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# Parental Involvement of Somali Parents in the Midwest

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**Parental Involvement of Somali Parents in the Midwest**

by

Noorayn Muhumed

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts in

English: Teaching English as a Second Language

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### **Abstract**

Parental involvement is critical to the personal and educational development of pupils at all grade levels. The definition of parental involvement is the complete application of parents' resources to the mental, physical, emotional and social development of children according to Glock and Slowiaczek (1994). The data of this study is collected from a sample of ten Somali male and female parents based in a small Midwest town. The Somali parents in the study are parents with children representing early childhood, elementary, middle school, high School and college level. The method used to collect data are a combination of surveys and open-ended interview questions. The analysis of the interview questions generated ten major themes relating to the parental involvement of Somali parents; concerns about racialization, concerns about their children's' academic skills, collectivism and sibling support system, Somali parents have a strict parenting style, Somali children experience a cultural shock in school, Somali parents expressed issues with school bus, employment, and language barrier as obstacles to school involvement, great relationship with the school faculty, Reading and Writing proved to be challenging subjects for students and Somali parents have high aspirations for their children.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

There are many studies on the importance of parental involvement in school. However, the current research is unique because it is specifically about the parental involvement of Somali parents in American schools. There are some Somali immigrants in the Midwest. Therefore, the study will seek to serve as a means to understanding Somali parental involvement.

### Background Knowledge

The CIA World Factbook (2016) reports that Somalia became independent from British rule in 1961. Somalia is in East Africa, the capital of Somalia is called Mogadishu, and neighboring countries are Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti.



(Retrieved from: [https://farm8.staticflickr.com/7100/13304579694\\_54278de6fe\\_b.jpg](https://farm8.staticflickr.com/7100/13304579694_54278de6fe_b.jpg))

The main religion in Somalia is Islam with a population of about 11 million people. Languages spoken are Somali, Arabic, Italian and English. Ethnic groups in Somalia are made up of 85% Somali, 15% Somali Bantu, Arab and others, (Somali Bantu are a minority group among Somalis). In 1969, the first official president, Siad Barre came to rule Somalia as an authoritarian leader whose rule was absolute, and any opposing views resulted in weighty consequences. In 1991, the government collapsed, leading to the civil war, division of the state, and migration of Somalis around the world. Since the fall of the government, there were efforts to restore leadership in Somalia, but most of these governments remained transitional.

Bigelow (2007) conducted a study on Somali youth regarding the cultural transformations that were faced by young Somalis residing in the U.S. as a result of migration, particularly concerning issues of race and religion. In the United States, the largest Somali community resides in Ohio, Minnesota, Washington, Georgia, California and Washington, DC. Fear and discrimination have accompanied cultural contact between Somalis and the hosting community. Somali immigrants living in dominantly White and Judeo-Christian areas experience racialization and Islamophobia. Ajrouch and Kusow (2007) state that racialization impacts immigrants of color greatly. The researcher continues to explain that a concern for Somali parents and elders is the tendency for Somali youth to act “Black” or take on the fashion, music, and attitude of their perception of blackness while leaving behind the traditions of Somali culture and the teachings of the Islamic religion. Regarding language, Somali youth maintain their home language to communicate with parents and elders, learn Standard American English for academic success, and master the African American vernacular for group membership among

peers in urban schools. Despite the concerns of Somali parents and challenges of racialization, Somali youth identify themselves as Somali and Muslim.

Bigelow (2007) reported that Somali male youth experience misidentification by law enforcement officials often being profiled for the color of their skin. Students have also reported that teachers at school reprimanded misbehaving Somali students by reminding them that this is not Somalia: A statement that communicated negative behavioral association about Somalia to classmates from other cultural backgrounds. Somali Muslim women also experience struggles with their Hijab. The author states that Somali Muslim youth are facing struggles with their identity and religion in White dominated schools. The author suggests that educators should seek to understand the minority culture of Somali Muslim youth, engage the youth through discussions about the diversity of cultures and religion, and create a safe environment as well as positive relationship between students in the classroom. Furthermore, educators can facilitate cultural acceptance of Somali students through the exclusion of curriculum content that contains misguided information about Islam.

