The Multi-layered Character of Newcomers’ Academic Identities: Female Somali High School Students in a U.S. School

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Purpose
This study aims to understand how newcomer refugee students from Somalia negotiate social and academic life in their receiving country (the U.S.). It proposes a multi-faceted theoretical approach for educators interested in understanding the viewpoints of newcomer students and creating programs responsive to their needs and educational aspirations.

The Article
In order to situate the analysis in the global socio-cultural context, Oikonomidoy borrows theoretical tools from the sociology of migration and from refugee studies. She positions her view of academic identity construction as a dynamic process evolving between intersecting spatial layers, ranging from the global to the local, and temporal dimensions, ranging from the past to the future. Upon providing the contextual details of her study and the participants’ profiles she goes on to weave their collective narratives as they were constructed through focus groups and her observations in the school. In the conclusion, the theoretical implications of this study are discussed and are followed by practical implications for K-12 educators and policy makers.

What This Means for the Field
This study aims to fill a gap in the multicultural education literature, by providing a fresh perspective on a newcomer group of students who, although invisible in the literature, have characteristics that position them as a very visible minority in school contexts. In so doing it provides us with a window to understanding how the current intercultural landscape of schools are formed and negotiated by diverse groups of students.

Citation

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