is often understated or misunderstood as a one-time acculturation process, highlighting the necessity for refugee individuals’ construction of resiliency. Followed by the explanation of refugee acculturation, I identify educators’ roles in refugee student success. Finally, I present how communication scholarship can enlighten and promote the facilitation of empowerment in education for refugee students.

**The U.S. School System’s Landscape is Changing**

Many refugee individuals enter United States schools each year without the luxury of past, consistent, elementary education (Roxas, 2011). With the migration of peoples from their home countries to the U.S. on a regular basis, America (as a host country) must find ways to meet the demands of the influx. For example, as different languages and cultures enter U.S. schools, teachers are expected to learn how to effectively engage in intercultural communication with their students (MacPherson, 2010). Effective intercultural communication can be exceptionally difficult when large percentages of diverse student populations enter the classroom with minimal to low levels of English proficiency. Some scholars suggest that all instructors should assume the role of a language teacher in response to this increased English language learner population; however, the challenges such students face extend beyond language acquisition (Kanno & Varghese, 2010). Though they face similar challenges to immigrant individuals, refugee students often encounter barriers in a more acute way, and must deal with particular hardships completely unique from those faced by immigrants.

**Differences Exist Between Immigrant and Refugee Students**

Inconsistent prior education is only one of many characteristics of refugee students’ backgrounds. Though scholarly literature sometimes treats refugees and immigrants similarly in discussions of intercultural communication issues, the two populations are quite different. Refugees experience certain stages of stress that immigrants often do not. Barowsky and McIntyre (2010) discuss such stages of the refugee flight experience in terms of the stress
they experience before leaving their country of origin, during their flight from that country, and after resettling in a new place. For immigrants, migration tends to be a matter of choice, as they “usually decide to relocate for economic reasons” (Wycoff, Tinagon, & Dickson, 2011, p. 166). Some immigrants leave troubled situations in their home country to search for a better life in the United States; however, refugees tend to have much more harrowing experiences upon leaving their country of origin and resettling in the U.S. As stated in the UNHCR’s (2012b) definition, refugees flee persecution, usually having experienced extreme trauma and duress. Movement is a matter of life or death for most, if not all, refugees, who may be relegated “to an intolerable life in the shadows, without sustenance and without rights” (para. 5), should they find a way to stay alive in their own country. From time spent in camps to temporary relocation in urban slums, some students of refugee background face psychological and physical hardships before entering the U.S. unmatched by immigrant students (Barowsky & McIntyre, 2010). In addition to effects on their mental and physical health, flight from their home country can often influence how well refugees adjust to the new culture, including educational settings (Barowsky & McIntyre, 2010, p. 162). Consequently, experiences of refugees and immigrants in the educational system tend to differ in many ways (Roxas, 2011). Understanding the “emotional road” students travel before entering the U.S. school system is tantamount to instructor impact (Barowsky & McIntyre, 2010, p. 166). Once a refugee student enters the U.S. school system, the adaptation process does not end after his or her first year in the country.

**Refugees’ Acculturation is an Understated Adjustment**

Refugee students undergo the ongoing process of acculturation in the U.S. “Ever growing populations of refugees live in the United States, yet little is known about the communicative problems refugees experience while adapting to American culture” (Semlak, Pearson, Amundson, & Kudak, 2008, p. 43). Acculturation refers to the mutual cultural adaptation process individuals and groups experience when interacting with one another for a period of time (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). The process can be drawn out—“sometimes taking years, sometimes generations, and sometimes centuries” (Berry, 2005, p. 699). Acculturation is an obstacle encompassing several aspects of adaptation that refugees
must face and overcome. “Cross-cultural adaptation is not a new area of study for communication scholars, however there is a paucity of knowledge about the communicative challenges refugees experience” (Semlak et al., 2008, p. 45). To adapt, refugees make changes “in response to external demands” (Berry, 2005, p. 709). The “external demands” of the U.S. educational system are only a portion of the changes refugee students strive to make upon entering the country.

**Cultural Adaptation Presents Multiple Barriers**

Refugees experience varying degrees of hardship depending on when they and their families entered the U.S. Regardless of how long they have been in the country, their past speaks of individual hardships often unbeknownst to their peers, especially in school settings. The stresses before fleeing home and after refugees begin life in a new culture shape adaptation (McBrien, 2005, p. 355). Having undergone acculturation, many individuals “find opportunities and achieve their goals sometimes beyond their initial imaginings” (Berry, 2005, p. 710). Even though the process may be difficult, people acculturating often find support from engaging with both their home culture and their new culture (Berry & Sabatier, 2011). Scholars have cited that the two are linked in the immigrant’s identity (Kinefuchi, 2010). Though important for learning how to function in a new culture, proficiency in the language of the host country could be at odds with ethnic language maintenance (Hatoss & Sheely, 2009; Miglietta & Tartaglia, 2009).

The “maintenance of the mother tongue” is one of several factors contributing to resettlement success, and as such, is deserving of scholarly attention based on the growing number of refugee populations worldwide (Hatoss & Sheely, 2009, p. 142). Language policies in relation to intercultural communication differ from country to country, yet comparisons of the U.S. with different nations’ language programs can provide a measure by which the U.S. can gauge how to approach English language learners (Ager, Muskens, & Wright, 1993). In one study of Greek students, it was found that “overall, the results for psychological and school adjustment indicate better adaptation among adolescents who feel connected to both of the worlds in which they live” (Motti-Stefanidi, Pavlopooulos, Obradović, & Masten, 2008, p. 57). Thus, interactions students have with educators that are
sensitive to both their home culture and their adaptation to the new culture have the potential to facilitate adjustment.

**Refugees Can Respond to Barriers with Resiliency**

Resilience, though a key aspect of survival (Wycoff et al., 2011), transcends a basic will to do so. Richardson (2002) calls resilience a “transcending intervention” (p. 319). Refugees’ internal resilience can be considered with the external forces that shape their identities (Kinefuchi, 2010). Communicative interactions are one group of such external forces. Says Buzzanell (2010), resilience, “is fundamentally grounded in messages, d/Discourse, and narrative” (p. 2). Resilience is visible in particular communicative processes, including “crafting normalcy, affirming identity anchors, maintaining and using communication networks, putting alternative logics to work, and legitimizing negative feelings while foregrounding productive action” (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 3). Therefore, through communicative choices and interactions students can form resilient responses to academic and acculturative challenges.

When “Putting alternative logics to work,” says Buzzanell (2010, p.6), members of “resilient systems incorporate seemingly contradictory ways of doing organizational work through development of alternative logics or through reframing the entire situation” (p. 6). For example, in the same way that members of an organization may “ideologically [position] themselves in relation to [a] merger” (Howard & Geist, 1995, p. 126), students may ideologically position themselves in relation to their acculturation. Hence, if a refugee student sees his or her acculturation as a positive process, he or she demonstrates resiliency by taking action based on that ideological positioning. Fleeing from home and adapting to a foreign system presents considerable obstacles. Buzzanell (2010) writes,

> The effort to create appropriate feelings in any given situation, especially in traumatic or disastrous times, is considerable. However I firmly believe that the engagement in this kind of emotion work and the reframing of the situation linguistically and metaphorically to one of constrained hopefulness is yet another key process in the communicative construction of resilience. (p. 9)

Thus, as previously stated, resiliency is partly a matter of communicative choice. Consequently, scholars are responsible to cite “how communication can enhance individuals’
and collectivities’ well-being and resilience in particular contexts” (Buzzanell, 2010, p. 10). This thesis is one effort to demonstrate examples of such phenomena.

**Empowering Interactions Play a Key Role in Success**

Acculturation can be aided by empowering interactions between educators and students. Schools are often primary points of contact for refugee families, so social support from educational staff plays a key role in the adjustment of both students and parents (McBrien, 2005). Staff can “convey explicit emotional support” with “sincere expressions of sympathy and condolence, concern for the other person, or encouragement to express emotions” (McCornack, 2010, p. 141). For example, when an individual feels he or she is being forced to assimilate linguistically, he or she may not desire to acculturate and may begin to see members of the dominant culture in a negative way (Croucher, 2009). Hence, as students acculturate, it is important that educators develop a sense of trust with them (Barowsky & McIntyre, 2010). Communication that reflects empowerment as a part of the support process is “cyclical” (Dirks & Metts, 2010, p. 409). Communication is not only important for empowering students, but is also “integral to the socialization of voluntary members” (Kramer, 2011, p. 252). Communicative interactions are part of Gudykunst and Hammer’s (1987) theory of uncertainty-reduction, which can also inform understandings of intercultural adaptation.

Students studying abroad often present a prime example of short-term adjustment. Research on students studying abroad is prolific (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011). Scholars have cited the importance of friendship ties for international students, suggesting a tie between “host national friendship” and “the cross-cultural adaptation process” (Hendrickson et al., 2011, p. 292). Mindful intercultural interactions can also contribute to identity negotiation through communication that facilitates “the feeling of being understood, the feeling of being respected, and the feeling of being supported” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 46). Therefore, from educators to peers, empowering interactions are important for refugee students.
Each Educator in a Refugee Student’s Academic Life Fills a Particular Role

Volunteers at nonprofit organizations can be educators for refugee students, as they often provide support for acculturation that schools may not. Communication scholars have given increased attention to nonprofit organizations over the past few years. One key component to these organizations is their reliance on volunteer staff for the creation and implementation of projects and programs. Volunteer relationships present an intriguing avenue of research as they pertain to the formation of groups and teams, the performance of culture, the fostering of social responsibility, organizational assimilation and identification, and the meanings of work. Though their study focuses mainly on diverse work teams, Oetzel, Burtis, Sanchez, and Perez (2001) suggest that more attention be paid to the role of communication in the formation of inclusive and divisive groups within organizations. They also cite how communication in group interactions, generally guided by a task or assignment, creates a group culture (Oetzel et al., 2001). Though not as recent, Pacanowsky and O’Donnell-Trujillo (1983) take a more in-depth look at how organizational culture is socially constructed. The present study seeks to fill the gap Oetzel et al. (2001) have mentioned by looking at one particular group’s formation and interactions over the course of an academic semester. The “effective communication processes” that Oetzel et al. (2001) list, including “integrating multiple viewpoints, frequent communication, willingness to communicate, support, and task conflict” (p. 256) helped guide the evaluations of observations and findings.

Examining a New Research Direction

Communication between volunteers and refugee students is a phenomenon worthy of scholarly attention. Barowsky and McIntyre (2010) say that teachers and schools can “be agents for countering the effects of abusive authority suffered by” (p. 166) refugee students. In caring about these issues, scholars can push for such change. Doná (2007) writes that, “studying the experiences, causes and consequences of displacement is done with the implicit or explicit intent to influence the development of better policies” (p. 210), which calls the scholar to intertwine theory and practice. Also, refugee students moving into the college setting face a daunting set of challenges, yet may claim they view themselves as “just like any other college student[s]” (Johnson, 2011, p. 2).
According to Kinefuchi (2010), “little intercultural communication research of immigrant identity has explored refugee experiences in general, except for a few recent works” (p. 230). Refugees’ experiences, specifically in the public school system, deserve a closer look (Roxas, 2011, pp. 514-515). Since this study’s nonprofit organization works with programs geared toward refugees, its importance to the surrounding community provides an interesting facet to the examination of volunteer relationships.

Finally, interactions between volunteers and students can provide insights about the meanings of work. In their 2008 study, Cheney, Zorn, Planalp, and Lair suggest “investigations of empirical associations between overall life satisfaction and particular dimensions of work(place) culture and analyses of specific enlightened work cultures” (pp. 170-171). I propose that the work culture of the nonprofit is an enlightened one, and as such, is well suited for further investigation.

Communication between tutors and refugee students is one avenue of research that could enhance understandings of the continual process of acculturation. By conducting interviews and observations at one particular nonprofit organization, I examined the acculturation experiences of refugee students and their construction of resiliency in interaction with their tutors. One major intercultural communication theory I used to guide the collection and interpretation of my data was uncertainty reduction. I argue that the atmosphere of the organization fosters a “weak uncertainty work situation,” where “there is a greater tolerance of innovative ideas and behavior” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 71). Since the members of the organization voluntarily choose to interact regularly with people from cultures other than their own, it can also be said that they seek to reduce uncertainty through self-disclosure (Ting-Toomey, 1999). The second facet of communication theory I used to guide the collection and analysis of data is that of empowerment. The third and final communication theory I used to collect and analyze my data is social support. As discussions of theory apply most directly to analysis of findings, each of the aforementioned theories is outlined in more detail in the discussion of my results.

When individuals enter a new environment, they often have access to people from both the new culture and their home culture (Kim, 1987). Thus, I ask:

RQ: How do refugee students construct resiliency in interactions with others?

a. What facilitates or constrains this construction?
As the research question listed above dictates, this study focused on messages of empowerment, communication of meaningful work, and construction of resiliency through interactions between the volunteers and students at a local nonprofit refugee resettlement agency. The following section outlines the specific methods that were used to gather data for this study.
CHAPTER 2

MAPPING AND MEANDERING

Young adults just beginning their college education, with several academic and extracurricular commitments, require heightened degrees of patience and flexibility from anyone with whom they work. I encountered this phenomenon during the data collection phase of my project. With a lack of consistent access to e-mail and the inconsistency of replies through text message communication, students and tutors contributed to my development of increased patience and flexibility. One day I would conduct an interview, or two, possibly three. Another day I would observe while waiting for an interview the entire time I was at the organization, only to end up with a few hours’ worth of notes and the promise of a future conversation. The spontaneity integral to this study’s research process was both exciting and difficult.

At times, I felt I was aimlessly wandering, waiting for something amazing to happen. Apparently Lucas had left right before I got to the office. Good thing I stuck around! Every time I think I won’t get an interview, something organically happens. Lucas had such great things to say and honestly seemed engaged in our discussion. He leaned in, used hand gestures, and made a lot of eye contact. (De Wyn, field notes, February 28, 2012)

After a few observation sessions and interviews, I began to see how the organic approach I took to my work could lead me to an authentic end product. In each section that follows, I discuss the aspects of this study’s “map.” I start by focusing on the personal motivation behind my work in “Walking Shoes.” Then, I explain the particularities of the organizational context for my study in “The Lay of the Land.” Following this description of setting, the section entitled “Exploring with Ethnography” details the methods I utilized in my study. After outlining the specifics of my chosen methods, I discuss the process of entering the field in “Surveying the Scene.” Lastly, I talk about how I chose to analyze and represent my data in “Marking the Trail.”
**WALKING SHOES**

Ever since I started spending time at nonprofit organizations that create and implement college readiness programs, I knew I had a passion for promoting equal opportunity for education. I was enrolled in private school from preschool through my bachelor’s degree, and consequently, I am acutely aware of the privilege I have grown up with in regard to my education. My father always made it clear to me and my sister that schooling was of utmost importance and he insisted on the best for both of his daughters. Despite multiple moves throughout my childhood, he and my mother managed to find educational opportunities for my sister and me that I am now extremely grateful for.

Following my graduation from high school, I encountered underprivileged students regularly in various internship and volunteer positions. As a result, I started to realize how lucky I had been to experience the quality of education I did as a child. Seeing the struggles of students and instructors in the public school system (on the elementary school, middle school, high school, and university level) caused me to wonder what I could do to make a difference. Thus, after years of eye-opening experiences with the shortcomings of the U.S. educational system, and some substantial research, I knew this project had to happen.

Most recently, as a Graduate Teaching Associate, I have simultaneously encountered students from privileged and underprivileged backgrounds both at the University and at the organization that is the site of my study. When I mentally juxtapose the two populations–students from the University where I instruct and students from the program (most of whom attend community college)–comparisons and contradictions often arise. Just recently, I was discussing with a few colleagues how many opportunities students are afforded at the University where we teach. Not all of my students come from backgrounds of privilege, but attending University is a privilege itself, which I am not sure all of them completely understand. At the study site, I have spent the past year building relationships with refugee students who would give anything to be in the chairs of those sitting in my classes. To be honest, the more time I spend with each group, the more my curiosity builds as to what would happen if they exchanged lives for a few weeks.

This project, then, grew partially out of a yearning to understand such comparisons and contradictions. My students think it is unfair when they miss out on extra credit points because they did not win the exam review game. I think it is unfair when students who have...
faced immense challenges their entire lives end up meeting more struggles once they enter
the educational system in the U.S. Though they may be safe from immediate danger in most
cases, refugee students’ opportunities hang in a delicate balance between the resiliency they
have developed and the barriers they face, both of which U.S. students may never fully
understand, and both of which U.S. students most likely do not consider.

In an attempt to better understand how refugee students construct this resiliency, I
created the framework for my study of one particular group. Amidst refugee students’
continued adjustment to U.S. culture and the challenges they face upon entering the U.S.
school system, particularly the college system, I chose research methods that suited an
investigation of the aforementioned concerns. However, I had to start by choosing the proper
place to begin collecting data. For the purposes of confidentiality, pseudonyms have been
used for the organization, college readiness program, and all study participants.