According to Goodwin (2017) schools are expected to make changes to the curriculum, teaching style and increase teachers of color to reflect the student population in the classroom. Teacher training programs can implement culturally responsive teaching to prepare teachers for the changing dynamics of the American schools. The author suggests that teacher training programs should include a segment on the unique challenges of immigrant students as part of the teacher certification program. Furthermore, teachers must make intentional effort to decode the unique challenges of each student. Teachers should make an effort to advocate for immigrant students. And, teachers should personalize the curriculum in the classroom for students.

The current literature review will be focusing on four aspects:

1. The study provides definitions and theoretical framework for the concept of parental involvement.
2. The research explores parental involvement in different age groups and school levels. Despite the focus on age groups, the studies explore factors of ethnicity and socioeconomic status among ethnic groups.
3. The research focuses on the parental involvement of voluntary and involuntary immigrants.
4. The research discusses the parental involvement of Somali parents. However, the majority of the literature review is a collection of studies on the parental involvement of other ethnic groups. This decision came as a result of minimal to non-existing studies of Somali parental involvement.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the parental home and school-based involvement of Somali parents?
2. What are the identified obstacles to Somali parents' involvement at home and school?

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

This study is a descriptive analysis of the parental involvement of Somali parents compared to other studies of parental involvement. Most of the literature review is focusing on studies among Eurocentric and other minority groups. The researcher will be gathering data from Somali male and female parents.

### **Parental Involvement**

Glock et al. (1994), parental involvement in school means the complete dedication of resources to a child's education. The researchers further classify parental involvement to encompass a child's behavioral, cognitive and personal development. Parental involvement is the engagement with the child's daily encounters with the world and helping them understand situations better. The author states that parental involvement in school is like a social membership. Parents can meet other parents, teachers and school administration. Involved parents gain access to the behavioral as well as the academic performance of their children. Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, and Apostoleris (1997) state that among the practical ways that parental involvement can take place is through the management of a child's behavior, attending parent-teacher conferences, helping students with homework as well as open communication with their child. Activities such as watching current events with children are some of the many ways that parents can be involved with their children at home. For Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack (2007), parental involvement is classified into two categories: school-based and home-based parental involvement. School-based involvement includes all levels of communication that a parent conducts with the school, for example, contacting the school regarding a child's performance, attending parent-teacher conferences, and volunteering at school functions. Home-

based parental involvement can be helping children with homework and talking to children about school.

### **Parental Involvement and Conflict Management Strategies by Teachers**

Regarding conflict management, involved parents have an impact on the strategies that teachers use towards their children in the classroom during conflict management. Karakus and Savas (2012) examined the relationship between conflict management strategies teachers' use in class and parental involvement in school. A sample data was collected from 254 early childhood teachers using a combination of a questionnaire and a Likert scale. The findings of the study support the notion that parental involvement has a direct and positive impact on teacher's trust in parents. Secondly, parental involvement directly influences teacher's trust in the student. Trust in student impacts the conflict management resolution that teachers utilize to address students. The study found that teachers use the dominating strategy, which is a pipeline to prison, to address conflict in the classroom when dealing with students of less involved parents. In contrast, when addressing conflicts of students with more involved parents in school, teachers are using humanistic approaches. Therefore, the study underlines the direct correlation between parental involvement in school and behavioral management strategies that teachers use on students in the classroom. Another study by Roy and Roxas (2011) focused on Somali Bantu refugee families in Texas and Michigan. As was mentioned previously, Somali Bantus are a minority group among the larger Somali community. The researcher collected interviews regarding the parental involvement of Somali Bantu families in the home as well as the beliefs about education among the Somali Bantu families. Though the Somali Bantu families stressed about the efforts they place on their children's education, the teachers shared that Somali Bantu students struggled to



follow the simple classroom rules and expectations. Teachers expressed concerns that managing behavioral issues of Somali Bantu students in the classroom interfered with instructional classroom time. Educators stated that Somali Bantu students engaged in fights with each other or other students regularly. Teachers were not able to understand the patterns of behavioral issues that Somali Bantu students came into the classroom.

