Moving across languages and learning traditions
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In this talk I present an overview of my research on the social and cultural patterning of children’s language learning in communities whose members use multiple languages and participate in multiple learning traditions. I examine such patterning in three multilingual African communities. First, I discuss language learning and use in a village in the Mandara Mountains, identifying several features of social life that worked together to reproduce and reinforce norms of multilingualism. Second, I examine Fulbe children’s socialization into Fulfulde, Arabic, and French across secular, religious, and domestic activity settings. Third, I discuss Somali-American children’s experiences of language learning and double schooling (participation in Qur’anic and public schooling). In studying African children’s experiences and developmental trajectories as learners and users of multiple languages across contexts, I seek to expand and deepen our understanding of how everyday practices shape language learning in culturally distinctive ways that may be transformed over time and space.