**THE LAY OF THE LAND**

After a long day of mental exercises in the classroom, most students simply want the
chance to relax and unwind from the energy required for listening and learning. Exhaustion
can make it difficult for students to remain truly driven and determined once the clock
reflects the end of the day’s classes. In addition to the cognitive capacity required for college
courses, an understanding of the college system—registration, finances, classroom location,
transportation, etc.—is required. From completing homework to simply being a U.S. college
student, avenues for success may not always be clear to those unfamiliar with the higher
education system’s demands.

One nonprofit organization in California, the Global Safety Net (GSN), has the
unique opportunity to offer a program, College Bound and Beyond (CBB), that provides
college preparation and navigation resources for refugee students. This program is relatively
new, and works to support refugee students entering or in the early stages of their college
education. Refugee students are paired with volunteer tutors, of which the total group has
been estimated as high as 32 individuals combined (Serena, personal communication,
October 28, 2011).

The ratio of volunteer to student consistently remains at 1:1 throughout the week.
According to CBB’s coordinator,
All the students in the . . . program attend community college, or are working towards attending community college. Many of [the] students take English as a Second Language, and remedial math at community college. A vast majority of the students would like to transfer to [a local 4-year University]. In addition to providing tutoring the . . . program also offers “life skills” workshops. (Serena, personal communication, October 28, 2011)

Thus, CBB creates a space for individual refugee students to navigate their college experience.

CBB was set up to connect volunteers and students in the college preparation and navigation process (Serena, personal communication, July 2, 2012). From tutoring at the GSN office, to campus-based issues and services (i.e., enrollment, financial aid, etc.), CBB’s staff and volunteers help with a wide variety of undergraduate student concerns (Serena, personal communication, July 2, 2012). Interestingly, the coordinator’s position requires communication with the main tutoring office to confirm that college preparations are also in order for high school seniors (Serena, personal communication, July 2, 2012). Therefore, not only does the program offer tutoring services to students entering the local college system, but it also provides resources for students still in high school to consider attending college. The California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) also makes it difficult for refugee students to move on to higher education, so the organization provides resources for exam preparation. Based on the nature of the questions, and the inclusion of difficult phrases and idioms, many students in the program still have not passed the CAHSEE and visit GSN in search of help with both their college classes and their exam preparation.

I participated in what Lindlof and Taylor (2011) call “casing the scene.” From a high school tutoring volunteer (through the organization) to an intern with one of the organization’s high school summer programs, I gained extensive knowledge in the field for approximately one year prior to conducting my study. Though Lindlof and Taylor (2011) say that, “issues of dual role positioning pose serious, but not insurmountable, challenges in executing a study properly” (p. 90), I was not deterred by the projected difficulty of my desired choice of location,

Table 1 indicates particular details about the participants in this study. Though I did not ask specifically about gender or ethnicity for the purposes of confidentiality, participants did disclose details about their origins in interviews. Student participants included individuals
## Table 1. Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Status in the Program</th>
<th>Interview and/or Focus Group</th>
<th>Involvement in the Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>since fall semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nina</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Did not state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucas</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>since the program started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniella</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>since fall semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>since fall semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabella</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>&gt;1 yr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>&lt;1 yr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serena</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Approx. 1 yr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>&gt;1 yr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desi</td>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>since fall semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Karen</td>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>since fall semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie</td>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Did not state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>&gt;1 yr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Did not state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candice</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Did not state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooper</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>&lt;1 yr.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This table includes all participants—even those who may not have been interviewed. All student participants have been involved with the organization since high school.

from African, Asian, and Latin American communities. Tutor participants included individuals from Asian, Latin American, Middle-Eastern, European, and North American communities. The ratio of women to men in both the student and tutor participant group was unequal, as each group had more women than men.

### Participants

Participants for this study were volunteers and students in a college navigation program at a non-profit organization in California. “Cooper,” listed at the bottom of the
participant table, is an employee of the participating organization. His inclusion in the study is based on his constant interaction with the program’s tutors and students, as he runs a similar program at the same organization (which many of CBB’s students are a part of). Recruiting began as a straightforward process, but became challenging as I found myself forced to be creative about when and how I asked people to be a part of my study. The flexibility and patience this process required is unmatched as far as my research endeavors thus far in my graduate program. After several e-mail messages, text messages, telephone calls, and face-to-face interactions, I conducted interviews with seven students and six tutors from the program. Following completion of their individual interviews, I conducted a focus group interview with seven program members. The focus group consisted of five students, two tutors, and me. Only five of the seven focus group participants had participated in individual interviews. The other two are program members, who I did not have the chance to interview individually. All participants were over eighteen years of age. The group consisted of both men and women.

Procedural Considerations

I spoke with the coordinator to find out who I could talk to within CBB that may contribute helpful comments to my project. I then sought out each student or tutor based on their most-used means of communication (e.g., text messaging, e-mail, or telephone call). Then, we set up a day and time to meet at the organization for an interview. I received approval from my university’s Institutional Review Board prior to beginning my study.

Potential benefits of the study included insight for volunteer work environments and training practices and further understanding of group and team communication of empowering messages. Social risks in this study, such as disapproving attitudes from non-participants, were accounted for. Psychological risks, such as the reliving of an uncomfortable experience during tutoring (either at the current organization or somewhere else), were also accounted for. In order to manage risk, the program coordinator was present immediately outside the interview room during interviews but could not hear the content of conversations. During observations, the coordinator was present. If the participant expressed any discomfort to me during the interview, I could walk into the main office to talk with the program coordinator to decide how to proceed. I also made it clear to the participant that
responses to interview questions were entirely voluntary and confidential and the interview process could be stopped at any time.

**EXPLORING WITH ETHNOGRAPHY**

Based on the nature of proposed research avenues, an ethnographic approach best fit this particular investigation. Using qualitative research methods, I felt I could “…make tactical decisions about what forms of communication [would] be supportive to” the individuals I studied, “persuasive” to those I wrote this project for and about, “and conducive to a just and respectful society while at the same time protecting [my] own safety and personal relationships” within and outside of the program (DeTurk, 2011, p. 585). I considered my role as an ethnographer to be what DeTurk (2011) calls an “ally,” which I believe allowed me to “use [my] social and cultural capital to confront discrimination, stereotype, and prejudice” (p. 585) within the U.S. system of higher education.

Through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and one focus group interview, I aimed to uncover the answers to the research questions. Though ethnographic in nature, this research also incorporated elements of sociolinguistics, fitting within the sociocultural tradition of Communication. Much, if not all, of what I focused on pertained to language use in a particular social setting, which Boxer (2002) cites as the ethnographer’s main task. For example, similar to one of Boxer’s studies, I observed that sarcasm is used strategically in educational settings.

Interestingly enough, participant observation for this particular project required some adaptation on my end. As Berry, Poortinga, Segall, and Dasen (1992) explain, “the field worker as a sojourner experiences acculturation and may also experience acculturative stress” (p. 171). However, as I have stated multiple times, this project was not the first time I had encountered the culture I chose to study.

I arrive. I have visited regularly since last spring. Each of my tires graces the asphalt with careful certainty. My car knows the way. The spots I tend to choose. The ones I avoid because of the large pigeon population that roosts above them. The birds take flight every so often to cast a shadow over the lot just large enough to notice from the office’s second-story window. A year has flown by. The broken pavement and nearby Asian market speak of time well spent. Part of the picture has changed—the pavement’s been torn up even more to make way for new asphalt, leaving a curb in the middle of each lane—but I still encounter the same white stripes, the same speedy drivers, and the same nondescript building adjacent
to a few delis and small family-owned shops. I wait to park my car while a
tarnished mini-van pulls out of one of the spots near the end of the row.

I pull in, looking around at the sunny California landscape and wondering what
today’s visit will bring. When I stopped by yesterday, the building was buzzing
with activity. Today, when I walk up the stairs, things seem quieter. I head down
the maze-like hallways to the door, knowing exactly which one to open. Upon
opening the door, I hear little, if no, sound. Walking toward the coordinator’s
desk, some movement to my left causes me to look in the direction of the kitchen.
One of the students I had worked with over the summer stands in the doorway,
wiping his face from what looks like a good splashing. A smile washes over me.
(De Wyn, field notes, February 9 & March 19, 2012)

I spent several months adapting to the culture of the organization before delving into the
work for this project. As a result, despite unfamiliarity with the particular program I chose to
study, my “acculturative stress,” as previously mentioned, was rather minimal.

**Participant Observation**

I chose to adopt what Lindlof and Taylor (2011) call a “participant-as-observer” role
for this study. I could both watch interactions between volunteers and simultaneously take
my own interactions into consideration while observing. Fieldnotes include introspection,
which reflects reflexivity. The following excerpt exemplifies this chosen approach:

I just realized I have to go downstairs to the computer lab to observe, but I’m a bit
uneasy about this change of observation scenery. Daniella and her tutor are
working at a computer near the door, using a laptop to do work despite the
desktop sitting directly behind the laptop on the desk. I am watching them through
the reflection in the window in front of me, because facing them could result in
their feeling uncomfortable and my presence too apparent. I had walked down the
hallway lit by fluorescent lights and sterile-feeling, the door to the computer lab
was propped open so it was easy to locate. I’d been down here before but the
setup of this particular office is so counterintuitive. (De Wyn, field notes, March
12, 2012)

Ellingson (2009) cites the importance of reflexivity and says “describing the
researcher’s interactions with participants can reveal aspects of their relationship through
dialogue” (p. 13). Though I did not speak to the participants in the example cited above, I
tended to participate in playful conversations while observing in the main office.

So often, I would want to leave my computer screen long enough to play a game of
Jenga on the floor or see what one of the students was working on in a different area of the
office, but had to stay seated to take note of everything I was observing. Through my
participant observation, I felt conflicted at times about how to best approach situations based on my dual role as a researcher and a member of the organization. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) discuss this tension by acknowledging how researchers “can experience identity conflicts that arise from attempting to honor both their professional commitments and the norms of their chosen group” (p. 137). Participant observation allows for “a greater degree of informed reciprocity between researchers and group members” (p. 147). Though technically, my role looked more like Lindlof and Taylor’s description of “observer-as-participant,” I had developed so much prior rapport with the students in the program that my presence could not solely qualify as such.

Therefore, it follows that I needed to observe the volunteers and students in live settings to catch the nuances of their interactions. In observational data, I looked for interactions that build trust between instructors and refugee students, the dynamic of the tutoring setting (i.e., verbal and nonverbal initiation of and responses to questions), and ways instructors show refugee students their support. After spending approximately one year building rapport and becoming familiar with my study site, I concluded this project having formally observed the program for over 30 hours. My formal observation period was spread out over six weeks, yet I reiterate, I had a great deal of “behind the scenes” knowledge prior to beginning this particular study.

**Interviews**

Interviews were conducted during a “protected time” and in a “protected place” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 188). I made sure to allow the interviewee to choose the time which best fit his or her schedule. All interviews took place either in the “classroom,” a smaller office adjacent to the main room, or the conference room-each of which have doors leading into the main office and each of which are private spaces allowing for “needs of comfort and confidentiality [to] be met” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 188). (Please see Appendices A for the interview guide, B for the participant recruitment, and C for the consent form.)

Ellingson (2009) discusses the importance of crystallization for ethnographic research, which
combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of related texts, building a rich and openly partial account of a phenomenon that problematizes its own construction, highlights researchers’ vulnerabilities and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings, and reveals the indeterminacy of knowledge claims even as it makes them. (p. 4)

Individual interviews and a focus group discussion added an additional dimension to the observational data gathered for this study. Often, what is seen in interaction may vary from what individual volunteers perceive in certain situations. Thus, having access to each volunteer’s personal opinion about his or her experiences through interviews gave me a full picture of the interactions observed.

I interviewed a total of thirteen people individually: seven students and six tutors. All tutor and student interviews were conducted in one of three places: (a) the conference room, complete with black leather chairs and a black glass-top table, a black plasma screen television, white walls and fluorescent lighting, (b) the cozy, colorful department supervisor’s office adjacent to the main office, or (c) the main classroom with photographs on the walls featuring GSN staff and individuals associated with the organization (students, families, etc.). Sometimes for student interviews I would sit on a purple exercise ball, if it was nearby, since I felt that was less formal. However, all tutor interviews were conducted in chairs at tables. Some days I would come to the office in jeans and a t-shirt or sweatshirt or casual blouse. Other days, I stopped by still dressed in professional attire from a morning of teaching. All interviews were audio recorded for later transcription.

**Focus Group Discussion**

Though I had originally planned to use the focus group interview to serve an exploratory function for my research, scheduling and conversations with the coordinator convinced me that conducting the discussion after individual interviews would be more sensible. She knew I already had a positive rapport with the students, but expressed her desire for me to get to know the entire group well and familiarize everyone (students and tutors) with the project more before asking them to speak to me in a group setting. The focus group interview was conducted with five students and two tutors. I used the focus group because of its capacity to enact “a kind of ‘chaining’ or ‘cascading’ effect in which each person’s turn of the conversation links to, or tumbles out of, the topics and expressions that
came before it” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 183). I also recruited an appropriate number of participants for the focus group, which qualitative researchers have agreed upon to be between six and twelve individuals (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). The group of individuals I interviewed together consisted of both students and tutors, but I did not see much caution in communication of ideas, as Lindlof and Taylor (2011) mention can happen with heterogeneous groups. I must say, sometimes the conversation was quite lively.

SURVEYING THE SCENE

Sitting in my advisor’s office, I heard myself repeating similar things at each meeting with her. I kept falling more in love with this project. I enjoyed what I was doing. I would not have been able to get the answers I did without having built trust and solid relationships with students and staff. The beginnings of this project were a bit unconventional, I will admit. People tend to pick populations they care about to study. Yet, I found that I enjoyed my research so much, I began leaning toward the anthropological tendency to “go native,” not wanting to head home at the end of an observation session or interview.

As I have mentioned a few times, this thesis really began a year ago. I did not officially set observation and interview times until after receiving approval from my university’s Institutional Review Board, but I knew I wanted each student’s voice to be heard the moment I began volunteering for the organization. I came to know the students and staff on an individual basis and have stories that could fill a library. After volunteering with the high school after-school program, from which many of the current students in the college navigation program came, I spent the summer working with high school youth (refugee and non-refugee) educating them about refugee populations. That internship allowed me to continue relationships I had formed with the core group of students I would end up observing for my thesis. However, relationships were formed with ease since I was either an intern or a volunteer, not a researcher, when I first interacted with them.

The formal six week span of observations and interviews marked the culmination of all the work I had put into forming the relationships I have with the students. I had seen some of the tutors and staff members around, but gaining the students’ trust was my main concern, and at the outset of the project, I essentially had it. What a relief!
MARKING THE TRAIL

So many valuable quotes and moments surfaced in my data collection period. Unfortunately, as all researchers do, I had to make the choice of what to include and what to leave out. The following sections detail the process by which I selected data for inclusion and went about representing it formally.

Coding and Categorization

Analysis of findings included ethnographic coding of interview transcripts and fieldnotes, and application of Communication theory tenets to findings. Once categories were solidified, I applied appropriate emergent Communication theory tenets in my analysis. Final representation includes a visual model of gathered data.

After reading through my data, I devised categories and placed information into each based on commonalities (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). I developed codes for different data pieces, which “serve[d] to mark the islands, archipelagos, and other landmasses of meaningful data from the surrounding sea of raw, uncoded data” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 248). I also used in vivo coding for instances when students or tutors made comments that could be useful as categories or exemplars (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Drawing from interview excerpts and observational data, I separated the information gathered into categories based on their relevance to each other and the section as a whole. Students’ communication of resiliency in the program centered on three overarching expressive categories: affiliation (e.g., joking/sarcasm, nicknames/greetings, play, and planned group activities), diligence (e.g., drive/patience, support, firmness/flexibility, and music), and connectedness (e.g., text messaging/phone calls, computer-mediated communication, food/culture, and disclosure). The codes and categories I created allowed for comprehensive representation of data.

When looking at the categories together, each can be tied by forms of learning, which I highlight in depth in my final discussion of the project. For the sake of clarity, I will briefly discuss each form of learning here. Cognitive learning “is concerned with the process of acquiring knowledge” (McCroskey, 2002, p. 4). Also termed “psychomotor learning,” behavioral learning “is concerned with ‘doing’” (McCroskey, 2002, p. 4). McCroskey (2002) says affective learning “is concerned with the student’s attitudes, beliefs, and values that
relate to the knowledge and psychomotor skills the student acquires” (p. 5). Citation of the learning forms from particular pieces of gathered data helped me create a cohesive final product.