Regarding the teachers at school, the possible explanation they provided about Somali Bantu students' conflict in school is the use of aggressive behavior as a coping mechanism by students due to the distraction of the war in Somalia. An excerpt by Wani and Phogat (2018) discusses the stress that children suffer as a result of armed conflict. The authors conduct a systematic review of the mental wellbeing of victims of armed conflict. Mental wellbeing is clarified as the individual's potential to cope with the daily stress of life, work productively within the rules and expectations of the given society, and contribute to the positive development of the community. A review of psychosocial disorders by Slone and Mann (2016) included a total of 4,365 children from armed conflict environments who are between the ages 0-6 showed impacts of post-traumatic stress, behavioral and emotional symptoms, sleep problems, and disturbances. Dimitry (2012) conducted a systematic review of the mental health wellbeing of children in the Middle East in countries such as Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq. The study found that the high conflict areas strongly correlated with the mental, the behavioral and emotional well-being of the children. In Palestine, about 23-70% of children and adolescent suffered from stress disorder, and 10-30% in Iraq suffered similar cases. However, not all children who experience armed conflict exhibit mental problems. A study by Cortes and Buchanan (2007) examined six Columbian child soldiers who were not affected by the trauma of

the war. The study identified positive factors such as social intelligence, empathy, shared experience, community connection, a sense of future, as well as spiritual connection aided in the mental wellbeing of armed conflict children. Though not all of the Somali children were old enough to recall the events that took place during the civil war in Somalia, their parents have recollections and experiences from the armed conflict. Therefore, through the tradition of storytelling Somali children have second-hand experience of the armed conflict in Somalia.

Another study by Wang, Hill, and Hofkens (2014), explained aggressive behavior among adolescents could result from lack of parental warmth and strict home environments. Thus, this could be one explanation for the aggressive behavior mentioned by teachers of Somali Bantu students. Teachers state that Somali Bantu female students wore long garments over the school uniform and a headscarf which was considered like hats and violated the “no hats” rule at school. Teachers were unable to connect the religious expectations of Somali Bantu females of covering the head and dressing in long garments because all Somali Bantu females did not implement this religious rule. An act that the school considered rebelling against school policy.

In the ELL classroom, some students exhibited behavioral issues when the reading material became too difficult; this led many educators to label Somali Bantu students as unmotivated. Some educators wish Somali Bantu students were as successful in the classroom as other immigrants who came from neighboring countries such as Sudan. Roy and Roxas (2011) observed that teachers used bilingual translators as disciplinary tools towards the Somali Bantu students as opposed to using them as a resource for transmitting educational content to bridge the linguistic gaps.

### **Parental Involvement and Efforts made by School Administration to Engage with Parents**

Bower and Griffin (2011) conducted a case study at a high minority, low-income families' elementary school. The case study is from Hawk Elementary school. Hawk Elementary is an urban school located in the Southeastern part of the United States. The school has a total of 347 students, 60.5% African American, 33.1% Hispanic, and 6.4% Caucasian and Multiracial. 92.5% of students receive free or reduced lunch at school. Interview questions are ranging from 45-60-minute sessions from two school administrators and five teachers. The main question in the interview was: How do you communicate with parents? And how do you encourage parental involvement in school? The teachers indicated to send weekly reports home with students as well as any missing assignments. Teachers also provide open communication to parents and occasional home visits. School administrators also contact parents during school-wide activities and parent-teacher conferences. The results of the research showed that most parents didn't read the weekly reports sent home because the students never returned the communication sheets.

Parents who tried to help their students with homework became frustrated because they had to learn new methods to teach their child. Therefore, they often called the teacher to express why they could not teach their child the way they learned. A low number of parents attend school activities; the attendance was very low. Furthermore, the Parent-Teacher-Organization had only three active members. The lack of parental involvement in school did not necessarily affect the routine strategies taken by the school district to engage parents. However, it has certainly impacted the school's perception regarding parental involvement. According to Vang (2006), African Americans, Hispanic, and Native Americans score lower than the combined average of all the other students in school.

### **Parents' Education, and Student's Success in School**

Bui and Rush (2016) examined the relationship between parental involvement in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and the likelihood of pursuing higher education following high school. The study compares three level of students; 1) First-generation college students whose parents lack a college education. 2) Students of parents who have some college education. 3) Students of parents who completed a bachelor's degree and beyond. The findings of the study are that over the 8-year period after high school 37% of first-generation students pursued higher education whereas, 56.3% of students whose parents attended some college attended college and 88% of students whose parents held at least a bachelor's degree attended college. The only common determiner of college attendance of students for parents with no college education, some college education as well as at least a bachelor's degree was the parental expectation.

Despite the beliefs about the performance and exhibited behavior by Somali Bantu students, Somali Bantu parents expressed their desire for their children to achieve success in school. This result is consistent with Ogbu's (2003) finding of the view that education is the key to achieving the American dream. However, most Somali parents lack formal schooling and have limited English abilities. Somali parents encourage their children through practices of storytelling. Storytelling is a longstanding tradition of teaching children about the value of education. Somali Bantu parents desire their children to be academically successful but lack of knowledge about grading procedures, standardized testing, college preparation, and requirements for graduation. Furthermore, Somali Bantu parents were enrolled in ELL classes at local community colleges to learn the English language and acquire the ability to assist their children with homework at school. The researcher mentioned the teacher's referral to Iraqi immigrant

students who are doing exceptionally well without having been to the school system for an extensive period. However, Iraqi students have been exposed to formal schooling in their home countries and are proficient in their first language. Children who have trouble acquiring reading fluency in their L1 will also be able to experience the same challenges in acquiring the L2 if the orthography system of the two languages is different.

According to Cummins (1984), L2 learners can gain access to literacy skills acquired in the first language through cross-linguistic transfer and apply the same skills in acquiring L2 literacy. Though there have been growing numbers of L2 learners in the U.S. school system, the performance of students at school is lower in comparison to students whose L1 is English. In the Assessment of Educational Progress (2005), over two-thirds of students whose English is a second language scored lower in the standardized tests at the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade level when compared to the other students in their grade level. Cummins (1979) proposes Linguistics Interdependence Hypothesis to expand that for L2 learners to acquire literacy skills in their L2 successfully; students must have a certain level of literary proficiency in their L1. In this case, most Somali children are not fully literate in Somali, therefore, making it difficult to add a second language such as English.

### **Parental Involvement at Home and School across Grade Level**

Wang et al. (2014) conducted a study on the parental involvement of African American and European American adolescents in secondary school. The goal of the study was to evaluate how parental involvement impacted the academic, behavioral, emotional development of students. The total number of participants was 1400 teens, 51% female, 56% African American, 39% European American, and 5% were others. The grade level of students' ranges was 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>

and 11<sup>th</sup> grade. The findings of the study indicated that the quality of communication between school and home decreased as the grade level of students increased. Regarding African American parents and lower socioeconomic families, they have reported less communication between home and school. European American and higher socioeconomic parents reported more communication between home and school compared to African American parents. However, African American parents reported more structured home environments that facilitate success in school. African American parents linked education to the future more often but less preparation for independence among their children. European Americans and higher socioeconomic reported more independence opportunities for teenagers than African American teenagers. Regarding behavior, increased parental communication, creating a structured home environment, and linking success to education decreased teenagers' behavioral problems, the comparison between parental warmth towards adolescence showed that adolescents with parental warmth performed higher on their grades than those who did not experience parental warmth. Parental warmth association to behavior and performance proved to be true for all ethnic backgrounds as well as income levels.

Wang and Sheikh-Khalil (2014) conducted a study of parental involvement among parents of adolescents. The average age of students in the study was between 15-17 years old. The various factors analyzed in the study are school-based involvement, home-based involvement, and academic socialization. The sample of students in the study was a total of 1,056 students in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade of their high school career. 51% of the study participants were males; 53% were European American, 40% African American and 7% were other. African American parents showed more home-based involvement compared to European American

parents, (African American = 3.79 and European American = 3.65 small difference). However, European American parents were more school-based involved compared to African American parents (European American = 2.28 and African American = 1.56 bigger difference), regarding academic socialization, there was no significant parental involvement across ethnic differences found between African American and European parents. Furthermore, the study analyzed the socioeconomic status of families about home-based, and school-based involvement as well as academic socialization. The socioeconomic groups were further classified by high, moderate and low income using the expected average income for each family. The researchers excluded families that were considered to have a moderate income. The study found that higher income parents reported more home, and school-based involvement as well as academic socialization.