**Data Representation**

The choice of how best to represent the data I gathered was a difficult one. As is hopefully evident in my writing thus far, I am exceptionally invested in the lives of the individuals I chose to study. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) termed one representational choice “enthusiastic advocacy” (p. 290), which I believe my work reflects. Substantial inclusion of participants’ voices is meant to convey a sense of their importance. Though the aforementioned categories appropriately separate information in a coherent way, I did not start out with a helpful representation method of my work. I had spent time pouring over my results and trying to piece them together on my own, but the categories I initially came up with did not seem fitting or helpful for understanding all I had collected. So, I turned to one of my committee members for help. During a productive meeting at her home, we discussed the categories I had, why they were not working, and came up with new categories based on that discussion. By listening carefully to my concerns and frustrations, she helped me come up with a new set of categories based on words I used in my explanation of what was not working. I had originally put information into groups such as “fun, family, firmness/flexibility, drive, determination, etc.” and from those words (and a lot of rearranging), my professor and I structured data in a way that made more sense. Despite my previous semesters practicing how to choose a representational style, sorting piles of paper strips on my floor into a coherent outline of categories was still a challenging experience. I am so thankful to have had a seasoned scholar to help me through the process. Data gathered addresses the research question by exemplifying communication of resiliency in interactions.
CHAPTER 3

THE JOURNEY

After having traversed the treacherous trials of life in a country rife with conflict and/or environmental crisis, refugee students entering U.S. schools embark on a path of possibility juxtaposed with uncertainty. When I talked with and observed program participants, I continually looked for communication phenomena that seemed to facilitate the construction of resiliency for students. I took note of encouraging words and empowering behaviors. I saw how communication of drive and patience functions as an expression of resiliency.

During interviews, I found myself explaining resiliency using a tangible example from the students’ program environment. Tutors, all of whom had some level of higher education, needed much less explanation of what resiliency means. The large purple exercise ball that resides in the office and floats from desk to desk provided me with the perfect opportunity to describe such an abstract concept to the students. Often, I would start by telling the student the dictionary definition of resiliency. Then, I would provide my own example based on the exercise ball. I would say that resiliency can be likened to falling off the exercise ball. Instead of lying on the ground in shock, pain, or sheer amusement at one’s own clumsiness, a person who sits on the ball again demonstrates resiliency by immediately “bouncing back.”

For refugee students, finding a place in the community college system amidst the barriers discussed thus far can only be described as difficult. The cohesive, comfortable atmosphere of the program creates a space for students to unwind and fosters different forms of the expression of resiliency. I noticed that I frequently desired to incorporate myself into their experience, wanting to watch every instance of this fascinating phenomenon.

I wonder to myself whether my presence here will become a nuisance. Part of me wishes I could blend into the soothing green wall, incorporated into the landscape, invisible to the untrained eye, something people see but pay little attention to because the color is a comfort. (De Wyn, field notes, February 10, 2012)
Despite my desire to blend into my surroundings and catch every nuance of interaction, sometimes distraction was unavoidable.

I’m sitting in the corner on a folding chair near the cabinet and the printer, feeling a little out of place and in the way, especially if someone needs to grab something from the printer. Nina and Serena joke about her hair at Serena’s desk. “So no one knows if the supervisor will be here at 9?” Serena calls out to everyone within earshot. . .Nina starts singing and playing with Serena’s hair again. (De Wyn, field notes, February 23, 2012)

Setting my own concerns side-by-side with the students’ expressions of resiliency, I was made more aware of how seemingly insignificant my research shortcomings were in comparison to the challenges students overcame by their own volition.

I probably should find a better place to sit. From this vantage point, I can’t see the student I am trying to observe. She gets up, walking to the printer to pick something up, but I decide not to move quite yet. I’ve seen her here before and she tends to work on stuff on her own. I wonder if she has a tutor. A lot of the students stop by on their own time to work on stuff without tutors. I have no way of knowing whether they’re a part of the program or not because tutoring takes place Monday through Friday all day. Someone knocks on the door and after a few minutes walks in looking for the main supervisor. This office is essentially impossible to navigate if you don’t know where you’re going, I think to myself. (De Wyn, field notes, February 10, 2012)

In addition to working diligently on their own outside of tutoring sessions, many students would demonstrate determination simply by working amidst distraction. Distractions in the program office are numerous. Not only are there the outward distractions of a bustling epicenter of learning, but there are also the internal distractions of the mind.

Despite the separation of several offices here, people tend to walk in from all different departments to look for information. Serena gladly calls another department to see if she can find what a lost wanderer is looking for. (De Wyn, field notes, February 10, 2012)

My results reflected a nuanced understanding of the construction of resiliency in interaction. Table 2 outlines the categories of affiliation, diligence, and connectedness. Then, I discuss each category in view of particular exemplars from my gathered data. After summarizing my results, I move on to a discussion of my findings.

Affiliation, diligence, and connectedness have been placed in a particular order based on students’ process of constructing resiliency. Through observations and interviews, I learned of the importance of students’ feelings of affiliation with their tutor, the program, and
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<th>Table 2. Communicative Expression of Resiliency</th>
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<tr>
<td>Category of Expression</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Affiliation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>This category is centered on the individual, reflecting how refugee students construct resiliency through expression of belonging and how tutors participate in these expressions.</td>
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<td><strong>Diligence</strong></td>
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<td>This category outlines refugee students’ construction of resiliency through their expression of diligence, including the support they receive from program tutors.</td>
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<td><strong>Connectedness</strong></td>
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<td>This category is centered on reciprocal relationships between refugee students and their tutors, including communicative expressions that allow for ties between both parties.</td>
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Note: This table shows the dynamic personal/professional relationship of students and tutors in the program, separating interactions into three different categories based on the criteria listed for each.
the organization, which provides a basis for their interactions with others each new semester. Within gathered data, the affiliation category is the smallest collection of recorded interactions. After students see themselves in a clear relationship with others in the program (tutors included) and the organization as a whole, their autonomy and work ethic can be more fully expressed. Expressions of diligence composed the largest collection of gathered data in any particular category. Then, when students have a clear sense of belonging (with their tutor, in the program, and in the organization), and find a niche in which they can feel empowered to work with help from their tutor or on their own, they can begin to connect on a more personal level with their tutor, other program members, and organizational staff. Expressions of connectedness were secondary in prevalence to those of diligence among gathered data. Students’ resiliency construction is fostered through each stage of relationship development in the program.

**AFFILIATION**

Refugee students, often with or alongside their tutors, develop a sense of belonging during interactions in the program. Many of the students and tutors described their interactions in the program as characteristic of a “family.” From jokes and nicknames to play and semi-structured activities, students and tutors participated in interactions that fostered the expression of resiliency through communication of a sense of belonging.

An atmosphere of laughter pervades the office’s small space. Says Daniella, “I like CBB a lot. I’m smiling and laughing a lot almost every single day” (Daniella, personal communication, February 13, 2012) “Yeah that’s why I like CBB is it makes me happy almost every day and then help me go through all the tough stuff” (Daniella, personal communication, February 13, 2012). In joining work and joking, another student shares, “everybody’s like laughing and telling jokes, you’d think like nobody’s getting anything done but we’re like doing it at the same time” (Isabella, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Another tutor shares, “it is a very friendly atmosphere where you always feel like you’re friends with these people even though you might not even know their name and you can like exchange jokes and friendly banter and not even know who they are” (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012). Affiliation includes joking/sarcasm, nicknames/greetings, play, and planned group activities.
**Joking/Sarcasm**

Different types of humor, including banter between and among students, tutors, and staff, build a sense of belonging in the program. Students often shared during interviews the important role of laughter and humor in facing tough challenges. Joking is received and responded to in a positive way, seldom, if ever, reflecting any negativity toward either student or tutor. An important note about joking and sarcasm is that it also takes place between students and staff. From practical jokes to playful comments, memorable moments infused with humor pervade each day. As Nina shared with me, “If you don’t know how to joke I mean seriously you can’t enter this building…but if you know how to joke you’re welcome at this building” (Nina, personal communication, February 13, 2012). I can recall one time when someone had placed

her sparkly high-heeled sandals on the top of a computer screen. She took them and put them on her feet. The comfort level in here is such that she’s fine with walking around barefoot and seemed unfazed by the incident. (De Wyn, field notes, February 23, 2012)

One tutor shared how a student she works with expresses sarcasm sometimes, which is something unexpected for students who are not completely familiar with the English language. What follows is her explanation for the student’s use of language:

Yeah the way she uses the English language like she's sarcastic and she says like mean things but I know she doesn’t mean them and Rose will get offended and I think a lot of it is like what I found with the CAHSEE is knowing words, um knowing like different words that mean the same thing and like Rose had so much more questions than Nina did as far as like words and like Nina like listens to music a lot like English music and she talks a lot so I was like that totally makes sense that she would catch on to you know those kind of things and be sarcastic and make jokes and be funny she’s just like talking all day. (Monica, personal communication, February 27, 2012)

The same tutor says that sometimes she will have to explain sarcasm to another student she works with when the other students use it. She says, “like I told her one time I was like, ‘oh nice shirt, [Rose],’ like to show her like sarcasm ‘cuz I don’t really know how to explain it” (Monica, personal communication, February 27, 2012). Though sometimes confused by each other’s humor, more often than not, students feed off of each other’s banter. The focus group interview provided some prime examples of this, such as Candice and Jenny’s exchange:
Candice: I’m being honest so he comes…
Jenny: Talk to my grandma if you want honest. (personal communication, March 16, 2012)

Says Monica, “They prank Rose and we did a little board with points like just having fun” (Monica, personal communication, March 16, 2012). The “little board with points,” created by Nina, “is a chart for the people who tell the most jokes” (De Wyn, field notes, March 2, 2012).

Aside from banter with one another, students also engage in joking with their tutor. One tutor shared she even jokes when she’s trying to correct the student she’s working with: “I hesitate to say, ‘hey,’ you know, I’ll reprimand her, but in a joking way, like ‘are you gonna listen to me?’” (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012). She also shares, “We laugh a lot. We laugh about mistakes, you know, we laugh about funny words she uses or just, you know, wrong meaning how it makes the sentence look and um that’s great that you can just face that and, um face it with a good attitude that’s resiliency too I guess” (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012).

Even though joking takes place regularly, students and tutors expressed an appreciation for the lighthearted atmosphere because of its contribution to their work ethic. Isabella shares, “It’s not just work and it’s not just fun it’s mixed” (Isabella, personal communication, March 9, 2012). The fun and work mixture contributes to resiliency. Says Samantha, a student in CBB, “people in the office around me they work really hard and also they really funny so I think that because of that so I stand up on my feet I back up easily” (Samantha, personal communication, February 13, 2012). By allowing students to simultaneously enjoy themselves and work hard, the program facilitates students’ tendency to recover quickly from failure because of the playful response they are encouraged to have upon facing difficult situations.

Nicknames/Greetings

Terms and expressions of endearment develop affiliation between program participants by their regular use. When students and tutors use nicknames or greet each other in a unique way, students’ sense of belonging grows.
Nicknames and terms of endearment are used on a regular basis. For example, Serena used a term of endearment when she asked Nina to move to a different computer because Nina was sitting at Serena’s desk: “Hey girl” (Nina), “Hey girl, whaddup girl, can we switch?” (Serena) “Yep” (Nina) (De Wyn, field notes, March 2, 2012). Sometimes, nicknames would be created spontaneously. Daniella asked one day, “Who wants to go to McDonald’s? Here’s McDonalds right here,” pointing at Nina. “You mean McDiva,” replied Cooper (De Wyn, field notes, March 2, 2012). I felt a sense of belonging when I was personally greeted by one of the tutors.

I walked up to the building, engrossed in my phone. As I reached the door, Serena drove by and called out my name in a friendly tone, which I returned with a cordial “hello” …after our interview yesterday, I feel like I know her better now. (De Wyn, field notes, March 8, 2012)

Greetings and nicknames gave interactions an exclusive quality, making tutor and student conversations seem more intimate. Sometimes Serena calls Nina “Mija” (De Wyn, field notes, March 15, 2012). Nina once said to me, “How are you doing, darling?” (De Wyn, field notes, March 15, 2012). Complimentary phrases also fostered a sense of belonging, reflecting the close bond shared between program participants. “You’re looking nice today, what’s the occasion?” Cooper asks Nina (De Wyn, field notes, March 16, 2012). The familiarity with which students and tutors interact not only appears in their nicknames and greetings for one another, but also appears in their playful behaviors toward one another.

**Play**

Fun, lighthearted verbal and nonverbal interactions also build a sense of belonging among program participants. Through playful interactions between staff and students, bonds are formed. Tutors do not tend to play as much, but staff do. Tutors come in for sessions and tend to leave directly afterward. As Cooper says, “Life’s not fun if you don’t have fun” (De Wyn, field notes, March 16, 2012). Even the layout of the office communicates a sense of playfulness.

A painting in Serena’s supervisor’s office is visible through the doorway. A depiction of an adorable Cyclops, the painting resembles a mixture of Mike Wazowski (from the Disney film Monster’s Inc.) and a baby redhead web-foot child. The picture is characteristic of the atmosphere of the room—playful, laid-back. Bright yellow, red, green, orange, and bluish purple paint draw my eyes to it
despite the murmuring conversation taking place between Alexis and Serena nearby. (De Wyn, field notes, February 9, 2012)

The program seems to intentionally invite students into its fold through this atmosphere of enjoyment. From commenting “You wanna karate?” to twirling a soccer ball on her finger, Daniella often exemplifies the office’s playful nature (De Wyn, field notes, March 2, 2012).

Says Daniella,

It’s fun working with tutor sometimes. It can be like when we can, when we talking about essay or some sort of story that connects, just kinda share and everything that happened today we just like make it fun. Sometimes, yeah, it's like and, um what I do with my tutor for last semester is like, when I don’t have homework I ask her to bring a game, so she bring a board game. Yeah, it's really fun, I get to learn, I get to have fun time and she explained to me very well. (Daniella, personal communication, February 13, 2012)

The informal playful interactions in CBB add to students’ sense of belonging in the organization, yet more structured activities can also facilitate such association.

**Planned Group Activities**

Students and tutors sometimes attend scheduled events that foster a sense of inclusivity within the program. Sometimes these activities revolve around relationship-building, but other times a sense of belonging is built through group learning. Though much of the “fun” described is unstructured, CBB sometimes coordinates group activities for the students and tutors. These events are often attended more by students than tutors, predominantly because tutors have extremely busy schedules and often live farther away. Jackie expresses regret for not being able to attend, saying, it is “not because I don’t want to, [it is] because I don’t have the schedule” (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012). These events include workshops, movie nights, and field trips. Isabella says, “We have a lot of activities other than homework that we do like to like relax and forget about homework for a while, yeah, they’re really helpful” (Isabella, personal communication, March 9, 2012).

Workshops tend to be the most structured of the planned events. Isabella says the workshops cover subjects such as “transferring and financial aid and nursing” (Isabella, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Serena describes the workshops this way:

Sometimes we do workshops, um the workshops are targeted towards things that students have expressed interest in. Not all students always attend workshops.
We’ve had financial literacy workshops several students have attended, um transportation workshops, like um, where the students learn how to navigate the bus and trolley system, um and we had a nursing workshop. It seems like a lot of the students want to go back to refugee camps and help, um and a lot of them are interested in becoming nurses, particularly women so… (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012)

The workshops tend to address student interests, but one tutor says he attends “as many workshops as [he] can as well just to be able to communicate with the students” (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012).

The students all seemed to remember the transportation workshop when asked about specific events. The prize for the winning team was a day pass for the bus. Rose says it was a “very good experience” (Rose, personal communication, February 27, 2012).

Isabella: I took I took that’s my first time taking the trolley and learning how to go to downtown with the bus.

Nina: Yes, we did the scavenger hunt.

Isabella: It was just students, no tutors, no adults. It was just it was scary.

Jenny: It was only us [sic] by ourselves.

Nina: I was like responsible not getting lost like to myself, I’m like, “Oh my gosh I’m actually having like directions.”

Jenny: And we didn’t even have a phone.

Isabella: They took our phone, all we could rely on is the map. (personal communication, March 16, 2012)

She also shares that the workshops sometimes bring students together who may not know each other that well.