Deka (2016) conducted a unique study on the attitude of parents and students in the higher education. The sample of participants was a combination of 20 students from Pub Kamrup and Patidarrang College in India, along with their 40 parents, consisting of mother and father. All the students in the study are pursuing their undergraduate studies. The study used two instruments to collect the data: Questionnaires consisting of 15 questions for parents and 15 questions for students. The study investigated students' desire for parental involvement, parents' perception of parental involvement in higher education, as well as any present barriers to the involvement of parents in higher education. The findings of the study show that the combined ratios of Pub-Kamrup and Patidarrang College are that about 70% of students are in favor of parental involvement, and about 30% would prefer their parents not be involved with their education. About 68% of students seek parental advice during the high stakes decision-making process, whereas 32% make their own decisions without parental consultation. Eighty-five

percent of students believe that parental involvement enhances academic achievement, whereas 15% did not find it helpful. About 60% of students seek assistance from parents encountered in the educational setting. About 80% of students' state that parents are helpful in fulfilling psychological needs, 15% of students seek career guidance from parents and 10% for other activities.

Out of the parents interviewed, 95% expressed the importance of parental involvement in education. Seventy percent of parents state the desire to be involved with their child's education. Sixty-five percent assist their children with learning assistance, about 20% of parents' volunteer at their children's schools, 90% of parents provide advice to their children, but 10% believe that their children are old enough to make their own decisions. Forty percent of parents expressed concerns that higher education does not provide adequate opportunity for parental involvement in schools. Also, about 50% parents identified a communication gap between them and their children, and 10% of parents considered time constraints along with other factors as hindrances to parental involvement at the higher education level. The author suggestions are that parents should transmit positive attitude about education to their children from a young age all through higher education level. Parents must provide support when children seek help. Parents' involvement in school increases students' motivation concerning school. Parents should allow children to discuss their problems in a non-judgmental manner. Furthermore, parents should encourage successful school career.

### **The Difference between Voluntary and Involuntary Immigrants School Experience**

Extensive research shows that African American and African Heritage students' educational achievement is lower compared to other minority groups and European Americans,



particularly, the voluntary and involuntary waves of migration. Ogbu (2003) explained that involuntary immigrant groups experience a history deeply rooted in acts of oppression and racism. The presence of involuntary immigrants in the United States was a result of the system of slavery. Involuntary immigrants were not treated equally compared to the rest of the inhabitants at the time of their migration, and therefore, developed resistance to the White Eurocentric school system, so involuntary immigrants' academic performance in school may have suffered because of the history of slavery and resistance. On the other hand, voluntary immigrants like Somalis in the U.S. have the potential to succeed in the Eurocentric school system. Though Somalis encounter cultural differences, they have not experienced the extent of historical and racial discrimination similar to involuntary immigrants. Ogbu (2003) also reports that voluntary migrants, when compared to involuntary immigrants, believe differently about the value of Eurocentric education system. Some immigrant groups enforce the belief that the path to achieving the American dream is by way of education and learning the system from the source, which is the school system.

Wiggin (2007) explains that oppositional identity plays a role in the underperformance of African American/involuntary immigrant students. The argument is that Black American students avoid being label as "acting white" by other Black students by underperforming in school. Students seeking to be considered "in group" will purposely perform below their ability. Students who underperform in school invest their energy in sports and music as an alternative to academic achievement. Ogbu (2003) states that the negative pressure to underperform does not exist among other minorities as well as voluntary immigrants. Voluntary migrants are driven by peer pressure to succeed. According to Ogbu (2003) believed that the contributing factors of the

poor academic performance of some African American students are student-centered factors such as low ability, negative peer pressure, and avoidance of the label “acting white” and lack of parental involvement. For example, lack of parental involvement in a child’s education, low expectation of Black students by Black parents and higher expectations of white students by white parents. O’Bryan (2006) indicates that parental involvement in school improves work habits, attendance, and academic performance. Even though the research suggests African American parents are involved in their child’s education, the involvement is minimal compared to other minorities. Hayes (2012) conducted a study on the impact of parental involvement on African American teenagers. The researcher’s goal is to investigate factors that improve academic behavioral and attitude towards the schooling of African American teens in addition to improving school attendance of African American teenagers attending high school. The findings of the study reveal that the age of the teenagers had a negative impact on parental involvement. In fact, age, employment status and home involvement combined had an impact on students’ grades. The education level of parents had a positive correlation with parental involvement in school. Marital status had a positive impact on parent-school involvement. Teenagers performed better in school with increased age, married parents, and communication engagement that centered on the importance of education and learning. Home involvement predicted fewer days missed at school and fewer behavioral referrals.

Pinder (2010) conducted a comparative study between the performance of African American and African heritage students in high school. The study took place in Maryland, and the content under evaluation is chemistry. The combination of students was 18 Afro-Caribbean and 69 African American students. The findings of the study showed that Afro-Caribbean

students performed better in Chemistry compared to the African American students. The study found that parental encouragement to perform better in science courses became the major factor of different performance between African American and Afro-Caribbean students. Similarly, Fisher (2005), conducted a study with a total of 26 high school students representing African heritage. Fisher found that all the students whom the teacher identified as high achievers were immigrant parents from the Caribbean, Africa or second-generation U.S. citizen. Also, teachers classified these students as having strong parental support and high academic expectation.

Scott Graves (2010) analyzed the differences of African American male and female children about parental involvement. The sample students are at the entry level of schooling, and a predictor will be used to determine the performance of students in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The sample of students is specifically African American males and female children from the Kindergarten to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. A total number of participants are 2500, 1235 males, and 1205 females. About 41.3% of African American children live in a two-parent household. The result of the study showed that the main difference in achievement between African American males and females is the parental expectation. African American parents are involved with reading, doing activities with their children between Kindergarten and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. However, there is a decline in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, African American parents had a higher academic expectation from males compared to females.

**Parental involvement of voluntary immigrants.** Turney and Kao (2009) focused an investigation of barriers that hinder minority immigrant parents from the participation of parental involvement in school. The study compares the parental involvement of native-born parents to minority immigrant parents. The sample students were transitioning to Kindergarten. According

to Dockett and Perry (2007), there are three main changes children experience during the transition from home to school, which are changes in identity, learning school conduct and curiosity about their growth. Of the native-born parents; 63% were White, 12% Black and 6% Hispanic. Regarding immigrant parents; 4% foreign-born white, 4% Asian and 10% Hispanic. 51% of the children were male. Twenty-seven percent came from unmarried parents. There were two adults in the household and about two children. About 45% of mothers were employed full time, 23% of mothers were employed part-time, and 32% were not employed. 91% were able to complete the interview in English completely, and a handful of parents completed the interview in another language. Most parents reported that they attended parent-teacher conferences, but fewer parents participated in Parent Teacher Organizations and other activities. Fifty-one percent of parents reported that employment demands hinder them from school involvement. About 4% of parents indicated transportation issues as barriers to school involvement, 55% reported one or two barriers to school involvement and 18% reported no barriers to school involvement. Almost all minority groups reported having experienced barriers to school involvement compared to white, native-born parents. The only exception to that is minority parents are less likely to have childcare barriers compared to white parents. Minority groups tend to have strong support network childcare needs.

Turney and Kao (2009) found that immigrant Hispanic parents reported language was a barrier to school involvement. Native-born Hispanic parents reported barriers in inconvenient meeting times, transportation and safety to be among the barriers to school involvement. Native-born Black parents reported feeling unwelcome at the school and lack of transportation as a barrier. Asian foreign-born parents reported feeling unwelcomed at their child's school. The

main barriers reported by parents of all races feeling unwelcomed, transportation, inconvenient meeting times, feeling unsafe. Native-born Black parents faced more barriers to school involvement than native-born Whites. Native-born Hispanics and Asians experienced similar barriers to native-born whites. In addition to all the barriers experienced by other parents, immigrant parents also experienced language barriers. Almost all minority immigrant parents experienced a barrier to school involvement except for native-born Asian parents. Asian native-born parents were as likely to participate in school as White-native parents. For foreign-born parents, time spent in the States and English language ability positively correlated with school involvement. It appears that Hispanics assimilated to the American culture the longer they remained in the states and found it easier to get involved in school. On the contrary, as Blacks spend more time in the states, they feel uncomfortable getting involved in school activities.

#### **Differences between One-Child Only vs. Children with Siblings School Performance**

Wei, Wu, Lv, Zhou, Han, Liu, and Luo (2016) determined to investigate the underlying factors of higher academic achievement of one-child families' students compared to children with siblings in China. There was 625 sample of students from three different elementary schools. 312 boys and 313 girls. 397 students represented an only-child family, and 228 were more than one-child family. The parent participants were 216 fathers and 409 mothers. The average age of students was 11 years old, and the average age of parents was 38 years old. Parents completed a parental involvement questionnaire with a scale ranging between 1 and 4. The number 1 represented never, and four indicated always. The five categories of the parental involvement scale were parent-school contact; parent-child communication, learning assistance, parent-child activity and home mentoring. Regarding family income and parents' education, one-

child-only families had higher income, one child only students scored higher on academic achievements in comparison to children with siblings. Additionally, one child only parents had a higher educational achievement compared to parents of more than one child. As far as parental involvement is concerned, parents with one child only were more involved with their child's schooling compared to parents with more than one child in school. Also, a parent with one child had a higher parent-child communication and learning assistance compared to parents with more than one child.