The first time we’re in the workshop I was scared to talk to them because I’ve never been their friends, but after we have workshop together I feel confidence about when I’m talking, and then, yeah, we became very close friend[s] and I know most of them. (Rose, personal communication, February 27, 2012)

In addition to scheduled workshops, the program also holds other semi-structured group activities such as fieldtrips and movie nights. Fieldtrips and movie nights are the other two events students sometimes participate in as a part of CBB. “It depends,” says Daniella, “what we really want” (Daniella, personal communication, February 13, 2012). “Like last couple one[s] they have that they do the college field trip so they went to LA, uh, visit three different colleges and sometimes they do Point Loma and stuff—different place[s]” (Daniella, personal communication, February 13, 2012). In addition to these fieldtrips, the
least formal activities, movie nights, occur at times. Though tutors may attend, students tend
to be the ones filling the seats. These occur “sometimes after like after big final” (Rose,
personal communication, February 27, 2012), or “during winter break” (Desi, personal
communication, February 24, 2012). Serena cites how the “sambusas,” an east African
pastry, are a part of movie nights she appreciates (Serena, personal communication, March 7,
2012). CBB students are not the only ones in attendance, as they and local high school
“students come together. Everyone in the community is welcome and like we watched this
movie last time, we watched um this movie Paranormal Activity” (Lucas, personal
communication, February 28, 2012). From food to friends to pop culture trends, planned
group activities provide students with a sense of belonging within the parameters of “play
with a purpose.”

The three types of learning discussed throughout this thesis can be seen in the
affiliation category. Cognitive learning, a facet of most, if not all tutoring sessions, can be
seen in the knowledge students gain during workshops. Behavioral learning can be seen in
students’ use of sarcasm in interaction, as they learn the meaning of sarcastic terms and the
appropriate times to inject humor into their language by listening to each other and the staff
and tutors. Affective learning is visible in students’ choice to engage in play during sessions.
Seeking to find a balance between fun and work, students show how they believe both to be
important facets of their learning.

DILIGENCE

A strong work ethic is often individually and collectively expressed by students when
they are at GSN. Students in CBB often work tirelessly on assignments. Whereas I, and some
of the other tutors, may take several breaks between sessions, students “always push through
like these are my four hours and I’m gonna get everything out of them” (Jackie, personal
communication, February 17, 2012). The tutor continues, “They can do all their homework at
once and if I had like four hours of homework it would take me forty-eight hours to do it”
(Jasmine, personal communication, February 24, 2012). “I’ve been sitting here for three
hours,” says Nina, “you’ve just been doing your schoolwork? That’s awesome,” replies
Serena (De Wyn, field notes, March 13, 2012). Unlike many people who may set a time to do
something, then decide to spend their time doing something else, “they don’t have this kind
of like wasting time like is not even an option like in anything that they do and if they’re
gonna do something they’re just gonna sit and do it and they have like the time set for it and
they’ll do it…it’s a foreign mentality” (Jasmine, personal communication, February 24,
2012). Along with working hard on tasks at hand, tutors often cite students’ habit of a
diligent work ethic. “Resiliency, I think it’s just that’s just inherent in, just comes naturally to
her I don’t feel like I have to push her in any way ever to work harder or focus more on what
she’s doing” (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012). Students’ hard work can
be witnessed in different expressions of diligence including drive/patience, support,
firmness/flexibility, and music.

Drive/Patience

Expressing diligence can be difficult in the face of distraction, yet the students of
CBB find a way to persevere even on impossibly busy days. For the students in CBB,
distraction comes both from within and outside of the program. Says one tutor, “They’re
always [exhibiting resiliency]. I can’t think of a time where ‘oh [this student] suddenly she’s
being resilient,’ um, their whole demeanor their whole work ethic…they just ooze it all the
time” (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012). On the outside, students have to
manage their image because they sometimes appear in news stories. Serena recalls one story
published in a local paper about a CBB student which resulted in “comments [which] were
this like combination of like xenophobia and racism and like unfounded” (Serena, personal
communication, March 7, 2012). She shares,

And my favorite is like, oh this is good, when people are like, “well I just don’t
know how smart this student is,” and I’m kind of like, that always horrifies me
because I don’t, like where do you begin to explain to them that it’s not a lack of
intelligence, it’s a lack of like, strong educational foundation. So that’s
interesting. (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012)

Interesting indeed.

Along with insensitive comments and news stories, students also deal with exhaustion
and other concerns. “Most of the time [sic] I get headache[s] because I focus too much,” says
Daniella, “before I didn’t really get headache but since I get to college I get headache every
day” (De Wyn, field notes, March 19, 2012). Says one tutor, “I find that like for some of
them coming to the GSN is where they can kinda like relax, and they don’t have like the
pressure of like riding the bus for hours or like dealing with like all of the responsibilities that 
they have at home” (Jasmine, personal communication, February 24, 2012). “When I’m at 
home I’m trying to do at least studying but then I can’t ‘cuz I have cooking and cleaning and 
stuff so or other stuff that your mom wants you to do” (Nina, personal communication, 
February 13, 2012). Alexis, like some of the other students, says, “[he’s] the first one to go 
that’s [sic] gonna go to college” in his family (Alexis, personal communication, March 1, 
2012). Jasmine, one of the tutors, talks about the distractions of financial restraints 

I saw that budget cuts and like huge classes they were really struggling, and it 
made me sad because I also go to like a big public school where there are those 
problems, and you can see that totally in the community colleges and so it's like 
they’re stuck in community colleges for really long time. (Jasmine, personal 
communication, February 24, 2012)

The financial crisis is making it hard for students to get a quality education.

As if outside distractions were not enough, the office itself can be distracting simply 
because of the presence of friends and food.

Yeah, so you know I mean she has like at times just in the middle of me [sic] 
saying something she’ll just talk to someone else and it’s hard for me to say, 
“hey,” you know, “no no,” um, because I, you know, I almost feel like I do that 
too sometimes like you know people just walk in and you’re like, “hi,” or, you 
know, some song will start playing so it the atmosphere is really good in some 
ways but I don’t think it detracts that much from the work. I mean obviously you 
still get the work done. (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012)

Not everyone that passes through the office door is an employee. One student expressed 
frustration about people wandering into the office: “I’m actually very bothered by it ‘cuz I try 
to focus on my essay” (Samantha, personal communication, February 13, 2012). Overall, 
students tend to find a way to direct their attention back to their work.

Tutors will talk about how they can “totally tell a difference between when [they] first 
started [tutoring] and when [they] like end the semester” (Jasmine, personal communication, 
February 24, 2012). To encourage this progress, one tutor says she feels “that there’s very 
little that [she] really need[s] to do but [she tries] to tell them that they’re like improving and 
that they’re really like getting better” (Jasmine, personal communication, February 24, 2012). 
Tutors’ empowerment of students is reflected in the way they talk about whom they work 
with.
Every time we meet, um, she has, seems to have more confidence in what she does and, you know, we touch back on things that we’ve gone over in the past and I love when those things come up again and she’s able to really show that she has learned these concepts and employs them. (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012)

Students will verbally acknowledge that their tutors are partially responsible for their progress. “She helped me a lot and so I pass my class” (Rose, personal communication, February 27, 2012). Daniella says, “When I stay with my tutors like I can understand a lot…two chopstick[s are] better than one and you [do] not feel alone” (Daniella, personal communication, February 13, 2012).

Tutors are present for moments of progress and joy, but they also witness when students deal with failure and uncertainty. Despite students’ survival of traumatic events, they still have the capacity to get down every so often. “I don’t wanna discourage them, and I see them [sic] sometimes that could happen” (Jasmine, personal communication, February 24, 2012). The possibility for refugee students to have to deal with difficult situations in the U.S. is real. One tutor recalls

The night when they found out their test results I get this phone call from [one of the students I work with] and there’s this person screaming on the phone at me in delirium, happy. And I realize [who it is], “oh she must have passed.” She’s barely being able to tell me that because she’s just yelling over the phone. So I get this call, I actually got the call out in the parking lot, so I park. After I park, so I walk in and there’s [another student I work with] and she’s crying. So like high, low. So that was tough…that’s the only time I’ve seen real disappointment, real, like a sense of despair, just real serious frustration like, “I dunno if I can do this.” (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012)

Sometimes tutors are there for the tough moments, too. The unfortunate truth of the matter is that even though students exhibit resiliency on a regular basis in CBB, the program and its participants still seek to prepare individuals for the reality of college life, and more indirectly, the world. Says Jackie, a tutor, about correcting student work during sessions

It’s also the kind of “I don’t want to tread on your toes” syndrome, you know, like, “I don’t wanna make you feel bad,” but at the same time, these are resilient kids and you know, sometimes they have to take “no,” like the real world is gonna tell them, “no.” The real world is gonna say, “that’s wrong,” and you can’t sugar coat it all for them. I mean you can try to give positive criticism, um, but sometimes you just have to tell them “no that’s wrong.” (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012)
Even though there may be a tendency to want to make things easier for students who are “so young and they’ve been through so much,” cushioning their experience too much could be problematic (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012).

Students also face fear and uncertainty outside of the confines of CBB, which they may share with tutors.

I feel like a lot of the students like everything is against them. They have like a really hard time figuring out the whole community college system. It’s like a very bureaucratic system. It’s difficult to figure out, like, what transfers and stuff like that but they keep going…even if they’re only taking 5 units a semester, they dedicate so much time and they’re always at the GSN and always getting help from the community college—even the other tutors at the community college that they have—and they just like, are working so hard. So they’re always exhibiting resiliency. (Jasmine, personal communication, February 24, 2012)

One memorable moment of failure was for “the last big scholarship deadline, like all of the students were working on it…and they didn’t get it” (Jasmine, personal communication, February 24, 2012). A tutor recalls the student “reprimanded herself for missing the scholarship deadline when like there were a lot of things beyond her control and she’s like, ‘I’m gonna do it earlier next time, I’m gonna figure it out and I’m gonna get the scholarship’” (Jasmine, personal communication, February 24, 2012). Another student said that it was “just one experience” and how people should “never give up and always just pushing [sic] through” (Daniella, personal communication, February 13, 2012).

When asked about the word “resiliency,” participants had a plethora of comments to share. One tutor said resiliency was “perseverance, um, learning from mistakes, making mistakes in the first place” (Monica, personal communication, February 27, 2012). She went on to talk about how the students “really sort of like own” their mistakes, which, she says helps, because “then you can address [them] like you can talk about [them]” (Monica, personal communication, February 27, 2012). As one tutor said, “[the students] ooze resiliency, it just comes out of their pores” (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012). He continues it is “just the sort of matter-of-fact way in which they know they’re poor, I mean they’ve been to [wealthier parts of the city], they’ve been around [the area], they know that [where they are living] is not the ultimate place that they’d wanna live in. They know that, and they see the experiences their families go through, but yet it doesn’t get in their way” (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012). One tutor said that
resiliency means a person is “prepared to deal with more” (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012). Jackie continues talking about the student she works with saying, “I don’t feel like she has any feelings of inadequacy or that she isn’t right where she should be” (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012).

Though talking about resiliency directly was a topic of interest, some students made metaphorical references to describe the phenomenon. Lucas says, “we were playing a soccer game for school and like you know someone like tackles you down and then like you like you act back” (Lucas, personal communication, February 28, 2012). He goes on to say,

To me, I will speak about like, failure because to me, failure is, it's not a bad thing. It's another way of learning. So like, once like, once you fail, you don’t have to give up, you keep doing, you keep doing better. So that's what I kind of think of resilience, like you, you get back up on your feet if you are down or something. Like if, like there are many ways you can be successful, like if once you, if you are fired or something, you can't just sit home and say, “oh the job is going to find me,” you have to go there and look for one, you know. (Lucas, personal communication, February 28, 2012)

When he experienced difficulty in his own academic career (his father discouraged, or rather, prohibited college attendance at the school he wanted to go to), Lucas said the people at GSN told him, “It’s not about where you start it’s where you end up” (Lucas, personal communication, February 28, 2012). A differentiation one tutor expressed is that “resiliency for a middle class kid growing up in the suburbs . . . is not the same as resiliency for a low income kid from Kakuma refugee camp being resettled here and I think that’s important to keep in mind” (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012). She posits resiliency as the difference between “learning to cope vs. thrive” (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012). Says Rose,

You should not give up because in this country it’s like, if you don’t have any educations [sic] you’ll be on the street you know, and yeah, and even though like, for example, if you fail your class you should not like feel bad about yourself. The only thing you should, I mean you need more is practicing, and there, you know, study more harder [sic], yeah, then you retake it again [sic] and you pass it. (Rose, personal communication, February 27, 2012)

Perspective is important when dealing with failure. Daniella says, “In my country if you fail the class you get [sic] ‘F’ it’s no one like you at all” (Daniella, personal communication, February 13, 2012). She, along with a few other participants, cited the value of hard work. “If you think that you not smart that must be wrong. Everybody is smart and
everybody is the same thing, it depend[s] how they do the work” (Daniella, personal communication, February 13, 2012). Attitude, it sounds like, has a lot to do with success. As Mr. Karen says, “empowering is educating [students] making them aware of what their possibilities are provided they take advantage of the help and work hard themselves” (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Even though they have been through extremely difficult times, life does not just automatically become easier once they leave a crisis situation.

With Nina and [other] kids, they come from a tradition where they didn’t read and write they spoke their language and that’s it. And I’ve learned that, I didn’t know it going in, so I have to constantly remind myself of that when Rose is reading this and she goes “if you choose this” and then she’s down to this line, she forgets this line. They, both of them, tend when they’re reading, it’s fingers or pencils still…reading is still kind of a relatively new phenomenon for them. (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012)

However, tutors often witness students’ determination to receive the help they seek.

Mr. Karen was standing talking with Serena. Apparently, Rose had left her key in her apartment and locked herself out. Mr. Karen left to pick Rose up from her home after he called and left her a voicemail and Serena texted her, both to no reply. He walked back in a minute or two later and said, “it was a quick drive, she’s here, she broke into her apartment.” (De Wyn, field notes, March 9, 2012)

Though supportive members of students’ communities encourage and facilitate diligence, students often express diligence through their ability to adjust to new tutoring pairings on a regular basis. Sometimes this constant change is joked about. Monica says, “[Nina]’s like no I don’t remember her and [other students] are like, ‘wow Nina, you go through so many tutors,’ like, ‘you just scare everyone away’ kinda thing, like saying you know, she’s just a horrible student but they mess with her” (Monica, personal communication, February 27, 2012). One tutor cites how “it just really broke [his] heart” when one of the students he worked with had to move away (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012). How much more students’ hearts must break upon having their tutors leave every semester. Nina says, “everybody’s moving on and you gotta move on too” (Nina, personal communication, February 13, 2012). Jackie phrases the turnover this way: “Sometimes people come sometimes people don’t and all of a sudden people are coming regularly and then they disappear, like, ‘oh I never learned their name and now
they’re gone’” (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012). This painful process was touched on by a few different students in the focus group discussion.

Mr. Karen: Most tutors who are here for, you know, a semester and then you’re gone.

Nina: I don’t like that.

Isabella: Yeah, meeting new people all the time.

Jenny: That gets me mad, that gets me really mad. I meet you and then I’m getting used to you and I learn, we’re becoming friends and then a year later you’re not here.

Nina: I’m like, “You too? You’re gone.”

Isabella: And then I start to like you and then I start to hug you every time you come like, “Yay my tutor’s here,” and then you’re like, “Oh she’s leaving,” and like what then I have to go through the whole process again. (personal communication, March 16, 2012)

Even though tutors often have to leave for different reasons, the support they provide to students during the formation of and engagement in the tutoring relationship allows for students’ expression of diligence.

**Support**

Students and tutors’ verbally and nonverbally interact in a way that encourages confidence and self-esteem. Having tutors and other members of their community to support them makes a difference for refugee students. Daniella says,

So when I fall and then I get up quickly would be, um, I’m not um, actually when I’m do, when I fail something I get really stressful, yeah. So it must be hard to get up really quick, but unless I have someone sitting next to me try to make something funny, I’ll be like forget about that and then move on really quick[ly] [sic]. (Daniella, personal communication, February 13, 2012)

As evidenced by tutor’s recognized impact on students’ lives, support from those in the program aids students’ willingness to work hard. Rose says, “the more you get help, the more you get better…college is hard and then like, um you got people here, you know, volunteers helping us and then we go to class we pay attention, so it’s kinda like people here encourage us” (Rose, personal communication, February 27, 2012).

Students in CBB are conscious about the benefits of tutoring sessions and the tutor-student relationship.
This program is helpful, so I would rather like, be with them [sic] than, you know, because I really like care about my education, you know. And like, if you want to succeed you don’t have to do it by yourself, you have to like acquire much help from people that [sic] have been in college. You know, many people that [sic] are here have been through what we are right now experiencing, so I want to learn from them how they did it and I want to do it and if I have to do it differently than them [sic] I still have to like, need like, I want help from them so it's been great. (Lucas, personal communication, February 28, 2012)

Some students even go so far as to say that the relationship incites a bit of obligation on their part, such as Samantha who says, “I see people try to like try to do the good thing for me and try to push me and like I cannot like step back I cannot make them you know like hurt their feelings” (Samantha, personal communication, February 13, 2012).

Lucas, Mr. Karen, and Monica talked about how students sometimes help one another. Lucas says, “if someone needs help from me like if I don’t have the ability to help them, I go ask for extra help from like the people from the GSN” (Lucas, personal communication, February 28, 2012). He also said when other students were working to pass the CAHSEE he had a “book you know it’s different from most of the CAHSEE materials books that they have so [his] is kind of like a whole stack of papers that [he] was like studying and stuff” which he gave to help them out (Lucas, personal communication, February 28, 2012). This dedication to helping one another can extend outside the GSN’s walls. Lucas recalls one time when he and Alexis were helping another student with homework at a coffee shop. They stayed so long working that they forgot to order and “people were like are you guys gonna order something and we were like okay coffee, I don’t even drink coffee” (Lucas, personal communication, February 28, 2012). One student shared how she sometimes chooses to help others who may have been mean to her in hopes that it “might change their like their attitude to other students” (Daniella, personal communication, February 13, 2012). Students support one another in nonverbal ways also. Alexis recalls, “One day we had to walk each other home because it was too late for some of the girls” (Alexis, personal communication, March 1, 2012).

Sessions can turn into a team effort. Isabella says,

Yeah, where me [sic] and the tutor didn’t know the answer, so we go like around ask other tutors if they know the answer if they can help. And then, if they know it they’ll just come over and explain it to like both of us until like, we get it. It’s like we’re, you don’t just stick to one tutor, if there’s like somebody else helping
somebody else and they [sic] know what they’re [sic] doing, they can help you too. (Isabella, personal communication, March 16, 2012)

Tutors demonstrate a commitment to their students that fosters expressions of diligence. Sometimes their support even borders on case management. Says Mr. Karen, I’ve been to [a local coffee shop] with a couple of them a couple times and just, I think I’ve been successful in convincing them I’m a teacher, yeah, but I’m your friend. If you need something that you think I can help with, call me. Maybe I can’t, maybe I can’t do it then, but think of me as a friend...but there too, you have to be careful it’s like, “how much can you do for them,” like their family and stuff. I find myself at times in their apartment and they may have a piece of mail or they’ve gotten a phone call and I’ve helped with that because they just don’t know, it’s like, it’s usually stuff people are sending them stuff asking for money you know “buy this.” (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012)

Monica says, “We’ve met before on weekends” (Monica, personal communication, February 27, 2012). Once when a student won a scholarship and needed a ride to her awards ceremony, Serena told the student, “Okay, well I’m gonna cancel the next few hours of my life and drive you there” (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012).

Expressions of this extended support are important, yet some tutors say that a line is important to draw. Says Desi, “I feel like if we become like too like friendly then it wouldn’t benefit her that much because I talk a lot with my friends, and like if we get sidetracked during a tutoring session I feel like that would be a waste of her time you know ‘cuz she’s supposed to be getting tutoring” (Desi, personal communication, February 24, 2012).

One of the most talked about aspects of CBB that students and tutors agree upon is the focused nature of one-on-one tutoring sessions. “When you’re one-on-one,” says Desi, “the tutor can gauge like, ‘oh so is this concept clear to you,’ and then if it’s clear like you move on so I feel like that’s definitely a lot more beneficial than group tutoring sessions” (Desi, personal communication, February 24, 2012). Part of the reason this one-on-one attention is important is that some members of students’ communities “just don’t know how to encourage people” (Rose, personal communication, February 27, 2012). As Isabella shares, “It’s helpful getting the positive comments that’s what encourages me to work” (Isabella, personal communication, March 9, 2012). For example, one day I overheard Jackie telling the student she was working with “That’s so amazing, I’m so proud of you. I have to read it again because I’m so happy, I’m so shocked, good, done” (De Wyn, field notes, March 2, 2012).
Tutors and students participate in an empowering relationship which fosters diligence. As Nina says, “Every [student has] a strong story we just need that person that [sic] instructs us” (Nina, personal communication, March 16, 2012). Included in the definition of empowerment are words such as “education” “independence [and] perseverance” (Monica, personal communication, February 27, 2012). CBB, says Serena, is meant “to help [students] navigate and to provide resources and hope that they utilize them” (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012). She goes on to describe empowerment as “the promotion of self-sufficiency through helping someone navigate resources, utilize resources, um, just generally to promote self-sufficiency and sustainability, and I guess in this educational program, um, job certificates, degrees, upward social mobility, some sort of security” (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012).

One tutor seemed to differ from this opinion a bit saying, “I think in America empowerment sometimes gets misinterpreted you’re just giving someone some opportunity then they can run with it [sic]. These kids aren’t gonna run with anything, but it’s making them understand, well, it’s making sure they realize how much they’ve accomplished already” (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Other participants cited empowerment in terms of “background knowledge” (Desi) or “giving them the tools to dissect their, to answer their problems, or answer their questions, rather than answering the questions in that moment” or “confidence motivation learning skills opportunity” (Jackie). Practically speaking, empowering moments consist of times when a student can “see the difference between what she started with and what she ends up with” (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012). Isabella talks about her empowering experiences this way: “I get the work done and they just they’re just fixing the grammar and stuff like that it’s like really I get that feeling like I did something that’s like I achieved something” (Isabella, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Tutors also buffer negativity. Rose says, “Mr. Karen told me… ‘just do this you’re gonna be fine and then if they talk to you not nice to you just pretend like, ‘you know, ‘you don’t hear them’” (Rose, personal communication, February 27, 2012).

Students also empower one another in CBB. Rose recalls, “I took the quiz and I got less than Daniella, she look at me [sic], she was like, ‘You should try harder,’ I was like, ‘I know you don’t have to tell me,’ and then the next one I’m kinda like, I study more and then
I got more score than her [sic] and then she’s like what you got more than me” (Rose, personal communication, February 27, 2012). Whether it is by way of competition or simple encouragement, students seem to seek to help each other reach academic goals. Alexis shares,

I cheer people up ‘cuz I don’t know it’s just that’s how my mom taught me how to do like to always if you’re down somebody’s gonna come and like make you happy…and yeah, that’s what I have done like I have a lot of friends that [sic] didn’t pass the CAHSEE and I try to cheer them up try to tell them next time. (Alexis, personal communication, March 1, 2012).

For students, support fosters diligence, as does firmness and flexibility in the tutoring relationship.

**Firmness/Flexibility**

Though some discussions and behaviors reflect strict rule enforcement, other interactions within the program show tutors’ and students’ willingness to compromise and adjust to change. In addition to empowering interactions, a degree of firmness and flexibility is reflected in CBB’s program interactions between tutors and students. As Mr. Karen wisely says, “You can plan, but plan that the plan’s not gonna last very long” (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Patience plays a key role in interaction, as a few tutors said; however, students recognize tutors’ patience. Samantha says, “I don’t know how can they get superpowers…we require a lot you know like I ask lots of questions and they always answer me in a calm voice and they always patient with me” (Samantha, personal communication, February 13, 2012). Serena seems to handle students’ questions well, with a poise I often witnessed.

Serena talks with a student about attending tutoring sessions. She tells him the text message reminders she sends him are intentional. A few students frequently stop by demanding attention and answers from Serena, but she always stays strong and responds to them in a polite, yet firm, way. (De Wyn, field notes, February 10, 2012)

Tutors commonly said the same thing about what is most difficult for them in terms of patience, firmness, and flexibility: scheduling. For tutors, finding space in their schedule that matches a time the student is available can be difficult. Also, unforeseen circumstances can prevent students or tutors from keeping appointments. Serena says,
Scheduling is, is pretty hard and, um, there’s a lot of times people are like, “well if someone’s scheduled something they always need to keep the time,” and like generally that’s fine, but if someone has to go to the welfare office because their [sic] food stamps just got cut off, like there’s this hierarchy of needs. So there’s, there’s not only the scheduling but the [sic] also keeping of appointments and the students keeping up with what they need to do while being within a system that is institutionally very stacked against them and then compounded by the fact that they’re English language learners and that so many things can get lost in translation. (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012)

Aside from scheduling, tutors and students also exhibit patience, firmness, and flexibility with session location and structure. Says Monica, “The other place we would meet would be like at a coffee shop or something around” (Monica, personal communication, February 27, 2012).

At times, I also had to demonstrate flexibility when observing and interviewing for this project. Even with several study announcements and communication between myself, the coordinator, and the students and tutors, I often had to physically travel to the organization to verbally set up interviews with students and tutors. Some days, I would stop by and end up with three full-length interviews. Other days, I would observe for hours and walk away having not obtained any interview data. Text messaging only works so well.

**Music**

During tutoring sessions, students will often sing aloud, have headphones on listening to their favorite song, and/or play tunes through computer speakers for everyone in the office to hear. Specifically, Nina used song to carry her through her work and her free time almost, if not every, time I observed her. Jasmine says,

> I’ve noticed that with Candice as well. I don’t’ know if you have ever worked with her, but she’s always singing and she’s always singing in, um, Somali I think or Swahili—something. She’s always singing and I’m like this is so cute and she’s always like singing and writing like I can’t do that…and she’s doing it in different languages too like she’s writing in English and singing in Swahili or Somali. (Jasmine, personal communication, February 24, 2012).

“Nina likes to sing a lot,” shares Alexis (personal communication, March 1, 2012). Students also listen to music while working. Isabella says, “Yeah, like I listen to it when I’m on the bus and I’m reading like a book that’s assigned or just a book for fun, like I do both. At least, I can read at the same time or when I’m doing homework” (Isabella, personal
communication, March 9, 2012). “When I walk into the office one of my students who’s taking like a homework tutoring break can be listening to like Selena Gomez in a chipmunk version, it’s just, it’s a fun, it’s a fun balance” (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012). Whether listening to a song alone or sharing a tune with the group, students express diligence during resiliency construction through the use of music.

Each form of learning can be witnessed in the expression of diligence. Cognitive learning, as mentioned earlier, takes place during almost every tutoring session. Students’ diligence in completing their work demonstrates a true desire for obtaining the knowledge they are seeking. Behavioral learning can be seen in students’ language learning. As Mr. Karen mentioned, many of the students did not read and write in their own language prior to coming to the United States, so not only are they learning college-level material, but they are doing so in a foreign language while learning how to read and write. Affective learning can be seen in students’ response to failure. When they choose to continue working and striving to achieve despite the obstacles they face, they exhibit affective learning. They not only believe in themselves, but also have others believing in them.

**CONNECTEDNESS**

Relationships between refugee students and their tutors grow through interactions that build trust. A few students echoed Rose, who said, “We’re all family” (Rose, personal communication, February 27, 2012). Says Lucas, “once I’m free I’m always in the GSN” (Lucas, personal communication, February 28, 2012). Serena similarly cites, “I feel like the people in the office help make the kids feel comfortable ‘cuz a lot of times they won’t go home after after-school programs they’ll come here…and that to me is pretty incredible um that it feels like such a safe place to them” (Serena, personal communication, February 28, 2012). The strong relationships built in CBB are described by one student this way, “Like a chopstick, it’s just one chopstick, you break it so easy but if you all stick together no one can break it. That’s how friend works [sic] so I try to build kind of relationship like a strong relationship with them [sic]…it’s kind of a word from my country” (Daniella, personal communication, February 13, 2012). She shares, “Yeah, it’s like this program is make us really more like connected to each other, it’s like a brother and sister like a whole family
together, it’s not like feel like separate from each other, that’s why I really love this program a lot” (Daniella, personal communication, February 13, 2012).

One student mentioned how tutors “don’t treat it like it’s their job. It’s like there’s something that they enjoy doing, not something that they have to do, so yeah, that’s helpful too” (Isabella, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Tutors, in addition to “friends” “CBB” and “my mom” also contribute to students’ connectedness in community, motivating them to work harder (Alexis, personal communication, March 1, 2012). However, the members of CBB seemed to appear most in conversations with students about who contributes to their college education. From text messaging, phone calls, and computer-mediated communication to sharing of food, culture, and personal information, students connectedness can be seen in different forms of expression during tutoring sessions.

**Text Messaging and Phone Calls**

The exchange of messages via mobile phone allows for a reciprocal bond between student and tutor. Text messaging can also be a primary source of miscommunication, especially in terms of tutoring appointments. Text messaging and phone calls are one way tutors and students keep in contact with one another. Isabella appreciates this form of communication. She says, “What kinda [sic] teacher has that in school? …it’s really helpful and easy” (Isabella, personal communication, March 9, 2012). From “special occasions” to “keep[ing] tabs,” Jasmine says that “it’s like a constant communication with the people that [sic] I do specifically tutor (Jasmine, personal communication, February 24, 2012). “For example,” shares Rose, “if it’s Valentine’s Day we say ‘Happy Valentine’s Day’ to everyone and then like ‘Happy Holiday’ to everyone and then sometimes like Daniella, Nina, I talk to them, yeah, like so there is not a CBB workshop yet, but like I can like the one[s] that I have their number[s]” (Rose, personal communication, February 27, 2012). Miscommunication via cell phone occurs from time to time. Lucas recalls, “There was a problem because we couldn’t contact each other because my home phone didn’t work because I dunno [sic] what happened to like the connection and then my phone broke my cell phone was broken” (Lucas, personal communication, February 28, 2012). Serena says she will “send students text message reminders about appointments so as to hopefully keep tutors happy and students on time” (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012).
Setting boundaries is important with students. Serena talks about a time when a student called her extremely early in the morning and says “maybe next time we…or telling students that CBB hours are from eight thirty to five and that means that they shouldn’t call me at six a.m. so even if there isn’t a language barrier sometimes there’s a ‘student calling me at six a.m. even after they’ve [sic] been told not to’ barrier” (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012). Students will share celebratory news with tutors via text messages, too. Desi says, “Oh, um, yeah, over winter break she texted me and she said that she passed the math class” (Desi, personal communication, February 24, 2012). Thus, although students may choose to use communication via telephone informally at times, text messages and phone calls can be useful for scheduling, congratulatory communication, and other forms of connectedness.

**Computer-Mediated Communication**

Ties can also be built through messages sent and received online. Jasmine says, “They e-mail me any like paper that they have that we don’t have time to go over during our tutoring session” (Jasmine, personal communication, February 24, 2012). Students communicate through Facebook with each other regularly. “We have this group in like Facebook so like we post, we like, ‘Oh I’m gonna be in CBB today, tomorrow’ and stuff…like if somebody [sic] needs help like we try helping them [sic] through Facebook” (Lucas, personal communication, February 28, 2012). Sometimes the site can be a distraction. “In this office we don’t facespace, we do our homework,” Nina looks at me and says with a laugh as she glances at Daniella’s screen (De Wyn, field notes, February 23, 2012). Though Facebook is a common means of contact between students, Mr. Karen says that it is “very little e-mail because for most [of the students] the only e-mail access they have is when they’re at the nearby high school” (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Samantha shares that sometimes she uses e-mail for greetings: “Their holiday, I just send them e-mail and say that, ‘hey, Happy Holiday’” (Samantha, personal communication, February 13, 2012). Despite computer-mediated communication’s potential for distracting students from their work during sessions; the use of Facebook, e-mail, and other online means of sending and receiving messages fosters connection through talk about schoolwork, meeting, and greetings.
Food/Culture

Sharing of edible dishes or other heritage-specific items or information creates tutor-student ties, too. In the office, at least once a week if not every day, some type of food is available to students, staff, and tutors. “On Fridays we have salsa,” says Serena, “and we joke,” replies Nina (De Wyn, field notes, March 2, 2012). Sharing aspects of food and culture also foster reciprocal relationships among students and tutors. Some students make comparisons to their lived experience also. For example, Daniella often uses the phrase “in my country” to begin sharing anecdotes about how certain situations relate to what she saw before she came to the U.S. “The new year in my country, I bought fruit at the market, and they [monkeys] took it,” Daniella shares after Serena said she likes monkeys (De Wyn, field notes, February 23, 2012). “My culture taught me to be respectful to other people to be like always positive to other people’s opinions, positive about other people’s, you know, other people’s stories, what you know about them, to always be positive” (Lucas, personal communication, February 28, 2012). Working in CBB, Serena says she has “learned beautiful things about many different cultures” (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012). When a tutor takes interest in a student’s culture, connectedness is fostered. “The first day she just give me her cell phone and then contact with her and everything and she’s like she asking me about my culture like how to say ‘goodbye’ or ‘hello’ in my country so she can say it every time she see [sic] me” (Daniella, personal communication, February 13, 2012). Rose shares about one of her friends who is “Muslim, I mean most Muslims from other countries don’t eat other people’s food but her, she eat[s] [sic] my food and I eat her food, I don’t care. And then, she trust[s] [sic] me if I say, ‘There’s no pork,’ she just eat[s] [sic] it” (Rose, personal communication, February 27, 2012). Nina asks Serena, “What are you eating?” Serena replies, “Quinoa, sweet potatoes, and kale” Nina asks, “You’re eating Kenya?” Serena jokes, “Yeah, Tanzania’s pretty tasty” (De Wyn, field notes, March 13, 2012). “I bring food that I cook at home, I dress the way I should dress” (Nina, personal communication, February 13, 2012).