Wei et al. (2016) further explain that increase parent-school contact had a negative impact on a non-only child because parents used performance in school as a determining factor of frequency parent-school contact. Thus, the poorer a child performed in school, the more visits parents made to school and teachers. Not only child parents with higher achieving children made less frequent parent-school contact. However, parent-school contact correlated with a higher academic achievement for an only child. Only child parents made the same frequencies with school contact regardless of the performance of their child. The study indicated that there was no correlation between parent-child communications of non-only child families. However, only-child showed higher achievement through increased parent-child communication.

Tsui and Rich (2002), explain that only child benefits from parent-child communication because only-child parents have higher educational aspirations for the children compared to parents with multiple children. Therefore, only-child parents can instill the values and beliefs they hold through parent-child communication sessions. This form of communication helps only-child learn the expectations of their parents and devise a plan to achieve higher in school. In contrast, there is a shared communication during parent-child communication in families with

more than one child. Furthermore, the study revealed that parent-child activities have a positive impact on child's academic achievement compared to non-only child families. The research explains that this is due to the one-on-one attention that occurs with only child families compared to families with more than one child. Furthermore, the quality of parent-child activities is more important than quantity.

### **The Influence of Culture on Parental Involvement**

Regardless of parents' education and socioeconomic status, culture can hinder parental involvement in school. For example, Isk-Ercan (2010) conducted a study on the parental involvement of a group of highly educated, high-income Turkish-American parents living in the States. The researcher found Turkish-American parents enforced academic work they encountered in their home countries but disregarded any new practices. When Turkish-American parents attempted to form a relationship with school personnel, their approach was not acceptable to the American teachers. Culturally, Turkish parents consider teachers part of the family. However, this close type of a relationship with teachers isn't welcomed by American teachers due to culture and laws in the school system. Thus, Turkish-American parents who were educated and affluent experienced disengagement with the school system because of varying perspective on the parent-teacher relationship.

Malone (2015) suggests schools should approach cultural parents with a welcoming atmosphere, effective communication, and cultural celebration in school activities. Regarding culturally diverse students, Larocque, Kleiman, and Darling (2011) found that teachers did not find minority students more difficult to manage, however, there were cultural differences in the perception of authority in the classroom. In some cultures, the teacher is responsible for

addressing all issues that occur on school premises ranging from discipline and learning. Similarly, parents are responsible for all occurrences that take place outside of the school grounds such as making sure the children attend school, complete their homework, and provide children with the necessary materials for school. Therefore, this concept led some teachers to believe that these parents do not desire to be involved in their children's education.

**Somali parenting style.** Renzaho, Green, Mellor, and Swinburn (2011) conducted a study regarding the parenting styles of the African immigrant community migrating to the Affluent Western countries. The particular research setting was Victoria, Australia. The study technique was based on interview question format. A translator was present between the researchers and the African immigrant parents. The first African American immigrant parenting principle emphasized the importance of obedience to their children. Parents said that at early age children are taught to be obedient to adults. The second African immigrant parenting principle promotes a collective approach practices. The third African Immigrant parenting principle is to heavily supervise the behavior and environment of their children. Children are not able to persuade or negotiate their parents' perspectives or decisions. The fourth African immigrant parenting principle is disciplining and reward. Regarding disciplining negative behaviors parents do not always follow through with their proposed consequences for bad behavior but often reward positive behaviors.

Family roles in the African household in evolving through the opportunities as well as deficits of relocation and immigration. Traditionally, in a two parent home with mother and father, the father is the main provider, and the mother maintains the caretaking duties and the household responsibilities. Parents divide the household chores based on gender, assigning the



heavy lifting duties to the boys and cleaning and cooking for the girls. Major decisions were made by the head of household; if a father was present, otherwise, those responsibilities shifted towards the mother. The role of the mother in the African community is to nurture the children. The role of the father is to discipline and teach values to their children; fathers also spend much time in social gatherings at African markets to discuss the latest news and politics. However, African immigrant fathers are struggling to balance their responsibility towards their children and socialization habits with other community members which is an African tradition.