Students seemed to express an appreciation and desire for learning about other cultures. Samantha shares, “I want to try other food [sic] from other country [sic]” (Samantha, personal communication, February 13, 2012).
Linguistic choices in the program setting also reflect cultural forms of expression of reciprocity. Monica shares,

We talk about words a lot and they’ll say, “In my language this, in my language that” and that kinda [sic] thing, and then so like, I’ll put on my, like also my understanding, either from like you know like from what I know in American schools or from my like [---]-American perspective, so it’s just like a big mush. (Monica, personal communication, February 27, 2012)

An interesting dichotomy exists between home language and host language. Lucas cites that, “Once you speak English everything is possible” (Lucas, personal communication, February 28, 2012). Aside from learning English, Daniella talks about speaking in the host language as a politeness factor:

Yeah, and also, it’s really, um, respectful to others. You know, when you talk, what I talk in my language and then other people don’t understand what I’m saying and they might think that I’m might say something about them, so it’s a good thing too, you know…because you know how different language they talking and the action. Even you say, “I’m talking,” I’m talking about you but I’m not mean [sic] to talking about a bad thing I just like talking “you [are] [sic] nice, you [are] blah blah” just talking nice [sic], but you don’t know what I’m talking [because I’m speaking another language]…and then I look at you so you think that I might speak something bad about you so that make you think another way. That’s how it was, that’s why I don’t want people to think that way. (Daniella, personal communication, February 13, 2012)

Samantha talks about how speaking English with her tutor helps her improve her language skills. She says,

I improve my English a lot when speaking ‘cuz, and listening too, when ‘cuz mores [sic] so people here [sic] native speaker [sic], [my] tutor is a native speaker, and when I heard they [sic] talk I also practiced [sic] my listening skill[s] [sic], and I pretend the [sic] voice, you know, yeah, ‘cuz I want to get rid of my accent so I just want to copy their voice. (Samantha, personal communication, February 13, 2012)

Many of the students said they only speak their own language at home, but Isabella said, “sometimes when I talk to like my friends we like mix it up…yeah, like my language and English together, like in the same sentence” (Isabella, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Lucas shares, “I’m trying to improve, like, my English so I try to avoid, like, speaking my cultural language and stuff, so that’s, I’m trying to avoid that, you know, and people that [sic] speak my language they say, ‘Oh, you’re forgetting the language, you are not a good kid, you’re Americanized’” (Lucas, personal communication, February 28, 2012).
Several of the students cited how people from their home culture view them as “Americanized.” According to Semlak et al. (2008), “many children of refugees have greater access to and interaction with, cultural knowledge than their parents” (p. 48). “While an abundance of empirical research documents the experiences of individual immigrant and refugee groups, limited understanding of the impact of dialectic contradictions on refugee and immigrant populations exists” (p. 61). Mr. Karen talked a bit about this process, saying, “Traditions are being eroded away and I realize, well, I can’t prevent that from happening, like, they have to adopt, blend in, to a certain degree, so I have real mixed feelings about a lot of that” (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012).

Culturally competent communication between tutors and students allows for bridges to be built. Jasmine articulates cultural competency this way:

*It means like being aware that there are other cultures out there and being respectful of them and not making any judgments and obviously not being any ethnocentrism like anything, that’s pretty crazy like that, um, just being respectful of other people and you don’t even have to like understand their culture completely to be competent…when they see like that the tutor understands their culture and understands where they’re coming from, um, they see that we’re like invested in them.* (Jasmine, personal communication, February 24, 2012)

More succinctly, Monica says it is “knowing that you never know everything” (Monica, personal communication, February 27, 2012). Though tutors, Serena says, are given orientation training before being paired with students, “I don’t expect them to know about what students have been through at a refugee camp, I don’t, so it’s a developmental thing, it develops” (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012). She says that having refugees and immigrants as employees of the GSN helps aid the acquisition of cultural competency (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012). Mr. Karen talks about cultural competency in terms of the difference between sympathy and empathy, saying,

*My way of looking at sympathy is just you can share an emotion with someone—she’s crying, you might cry, or you’re certainly gonna feel sad—but empathy’s a different level that you understand why the person is very happy or crying and you can better put yourself in the person’s position so I think what the GSN has done for me is I’m not just a sympathizer of refugees and immigrants, I’m much better empathizing with them. I got a ways to go, I’m still learning, uh and for that I can be thankful. At the same time I wish I didn’t have to be thankful for doing any of this ‘cuz I wish none of this situation existed at all. I wish there wasn’t any need for the GSN um but there certainly is, and they do a fabulous job with their limited circumstances, yeah, funding and all that…*[to]* think what it means to be...*
in their position or shoes I think that has kind of a measure of the degree of one’s cultural competency. (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012)

He shared a story of a time when he almost accidentally saw a Muslim woman without her hijab. He was going to find a teacher in one of the classrooms, but she was in a meeting with other Muslim women and they had taken off their head coverings. The “door opened and I started to walk in and one of the women said, ‘no no,’” recalls Mr. Karen. “If I had walked in it would’ve been a major cultural taboo. I would’ve felt really bad about it” (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Building relationships with students from different countries is “easier,” says Desi, “if you’ve already met one and feel comfortable with one” (Desi, personal communication, February 24, 2012). To build this competency, Desi says, “I would ask about their experiences I would ask about, um, or like I would ask about the language or the food that they eat, um, or even like how their family structure is sometimes, yeah, just to understand more where they’re coming from” (Desi, personal communication, February 24, 2012).

Tutors talked about the different factors that contribute to their own cultural competency. Jackie says that, “being from a multicultural background…traveling [internationally]…and also learning different languages” helps her understand other cultures (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012). She goes on to say,

working with specific students has made me so much more aware. I mean, if I meet someone and I learn about where they’re [sic] from you know it encourages me to go home look up that country—figure out what’s going on there right now or had been in the past—and it just, it really fills in so many cracks, um, it just helps you understand what’s going on here. (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012)

One word she used multiple times in her description was “awareness” (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012). In addition to sharing parts of their culture with one another through bringing food or displaying aspects of heritage, students’ connectedness is fostered through disclosure.

**Disclosure**

Sometimes students and tutors choose to share personal information with one another, which builds trust between them. In choosing where to draw the line, Desi says, “I try to stay away from ‘oh what’d you guys do last night,’ but I do ask about their family [sic] or you
know the food they like to eat” (Desi, personal communication, February 24, 2012). Alexis says, “It’s better, like, to talk a little bit about yourself and stuff and then [they] tell you about them[ sic] and then like, what, then do the work and that’s how you gonna get to know and them to know you” (Alexis, personal communication, March 1, 2012). However, Jackie shares, “I’m there to tutor her and I’m not just there to find out all about her life, so, um, it’s just been very focused on the work” (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012).

In addition to asking students questions, tutors will also relate material to their own lived experience or to students’ lived experience. For example, Jasmine says, Yeah, so I’m Muslim and a lot of the students that [sic] I tutor are Muslim and so sometimes they’ll be talking about like a holiday or like something they were doing and they’ll ask me they’re like, “whoa, you’re here on a Friday,” like, “why aren’t you like praying or something?” I’m like, “you’re so cute for knowing,” I’m like, “I’m tutoring you.” Um, but yeah, they always like, um, they bring it up and I feel like it makes them feel more comfortable. And, or if they say something in Arabic and they, I’ll understand it or something, like, they can’t talk behind my back or whatever. Like some of the Sudanese students know I know Arabic, so they’ll like speak and I’ll know what they’re saying. (Jasmine, personal communication, February 24, 2012)

Mr. Karen, who teaches, says he will bring in some of his students’ essays for his tutees to read. For a “study abroad experience in Mexicali” his “students wrote a reflective essay on their experience,” specifically “about the poor hard-working people in Mexicali who despite all of their obstacles and stuff are so friendly and warm. For me that’s the refugees I’ve met here so I’m having them read these, a part, it’s all grammar, building grammar, but it’s if they can relate to what my [own] students [I teach] have written” (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012). He also talks about how “constantly comparing and contrasting” the students’ culture with American culture helps “relate whatever we read to their lives” (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Desi also reflects this sentiment saying, “We just exchange stuff from our culture and it’s kind of a bonding experience” (Desi, personal communication, February 24, 2012). In relation to specific material, says Desi, “I usually tell her [about] my experiences because, um, I struggled a lot with math” (Desi, personal communication, February 24, 2012).

Sometimes tutors’ sharing, or simply the comfort level of the session, prompts students to share stories about their past. Jackie says that such sharing moments are eye-opening.
I’m like fascinated every time they tell me about, like, the camps, and like the process that it took to get here and stuff and being, like, put into this random apartment and stuff like that. I dunno, that just fascinates me. It’s like a new understanding of that and a new understanding of like, the conflicts that are going on that drive this migration to the U.S. (Jackie, personal communication, February 17, 2012)

One avenue students often choose to express their stories is scholarship essays. Serena cites how she “will try to not ask students certain questions due to the fear of like how much trauma they’ve been through but then scholarships give them like a sense of ownership in sharing their story and being important while also like allowing [her] to dig a little bit deeper without being like too intrusive” (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012). She continues, saying, “If they can feel safe here and they feel like they can come and talk to us and that we can help them then I think that’s our job…I think that it’s important from what I’ve learned for the kids to really really have a voice and spread that knowledge of what it’s like for them” (Serena, personal communication, March 7, 2012).

The story sharing that takes place ultimately contributes to both tutor and student learning. During the focus group discussion, this learning was talked about.

Mr. Karen: I’ll say that when we meet together it can take us the two hours to read a fairly short article. The reason is not because they read slow, is it’s [sic], we, we’re having a conversation.

Rose: A story of like, you know, our history.

Isabella: Exactly.

Mr. Karen: Which is I want them to do because…

Isabella : Exactly, ‘cuz that’s related to the work.

Mr. Karen: I wanna learn from you guys at the same time, hopefully, you’re learning from me.

Jenny : We learn from you guys and you guys learn from us. So it’s not just like you guys teaching us, but we teaching each other.

Isabella: It’s like going back and forth.

Jenny: Yeah, back and forth. Yeah it’s true, I don’t want you to just teach me teach me, you wants [sic] [to] learn something from me, too, ‘cuz there’s some stuff you don’t know about me and there’s some stuff I don’t know about you. (personal communication, March 16, 2012)

Through sharing stories and bits of information about personal experiences, tutors and students generate connectedness in their interactions with one another.
Various forms of learning can also be seen in this final category. Cognitive learning is eased by the close relationships formed in CBB. The bonds created between students, tutors, and staff are unique and engender an environment that encourages answer-seeking and a personal connection to what a student is learning. Behavioral learning takes place as a result of connectedness through trust-building interactions. Students’ choice to interact with people of cultures other than their own allows them to learn English. Affective learning is seen in almost every relationship formed in CBB, as students interact with others who foster and encourage their construction of resiliency.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The bureaucracy of the U.S. higher education system tends to hinder the construction of resiliency and acculturation process for refugee students. The system has guidelines of how everything is structured, but it is not in simplified terms, sometimes even for U.S. born students. The current setup of explanation is not functional. Similar to use of a Global Positioning Device (GPS), the potential to become lost or have to make choices based on incomplete explanations is unavoidable, even in seemingly favorable conditions.

My parents helped me all the way through the college process. I could “call dad” whenever I had any problems. I have family members who have been through college and know how to navigate the educational system.

I wonder how students survive the system without outside assistance. As an undergraduate at a private Midwestern institution with a 4,500 to 5,000 student population, I felt like I had access to whatever attention I wanted or needed from my professors. Granted, I did not seek help from them on a regular basis; however, I genuinely felt they cared about me and my success. (De Wyn, field notes, March 8, 2012)

Many of the students I teach at the University have similar familial and systemic support.

Sometimes it is necessary to rely on following others’ directions instead of trying to do things alone. Traveling to a destination that seems out of reach, with people helping along the way (who have been there or have heightened knowledge of the terrain), is rarely impossible. From misunderstandings about systemic expectations to misunderstandings of each other, students and tutors have to gauge their responses to challenges, and one another, accordingly.
I can’t imagine having to navigate the college system without resources and without a background knowledge of the language and culture of the university I’m in … I was just proctoring an exam this morning and 2 of my students are German … they kept asking me questions about definitions of words and I had a really hard time explaining words to them without giving away answers to the test. For example, one of the words was “desensitize,” so I tried explaining that the word “sensitive” was in the middle of the word and the “de” in front did something to that sensitivity, but if I said it got rid of sensitivity I would’ve given away the answer, as much as it isn’t fair that they don’t know the words, I can’t simply give them answers. (De Wyn, field notes, March 8, 2012)

Tutors, counselors, teachers, mentors, and friends, have the potential to make navigation of educational systems much more straightforward by providing guidance instead of simply giving students answers.

The “family” structure of the tutoring program allows for the development of solid relationships between students and staff, encouraging students’ communication of resiliency among people who know them well. Staff members and tutors have to apply a degree of firmness to tutoring sessions even in situations of empowerment, enhancing students’ abilities to be both respectful and hardworking. Flexibility is required from both students and tutors before, during, and after sessions, as miscommunications about scheduling and of academic concepts occurs. Frustration and failure related to material covered in tutoring sessions can occur, and is handled on a case-by-case basis. The role of the tutor hinges on facilitation of the construction of resiliency. The facilitation of this construction contributes to tutor and student conceptualizations of the future. Many, if not all, students in the program aim to attend four-year universities following their time in the community college system, which makes their construction of resiliency crucial as they further their college careers.

Though most of the students and tutors in the program cited the importance of each other’s involvement within and outside of sessions in terms of support, not much was said about those in refugees’ community outside of CBB. A few students mentioned their parents or help from friends as a source of encouragement, but most did not speak at great length about the other people outside the program. This was due, in part, to the questions I asked. Some of them expressed interest in talking about their previous experiences with the organization’s other student programs and/or tutoring outside of the GSN (such as teachers or non-program tutors), but social support and empowerment agents discussions centered on individuals who are a part of CBB. As Rose discussed briefly, her family members do not
necessarily know how to encourage her. For many of the students, they are the first in their families to go to college, and Mr. Karen even talked with me about how some men in members of communities he’s worked with are discouraged from getting an education and instead choose to get jobs because of the obligation they feel to help people in their home country. Many of the students expressed the number of distractions they have at home that often keep them from doing their schoolwork, which shows up in the results by way of their choice to come to GSN and even stay after hours to work on homework. The students have strong ties to their families, but the encouragement to participate in educational programming seems to come predominantly from outside their culture-specific communities.
CHAPTER 4

DESTINATION UNKNOWN

Resiliency, as Lucas similarly said about failure, is “another way of learning” (Lucas, personal communication, February 28, 2012). This study’s results highlight the importance of refugee students’ construction of resiliency for their functioning in educational settings. Based on the various forms of expression including affiliation, diligence, and connectedness, we see a complete picture of how different facets of students’ lives contribute to their acculturation. The individual voices of students and tutors provide reinforcement for previous ideas about refugees’ adaptation to the U.S. school system and the barriers (financial, systemic, etc.) they face. Thus, culturally competent members of a student’s educational community can serve to see, understand, and facilitate students’ expressions of resiliency construction by presenting refugee individuals with an academic space in which to openly discuss experiences and begin to heal from trauma through this communication. Accordingly, educators, administrators, and other individuals who regularly communicate with students should strive to display cultural competency.

In the following discussion, I outline a few main conclusions in view of the results of this study. Based on these conclusions, I then present some theoretical and practical implications of my research. Limitations and directions for future research follow my presentation of the study’s implications. Some final reflections on the project draw the discussion to a close and suggest a starting point for encouraging future studies about communication and issues of social justice.

CONCLUSIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

A careful look at the results of this research reveals patterns previously overlooked, or at least, under-examined, by Communication scholars. Construction of resiliency is a vital part of the acculturation process for refugee students. The community afforded students who participate in the program appears to create an environment that encourages refugee students’ expression of resiliency. Health communication scholars have cited the importance of
community for facilitating healing from traumatic events. As many, if not most, of refugee
students have experienced trauma in some way before coming to the U.S., creation of an
environment in which students can express resiliency may be a vital part of their healing
process. Like “the family-based services therapist, as both a community representative and a
witness to survivor’s storied experiences of abuse and survival, [who] could serve to
facilitate a certain level of resolution for the trauma” (Jager & Carolan, 2009, p. 305), tutors
who are involved with refugee students on a regular basis may play a key role in refugee
students’ healing.

Expression, recognition, and encouragement of resiliency construction through
communicative interactions functions to foster students’ academic and personal growth. “The
educational experience of identifying and exploring resilience allows students to contemplate
who they are and how their body, mind, and spirit function in relation to transpersonal
sources of strength” (Richardson, 2002, p. 317). In her “Refugee Well-Being Project,”
Goodkind (2006) found that dialogue allowed for “refugees’ experiences, knowledge, and
identities [to be] validated, and” that “refugees contributed to undergraduates’ education
through the sharing of their enthusiasm, strength, resiliency, and cultures” (p. 89). Thus, both
refugees and those they interact with can take part in a mutual learning process.

An environment in which this expression, recognition, and encouragement can take
place necessarily involves cultural competency of educational staff. Therefore, the members
of a refugee student’s educational community must strive for cultural competency in their
interactions with refugee students so that such students feel free, and even motivated, to fully
express their construction of resiliency.

Buzzanell (2010) puts it this way,

The construction of resilience is a collaborative exchange that invites participation
of family, workplace, community, and interorganizational network members. As a
new story, identity, mode of being and behaving, and/or linkage is crafted, there
must be others who support and elaborate on the new version and its potential to
assist in the construction of resilience. The conconstruction of new stories, rituals,
organizing logics, identities, emotions, and framings requires that people develop
ways to reintegrate new realities into their everyday lives. (p. 9)

A model for refugee students’ personal growth further outlines the process discussed (see
Figure 1).
Figure 1. A model of refugee students’ personal growth. *Students from refugee families (of which this study includes those of African, Asian, and Latin American descent).
The stakeholders in a refugee student’s education include empowerment agents (i.e., volunteers, tutors, educators, staff, organization, counselors, therapists, etc.), social support agents (i.e., family, friends, and peers in and out of the program), and the student (who is managing his or her uncertainty with the help of all agents). Empowerment and social support agents may have a direct or indirect impact on one another based on their interactions with the student and/or one another. While managing uncertainty, the student constructs resiliency through expressions of affiliation, diligence, and connectedness. A student’s uncertainty management process also contributes to particular constructions of his or her identity. These expressions facilitate the student’s acculturation process and contribute to affective, cognitive, and behavioral learning. Thus, by managing uncertainty with the help of empowerment and social support agents, constructing resiliency through expressions of affiliation, diligence, and connectedness, and undergoing further acculturation through affective, cognitive, and behavioral learning, the student negotiates his or her identity and subsequently grows personally in the process. Through the acculturative learning outcomes, resiliency can be reconstructed with new knowledge gained in each area (e.g., affective, cognitive, and behavioral). Identity negotiation also contributes to new constructions of resiliency based on interactions that take place during a student’s development.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

As far as theoretical contributions are concerned, I have extended a few different conceptualizations of particular research areas.

Affiliation Reflects the Tenets of Social Support

Through the exploration of students’ expression of affiliation and social support I add my findings to the social support literature. Expressions of belonging through joking/sarcasm, nicknames/greetings, play, and planned group activities serve to create social support systems. Scholars cite the importance of “a sense of belonging” for individuals migrating to the U.S. (Caxaj & Berman, 2010, p. E17). “Newcomers,” they say, are “engaged in constructing a new home in a new land, facing new and unfamiliar environments that can both threaten and facilitate their sense of well-being” (Caxaj & Berman, 2010, p. E17). For some migrants, hardships in “constructing a sense of belonging” include “feelings of difference and unfamiliarity,” negotiation of “the role of the family, life left behind/feelings
of loss, new opportunities and challenges, navigating public and private spaces, and deconstructing identity, enacting diversity” (Caxaj & Berman, 2010, p. E23). One study found that young people could “build a sense of belonging for themselves” by “harnessing familial/community supports” (Caxaj & Berman, 2010, p. E28). Thus, students have some agency in developing affiliation. However, in the same study, scholars cited how “organizational, sociocultural, and political barriers must be overcome in order for newcomers” to have a genuine sense of belonging (Caxaj & Berman, 2010, p. E28).

Discovering how newcomers construct this “belonging” can inform understandings of how to foster their well-being (Caxaj & Berman, 2010). Therefore, as exemplified in the results of this study, social support is a crucial part of refugee students’ affiliation, and consequently, their construction of resiliency.

Interacting supportively involves both sensemaking of situations in life and “a search for human contact” (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987, p. 19). This interaction “is a reciprocal process occurring in socially constructed networks of both strong (or primary) ties to family and friends, and weak ties to acquaintances, friends of friends, coworkers, and general others in the community” (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987, p. 19). The concept of social support can contribute to uncertainty reduction, yet focuses on communication that serves “to enhance a perception of personal control of one’s life experience” (Albrecht & Adelman, 1987, p. 19).

Refugee students’ expression of affiliation, then, allows them to create ties while developing their sense of agency in their acculturative process.

**Diligence Exemplifies Empowerment in Action**

Through the exploration of students’ expression of diligence I add my findings to the empowerment literature. Expressions of diligence through drive/patience, support, firmness/flexibility, and music serve to empower students. Studies have shown that “students become empowered learners primarily as a result of their teachers’ communication behaviors (nonverbal immediacy and clarity), and secondarily as a result of their individual characteristics (learner orientation)” (Houser & Frymier, 2009, p. 50). Therefore, the empowerment educators (such as tutors) can provide, enhances students’ ownership of their learning. That ownership, say Houser and Frymier (2009) “then leads to student learning” (p. 50). The empowering bond students and tutors develop contributes to what Houser and
Frymier-term "students’ classroom motivation to learn" (p. 50). Prior to this study, and in my results, I found refugee students to be some of the most motivated learners I had ever encountered. Drawing out their diligence and encouraging students to “keep it up” is crucial in fostering such individuals’ learning.

**Connectedness Contributes to Uncertainty Reduction**

Through the exploration of students’ expression of connectedness I add my findings to the uncertainty management literature. Expressions of connectedness through texting, e-mails, online posts, phone calls, food/culture, and disclosure serve to aid in students’ management of uncertainty. Say Albrecht and Adelman (1987), “in successful interactions, support occurs when meanings are obtained that reduce uncertainty, both for one’s situation as well as the relationship” (p. 19). In an effort to reduce uncertainty, individuals may seek such support, yet mainly attempt to come up with “proactive predictions and retroactive explanations about the behavior of others” (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1987, p. 106). Connectedness expressions, including disclosure, would be considered “interactive” strategies for uncertainty reduction (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1987, p. 119). Positive interactions help newcomers understand people’s behavior (in the host country), and the more these interactions happen, the more the “anxiety they experience upon entering the host culture” (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1987, pp. 119-120) is reduced. Though most, if not all, of CBB’s students have been in the U.S. for some period of time, they still experience acculturation-induced anxiety as evidenced by participants’ responses. Therefore, positive participation in interactions with tutors, most of whom are U.S.-born, gives refugee students the opportunity to reduce their uncertainty about everything from the culture at large to individual aspects of the college system.

**Ideological Positioning and Structuration**

The construction of resiliency and the acculturation process as observed in this study also confirm and extend theories of ideological positioning and structuration, which draw the three aforementioned categories together. According to Scarduzio and Geist-Martin (2010), ideological positioning refers to both how we view the world and “the material conditions of the formal power relations within an organizational structure” (p. 424). This ideological
positioning is influenced by “the relationship between power [and] discourse,” and, when experienced, “[influences] how [members of an organization] act, react, and exert power” (pp. 424-425). Students’ expression of affiliation, diligence, and connectedness serve to help them ideologically position themselves in relation to their uncertainty management, resiliency construction, acculturation, and identity negotiation.

Though a different change process, Howard and Geist (1995) discuss ideological positioning in terms of an organizational merger, which provides insight for the refugee students’ situation:

Essentially, ideological positioning is an enactment of the dialectic of control. Some members interpret their condition as autonomous, talking about the merger in ways that reveal their acceptance of change, their empowerment, and their identification with the organization. . . (p. 127)

In the same way, students have a choice about how they wish to think about their adaptation to U.S. culture, and the college system. Howard and Geist (1995) cite that “empowerment” is a central facet of “ideological positioning” (p. 127). Thus, those in a student’s educational community have the capacity to positively affect students’ sense of agency in their college preparation and navigation process. “Ideological positioning functions not only as a response to the merger, but also serves to produce and reproduce organizational structures that enhance or inhibit autonomy, identification, empowerment, and change” (p. 129). The way students choose to think about their acculturation and their adjustment to undergraduate study within programs like CBB, in addition to empowerment and social support agents in their educational community, can, then, affect the program structure. Therefore, intercultural communication competence of organizations that offer educational services to refugees is crucial for fostering empowering environments.

Scholars have utilized three dimensions to create measurements of intercultural communication competence for several years: cognitive, behavioral, and affective elements (Arasaratnam, 2009). In an effort to create “a measure of intercultural communication competence that can be used in culturally diverse groups of participants,” Arasaratnam’s (2009, p. 2) instrument effectively created a starting point for scholars wishing to pursue further research based on her findings. I argue that the same three dimensions used for Arasaratnam’s measure(s) can be applied to students’ learning.
Cognitive Learning

From simple “unit[s] of information,” to “methods of inquiry,” to “the ability to interpret, analyze, and synthesize” knowledge, cognitive learning takes place at different levels (McCroskey, 2002, p. 4). The levels of learning mirror the objectives of teachers at each educational stage (i.e., simple for elementary education and so on). For students in the CBB program, cognitive learning takes place during every session as the students work to acquire knowledge related to particular subject areas. Desi, a tutor, shared that sometimes she will talk about her own struggles with math if she sees that the student she is working with is having a hard time learning a math concept (Desi, personal communication, February 24, 2012). CBB allows for cognitive learning to take place in a supportive environment.

Behavioral Learning

According to McCroskey (2002), “speaking a foreign language” (p. 5) can be considered one aspect of behavioral learning. Since English is not the first language of most, if not all, of CBB’s students, they learn to speak, read, and write in a language foreign to them from the time they enter the U.S. For example, students in CBB learn behaviorally on a somewhat complex level, as they are enrolled in introductory college courses. As Mr. Karen shared, “reading is still a relatively new phenomenon” for many of the students (Mr. Karen, personal communication, March 9, 2012). Therefore, they are still learning how to read in a foreign language at the same time that they are learning course material in that foreign language.

Affective Learning

Resiliency, I argue, is a display of affective learning for the students of CBB. Affective learning combines belief and choices of behavior (McCroskey, 2002). However, this learning domain “receives the least attention from many college teachers” (McCroskey, 2002, p. 5). Recognition, encouragement, and facilitation of resiliency construction are important for refugee students because such behaviors allow for students’ affective learning. Says Richardson (2002), “Resiliency and resilience can provide hope and with practice, increase self-efficacy” (p. 319). However, sometimes “professors forget that they are teaching people, not content” (McCroskey, 2002, pp. 5-6). Attentiveness to “the affect of the learner” is necessary for “a competent job of teaching [to be] done” (McCroskey, 2002, pp.
5-6). I am reminded of one example a tutor shared in my data about the student she works with. The tutor, Jasmine, had said that the day many students missed a scholarship deadline, her student expressed determination to “do it earlier next time” (Jasmine, personal communication, February 24, 2012). Students’ “motivation . . . impacts their affective learning and performance of learning indicators” (Houser & Frymier, 2009, p. 50). Jasmine’s student’s comment exhibits affective learning in that the student has learned how to complete a scholarship application and knows she is capable of the task, she simply shared that she recognizes her failure to complete it on time and will strive to change her situation the next time.

**Pragmatic Avenues**

Major stakeholders for whom this study has practical implications are tutors, students, nonprofit staff, educators, administrators, school personnel, family, friends, peers, and the larger community. Those directly involved in a student’s education (teachers, administrators, tutors, etc.) are most closely related to the cultural competency aspect of this project. Anyone directly involved in a student’s academic life must be willing to assess and adjust his or her cultural competency if he or she wishes to encourage students’ construction of resiliency. Students are therefore responsible for gauging educators’ cultural competency levels prior to their sharing of sensitive information. A student’s social support community, then, serves as somewhat of a bridge between the educational community and the student, both encouraging their expressions of resiliency construction and providing an outlet for that expression should the student be unable to share certain stories with educational staff. Finally, the larger community (educational institutions, the general public, etc.) grows in awareness of the refugee experience through the aforementioned “shared stories” and other expressions of resiliency construction.

The community-based framework CBB provides for students is a model for national and international education systems. By bringing students through the organization from high school and fostering their communicative expression of resiliency, staff and volunteers can encourage postsecondary education early on. A couple considerations for this: inclusion of students depends on when they enter the U.S., and, some students may become frustrated by being encouraged to enter a higher level of a system they already have issues with. Therefore
some type of assessment of students seeking to enter the program may be beneficial for staff members to see prior to student’s inclusion in the program’s opportunities and activities.

Educators, administrators, and school personnel also can benefit from the findings of this research. Kanno and Varghese (2010) state that:

…ESL students would benefit from explicit encouragement to consider college during secondary school and also from ongoing and hands-on support during college just as much as racial minority and low-income students. Since colleges and universities already have these programs in place, it would not be an enormous stretch for them to include ESL students as another category of students that they would specifically target. (p. 325)

Thus, I hope educators can glean a sense of resiliency construction’s importance for their students and can learn methods to adapt to refugee individuals in their classrooms. Aside from university programs that have these support systems in place for minority students, I would argue that existing programs in non-profit organizations (such as the one which is the focus of this study) may be an even better option for ESL students who would benefit from encouragement to attend college because of the space it gives students to grow personally.

WRITING AS HEALING

Scholarship essays, as one participant suggested, may also be important for refugee students’ construction of resiliency. Many students choose to share life stories in their applications for educational funding. While reading these essays with students, tutors have the capacity to provide support and encouragement for students’ construction of resiliency through this expression of connectedness. “Recent scholarship is just beginning to address the broader issue of trauma among immigrants and refugees as a result of premigration stress resulting from war, natural disasters, religious persecution, and other such horrors” (Sethi, 2011, p. 498). Thus, a closer look into how such trauma can be dealt with is an emerging scholarly endeavor worth considering. One scholar of refugee background says how writing “became a site of healing and hope” (Sethi, 2011, p. 498) for her as she looked for ways to cope with trauma from her past. Claims the same individual, “arts-based research will continue to help me create and expand the spaces for authentic dialogue about ‘forbidden’ topics with vulnerable populations” (Sethi, 2011, p. 503). In writing about their past, refugee students have the opportunity to work through events that may otherwise silently haunt them their entire lives.
IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS, SCHOOLS, AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

In addition, the family, friends, and peers of students participating in the nonprofit’s programs should be aware of their impact on students’ construction of resiliency in educational settings. By contributing to the encouragement already offered through institutions and organizations, more informal members of a student’s academic support system have a direct impact on the student’s acculturation, and, consequently, their identity and uncertainty management strategies.

Pragmatically, this study’s findings suggest that the educational environment should encourage and engender culturally competent communication among those who interact with students on a regular basis. As far as what can be considered culturally competent communication, scholars have attempted to create scales for several years. Ting-Toomey (1999) outlines the concept this way: “Competent intercultural interaction emphasizes the importance of integrating knowledge and motivational factors and putting them into mindful practice in everyday interactions” (p. 48). Education scholars have recently begun to focus more on culturally competent communication among faculty and staff; however, I argue that culturally competent communication necessarily extends beyond the confines of the classroom and pervades any educational setting a student enters. Additionally, the existing scales for culturally competent communication in education approach the process as more of a one-sided phenomenon (teacher to student), whereas my results reflect students’ participation in the process. Furthermore, the present study reflects nuances in intercultural communication competency that recent intercultural communication competency scales may not.

Though currently in press, Quezada, Lindsey, and Lindsey (2012) have created a “Cultural Proficiency Continuum” and an “Educators Rubric for Inclusion and Support of English Learners and Their Communities.” The two tables exemplify their suggestions for engagement in culturally proficient teaching methods. Their work deserves credit for stimulating my thought process about cultural competency for this project. In my third committee member’s class about curriculum development in urban school settings last semester, I could not stop thinking about what the authors shared when they came to campus to present their work. I look forward to the public availability of their book, as it pertains so
directly to this project. In essence, Quezada et al. (2012) suggest that educators move from cultural competence to cultural proficiency, or, from awareness to action (i.e., working for change based on what an educator knows and sees).

Partnering with other organizations and institutions with similar goals may be another avenue of increasing culturally competent communication among individuals who work with students. Partnering with local schools is also a great opportunity, which the organization for this study already does. Encouragement to continue education is a difficult task even for educators of high school students in the U.S., as some states have listed freshman graduation rates lower than sixty percent in recent years (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2008). For refugee students, educational system barriers are tenfold, which makes programs such as the one in this study vital to our understanding of how to best approach refugee students about issues of higher education. Kanno and Varghese (2010) in their study on the challenges of accessing four-year college education say that their findings

...strongly call for a better partnership between community colleges and four-year institutions. For many ESL students, the community college is the only realistic pathway to a four-year institution. Given that community colleges provide more hands-on support to underserved students at a more affordable price, attending a community college first with the intention of later transferring to a four-year institution may be a good strategy for some ESL students. This is particularly true for those immigrant and refugee students who arrive in the United States only a few years prior to college application and feel that they need more time to improve their English and become better acclimated to the U.S. education system before they are ready to pursue a bachelor’s degree. (p. 325)

Many, say Kanno and Varghese (2010), do not even make it to the four-year colleges they intend to attend.

In other words, the community college transfer students we interviewed in this study are among the minority of students who have beaten the odds. If the community college is the only route by way of which some ESL students can ever aspire to a bachelor’s degree, it is incumbent upon community colleges and four-year institutions to collaborate closely in order to keep that pathway a viable option for this group of students. (p. 325)

Thus, culturally competent communication in educational programs that serve college-bound and enrolled refugee students is vital to their construction of resiliency in these programs, and, consequently, their success in higher education.
Limitations and Future Research

The limitations of this study include temporal, spatial, and population-related issues. Though I am familiar with the population for the study, and had interacted with individuals from the organization for approximately one year prior to this project’s completion, a longitudinal design with more observational data could provide important details I may have missed in my limited official observation period. Spatial limitations, such as the design of the office and the lack of optimal viewing areas sometimes made it difficult for me to see and hear volunteer, student, and staff interactions without being intrusive. I ended up sitting on the floor a lot of the time simply because all of the desks and chairs in the office were occupied by students or employees. Finally, the group of participants I interviewed and observed was quite small. Ideally, observation of a program such as the one chosen for this study would encompass all program members, however the confidentiality constraints of the study only allowed for me to observe those from whom I had obtained consent. In addition, I did not speak with, or hear much about, students’ communities outside of the program.

Therefore, future research could examine a wider range of participants which would allow for more detail about interactions outside of students’ program-based community. Future research could also focus on a couple other different facets of this study’s findings. The critical role of tutors in students’ academic lives and their hiring/selection process would be an interesting avenue to traverse. An extension of cultural competency scales and inclusion of their use in nonprofit programs could also provide interesting data about the nature of student-tutor interactions.

Reflections

In the global fight for social justice, individual stories are often shrouded by narrow views of “helping.” Attentiveness to personal stories allows us the opportunity to aid in the most helpful way. As Rappaport (1995) says,

Stories are not a scarce resource, but often the stories of people who are “outsiders” are an ignored or devalued resource. Much of the work of social change, organizational and community development in the direction of greater personal and collective empowerment, may be about understanding and creating settings where people participate in the discovery, creation, and enhancement of their own community narratives and personal stories. (p. 805)
Our world grows smaller with each passing day. Mass communication about global issues is important; however, only when we come to recognize the personal nature of the world’s problems can we fully grasp how to best meet the needs of those we are trying to aid. An awareness of the difficult, dangerous situations refugee students come from allows educators to be sensitive to individuals’ unique academic needs.

We should never underestimate people’s power to overcome challenges. We should learn more about refugee individuals in the communities that surround us. We should grow to a fuller understanding of these individuals by interacting with them and witnessing their strength of character and will. We should change the way we communicate with refugee individuals by listening more, talking less, and looking for opportunities to foster their construction of resiliency, thus facilitating their acculturation. Some say that the U.S. is not sufficiently addressing the concerns of native-born students and cite that as grounds for dismissing the concerns of foreign-born individuals. Though the U.S. educational system may never be able to fully serve every student’s needs adequately, seeking to serve all students in pursuit of higher education equally is a foundational principle of the country’s stated beliefs.

I do not mean to imply, in the culmination of this project, that the tutors and staff of the CBB program have reached perfection in serving the refugee [college] student population. Any diverse non-profit organization in the U.S. seeking to meet the needs of foreign-born individuals will inevitably run into differences of opinion and communication difficulties related to the cross-cultural nature of its work (Hammer, 1984). In response, GSN provides training to tutors and does its best to ensure that each tutor-student pair is well matched. Such pairing demonstrates what many similar orientation programs seek to do: to foster effective communication between program participants with respect to their cultural differences (Hammer, 1984).

Specifically, CBB’s tutors sometimes have a hard time understanding how best to help the students they work with because their background may differ vastly from the students’. In addition, tutors of CBB have a wide array of cultural experiences, yet may not have ever encountered anyone from a student’s home country prior to the initiation of the tutoring relationship. Consequently, tutors may often be unfamiliar with a student’s first language, which can create barriers to understanding if and when students have trouble
expressing themselves in English. Many tutors are students or employed professionals, too, so their busy schedules can present obstacles for students’ reception of sufficient tutoring sessions each week.

However, GSN’s CBB program is doing something unique and phenomenal with the resources they have. Though other organizations in the nation may be serving the refugee population, GSN’s focus on empowering young minds allows for the formation of an educational community that stays with them through their transition to higher education. Support and encouragement are crucial for any student aiming to attend university, and for the refugee students seeking college preparatory and navigation services, CBB provides individualized aid while fostering students’ personal growth. Overall, the tutors and staff of CBB exhibit a genuine care and concern for students’ learning and well-being, demonstrated daily in their interactions.

Today, GSN’s hallways remain fluorescently lit and still somewhat maze-like. New signs appear in a few places. One of the offices has moved closer to CBB’s door, with a brand-new tiled floor and color coordinated furnishings. The parking lot is perfectly repaved, and the only speed bumps are the ones intentionally placed several feet apart for safety. The hallways near my office door have become eerily empty, save a few wandering individuals and far-off conversations. Two years of teaching completed, and on to new adventurers I go. Soon, it will be time for a new wave of faces to enter the Communication building in the fall. For now, I, along with CBB’s students and my former students, am on the cusp of summer. “Tomorrow will worry about itself,” Matthew 6:34 (New International Version).

Following completion of this study, the disparities of the U.S. educational system are now even more apparent to me. I cannot help feeling an overwhelming sense of blessedness. I live a cushioned life and have had so many memorable moments afforded to me by circumstance. The feeling of guilt does not fully encapsulate the range of affect that I experience upon thinking about my own privilege. When I think about what people can do on an individual level to remedy such disparities, my frustration sometimes overshadows my hope for the future. Leadership in the educational system toward a fuller grasp of intercultural communication competence is simply one step toward building bridges for the nation’s non-native residents.
Refugees give up an extremely important possession when they come to the U.S.: home. As a nation, especially within the educational system, we would be wise to consider what kind of home we are opening to those knocking on our borders’ doors. We have the capacity to affect change. People do not tend to lock their deadbolts, turn off all their lights, and allow their refrigerators to be empty when they are expecting company.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

WORKS CITED


**WORKS CONSULTED**


APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDES
Interview Guides

The following interview guides provided a basis for the focus group, student, and volunteer interviews.

Focus Group

1. What do you like best about this program?
   a. What keeps you coming back each week?

2. (Students) In what ways do you see yourself, or other students, showing that they have overcome challenges? (Tutors) In what ways do you see the students you work with demonstrating this drive and determination?
   a. How have you seen communication – either yours or others’ – play an empowering role in your or others’ interactions in the program?
   b. Have you ever seen communication make your or others’ interactions more difficult? In what way? How do you think situations like that could be handled better in the future?

Refugee Students

1. Demographics
   a. What is your age?
   b. How long have you been here?
      i. How and/or why did you start participating in this program? When you started, what did you think of it?
      ii. What’s your favorite thing about participating in the program? What’s the most difficult?
   c. How often are your tutoring sessions? What does a typical week look like?
   d. Tell me about one of your proudest moments in this program.
   e. What made you decide to stay?

2. Social Support
   a. How did spending time with other people in the program play a role (if at all) in the relationships you formed here?
b. In what ways did your communication with others (and theirs with you) affect the relationships you started and/or kept?

3. Intercultural Communication
   a. How has meeting, talking, and working with people from other cultures – both in and outside the program – affected the way you view yourself and your ability to communicate?
   b. Do you think your background plays a role in the way you talk and behave around the other students and tutors in the program? How?

4. Empowerment & Resiliency
   a. What, if any, regular activities or gatherings do you and the other students and tutors have with each other?
   b. Describe your communication with other students and tutors.
      i. How often do you talk with others?
      ii. What is this communication like when you are off site?
      iii. Has miscommunication ever happened during a tutoring session? What did you do about it? Was the issue resolved?
   c. Empowerment is defined as giving “somebody a greater sense of confidence or self-esteem.” (Encarta Dictionary) What does “empowerment” mean to you?
      i. Talk about a tutoring session that has been particularly empowering for you.
      ii. How has that experience informed your current comfort/familiarity level with American culture?
   d. Resiliency refers to someone’s “ability to recover quickly from setbacks.” (Encarta Dictionary) What does “resiliency” mean to you?
      i. How do you feel resiliency has been a part of your progress in this program and the school system in the U.S.?

5. Wrap-up
   a. Would you like to tell me anything else about your participation in the program?
b. Please pick a different name I can use for you in my study. I want to protect your privacy, so I cannot use your actual name.

Tutoring Volunteers

1. Demographics
   a. What is your level of education?
   b. How long have you been here?
      i. How and/or why did you start participating in this program? When you started, what did you think of it?
      ii. What’s your favorite thing about participating in the program? What’s the most difficult?
   c. How often are your tutoring sessions? What does a typical week look like?
   d. Tell me about one of your proudest moments in this program.
   e. What made you decide to stay?

2. Social Support
   a. How did interaction with refugee students in the program play a role (if at all) in the relationships you formed here?
   b. In what ways did your communication with students (and theirs with you) affect the bonds you formed and/or sustained?

3. Intercultural Communication
   a. Have you had much experience interacting with cultures other than your own?
      i. Could you compare that experience to your work here?
   b. How have your intercultural interactions affected the way you view yourself and your ability to communicate?
   c. Did you notice yourself talking or behaving in a certain way that would demonstrate your relationship to your own background or to the organization?

4. Empowerment & Resiliency
   a. What, if any, regular activities or gatherings do you and the students have with each other?
   b. Describe your communication with the students.
      i. How often do you talk with students?
ii. What is this communication like when you are off site?

iii. Has miscommunication ever happened during a tutoring session? What did you do about it? Was the issue resolved?

c. What does “empowerment” mean to you?
   i. Talk about a tutoring session that has been particularly empowering for you.

d. What does “resiliency” mean to you?
   i. How have you seen refugee students communicate resiliency in your tutoring sessions?
   ii. In what ways do you facilitate or encourage their expression of resiliency?

5. Cultural Competency/Staff Development

   a. Did you receive any special instructions before beginning your tutoring position in the program?
   b. Has this program changed the way you relate to and/or think about individuals of refugee status?
   c. What does the term “cultural competency” mean to you?
      i. How important do you feel it is for tutors in the program to demonstrate cultural competency?
      ii. Talk about the ways you display cultural competency in tutoring sessions.

6. Wrap-up

   a. Would you like to tell me anything else about your participation in the program?
   b. What would you like your pseudonym (fake name) to be?
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT
RECRUITMENT MESSAGES

For Students (text message)

Hello students!

Erin De Wyn, a former [GSN] volunteer, would like you to participate in a research study. She’s working on her Master’s degree in Communication at SDSU and is studying the [CBB] program this semester.

If you can share with her about [CBB] (the relationships you’ve built and how it’s affected you), she would love to talk with you! She would also like to stop by a few times a week to see how you and the tutors work with each other.

Please let me know by Wednesday of this week if you can participate.

Thank you!

[Serena]
[CBB] Coordinator

For Tutors (e-mail)

Hello [CBB] tutors,

Welcome back for the spring semester!

My name is Erin De Wyn and I have volunteered with the [GSN] since last spring.

I am currently working on my Master’s degree in Communication at San Diego State University. For this semester, I have chosen to do a research study on the [CBB] program.

That’s what I would like your help with.

If you would be willing to talk about your experiences in the [CBB] program (the relationships you have built with students, the growth you have seen them experience, and your impressions of how [CBB] has affected their schoolwork), I would love to hear about that! I would also like to stop by a few times a week to see how you and the students work with each other.

You may be wondering why I want to do this.

Well, my project is about resiliency. As I have told the students, the definition of resiliency I am using refers to the ability to overcome difficult obstacles. The refugee students in the [CBB] program have overcome unique challenges in their lives. What I am interested in finding out is: where does their drive and determination come from? They are now starting
their college education, which is impressive for any young adult. However, I see all of them as some of the most impressive young adults in [the area].

So, if you can participate in my study, please reply to this message by Wednesday of this week.

Hope to hear from you soon!

Thank you,

Erin

Erin De Wyn
Graduate Teaching Associate
School of Communication
San Diego State University

(555) 555-5555
APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM
Dear Participant,

Thank you for expressing your interest in being a part of my research study. Below, you will see the details about what the study involves and what I will ask of you. After giving you this form, I will be present to answer any questions you may have. I have requested permission from the Global Safety Net* to conduct interviews and record observations of the College Bound and Beyond Program for the Spring 2012 semester.

**Title of Study:** Constructing Resiliency: The Acculturation of Refugees and Their Communication Within Communities

**Investigators:** Erin De Wyn, Principal Investigator, School of Communication at San Diego State University

Susan Hellweg, Ph.D., Co-Principal Investigator, School of Communication at San Diego State University

**Purpose of Study:** In this study, I am looking at the way refugee students communicate how they overcome tough challenges while they interact with tutors. In interviews and observations, I will focus on language and behavior that expresses empowerment and determination. As a result, I would like to add to what educators already know about working with refugee students to emphasize the importance of tutoring programs. You must be at least 18 years of age and a current member of the College Bound and Beyond Program at the Global Safety Net.

**Description of Study:** If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to participate in one individual interview, one focus group interview, and/or observations. Interviews will be audiotaped. All focus group participants will be audiotaped. If you choose not to be audiotaped for your individual interview, I can include your responses in the study via handwritten notes. You are encouraged, but not required, to participate in all aspects of the study (you may choose from the list below). Please see the attached interview guide for the list of questions that I will ask. Each interview will take place in the conference room, where other program members will not hear individual responses, and will last no longer than one (1) hour.

- Individual interview = 7 students, 7 tutors, audiotaped, one (1) hour maximum
- Focus group interview = 8-10 students and tutors, audiotaped, one (1) hour maximum
- Observations = participating students and tutors, 1-5 sessions per week over 6 weeks (1-3 hours of observation per session), I will be taking notes on communication (language and behavior) that reflects drive, determination, and encouragement
Risks and Discomforts: You may experience some discomfort when answering the questions. To minimize this potential discomfort, answers are kept completely confidential, including the focus group interview. You may refuse to answer any question and may end your participation in the study at any time. If you participate in the focus group, please do not share any information talked about with anyone outside the group. Though I am asking for everyone’s full cooperation with the previous request, I cannot guarantee that what you share in the focus group will not be discussed outside the group. Therefore, please do not share any information you would be uncomfortable with others knowing.

Benefits of the study: I hope the data collected during this study will allow you to come to a realization of your feelings toward the organization, allow the volunteer population to become aware of potential areas of communication competence as a result of this study, and allow society to receive additional information about the importance of an openly communicative environment for volunteers and students. I cannot guarantee, however, that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study.

Confidentiality: Protection of confidentiality will involve careful handling and storage of documentation. Only the researcher and the co-principal investigator will have access to the collected data. Data will be stored in the researcher’s possession and out of sight and access of anyone else (except the co-principal investigator). Your identity will be confidential, but will include a pseudonym (a fake name) for identification purposes. Your actual name will not be included in any publication. Data will not be stored longer than 3 calendar years. If you choose not to be audiotaped for your individual interview, you may be included in the study via handwritten notes.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with San Diego State University. Your responses to focus group and interview questions will not affect your position or participation in the College Bound and Beyond Program at the GSN. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw consent and stop participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

Questions: If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have any questions about the research after reading this agreement, you may contact the principal investigator, Erin De Wyn at (555) 555-5555, [username]@gmail.com, or [username]@rohan.sdsu.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a human subject and your participation in this study, you may contact the SDSU Institutional Review Board at (619) 594-6622 or irb@mail.sdsu.edu.
Agreement: The San Diego State University IRB has approved this consent form as signified by the Committee’s stamp. The consent form must be reviewed annually and expires on the date indicated on the stamp.

You indicate that by continuing on to complete one or all parts of this study—the focus group interview, the individual interview, and/or observations—you have read the information in this document and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Completing the focus group interview, individual interview, and/or participating in observations also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records. You have been told that by completing the focus group interview, individual interview, and/or participating in observations you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Pseudonym (fake name):

*All original names have been changed in this [published] consent document to protect the identities of the organization, program, and anyone affiliated or involved with either entity.