African immigrant parents expressed concerns about the health issues that can result from the convenient transportation system and types of food exposures that came with living in Victoria, Australia. The children of the parents prepare meals at home. However, their children developed a strong desire to consume fast food regularly. In the home country, most families ate fresh vegetables, milk, and fruits. African immigrant families considered meat the heart of the meal. Back in their home countries, African parents were active, washing clothes by hand, walking long distances. African immigrant parents kept their children from playing outside with peers and closely monitor the movement of their children limiting the physical activities that a child can gain. Traditionally, parents allowed their children to leave home for a long period without the concern for safety.

Nilsson, Barazanji, Heinzelman, Siddiqi, and Shilla (2012) conducted a qualitative study interviewing Somali mothers about their reflection on the adjustment of their children in the United States society. The study contained 24 Somali women ranging between ages 22-58 years. The study included Somali and Somali Bantu women. The period spent in the states are between 6 months to 12 years. All the participants had at least one child. The women experienced cultural

differences, for example, the responsibility of watching over children was shared by the whole community in Somali culture, contrary to American culture. Parents of Somali children attend classes and pursue careers while grandparents shared responsibilities of caring for the children. A second concern for parents regarding their children is a loss of respect. The women felt that their children were more respectful in Somalia. The loss of respect also affected teachers. Parents report that previously physical force as a form of discipline was used on children. However, children have learned to threaten parents by calling the police to avoid all forms of punishment. Parents have developed a fear of disciplining their children. Somali mothers felt that the U.S. school system, as well as law enforcement, misunderstood their efforts to foster the well-being of their children. The Somali mothers expressed that the only two options their children have are to become great students in school or resort to drugs. Somali mothers expressed the desire for their children to attend college and attain a better life in the future.

### **Successful and Unsuccessful Models of Home-Based Parental Involvement**

The literary work of Shirley Heath (1983) discuss the issue of narrative skills at home and school. The author explains the concept of “ways of taking,” and that is children learn to take from their environment and the faculties that are made available to them by their parents or guardians. Homes that are school-oriented provide children the opportunities to explore and expand the academic horizons expected in school. However, homes that are different from the school environment may provide fewer opportunities to succeed in school. School-oriented homes interact with their children through models and specifications that support the educational expectations of the school culture. The author studied three communities that are different in their home-based literary culture. The first group lives in Main-town, a middle-class society,

Road-Ville, a white working-class neighborhood, and Trackton, a working-class black community. The data showed that “Maintown” neighborhood children were most successful in school. However, Roadville and Trackton neighborhood children failed in school despite the community’s emphasis on the high value of education and the belief of school as the way of getting their children ahead to social mobility. The differences between these societies begin as early as the preschool years.

**Maintown: A middle-class group.** In Maintown, the middle-class mainstream school oriented societies, bedtime story through book reading is a widely participated routine for middle-class families. Bedtime stories are taking place after the adults have completed any distractions that may interfere with providing interaction to their child’s literacy needs. Through bedtime stories, parents adapt the environment of children to the school environment. When the homes of the middle-class families were observed the author reported as early as six months of age, children were familiar with books. The rooms of the children have characters of the books on their wall. There were visible decorations on the wall and around the room of characters of books. From the age of six months and forward, adults use questions to encourage students to discuss ideas from the book. For example; “What is that? Who is that? Adults also used nonverbal cues for students who are not able to fully express their thoughts verbally. In book reading children are also taught acceptable rules such as books should not be torn, unnecessarily drawn on, or destroyed. Furthermore, adults use this early age to connect book reading to success in school. Adults stated that the children’s books are more diverse and challenging to read. Children whose parents are reading to at a very young age attend school knowing how to answer “what” questions in class. Mainstream school oriented children have learned the faculties of

book, literature, reading, and ways of making meaning from a text before entering the school system. Also, children have also acquired behaviors and patterns of interaction in a school environment at home.

**White working-class group.** In Roadville, a White working-class neighborhood, when the child comes home, the first thing that the adult does is speak to the child. During book reading sessions adults focused on the main character of the book with minimal attention to text and detail. For example, adults who read a book about ducks to a child would emphasize the color, height, and characteristics of the picture of the duck, and follow up questions would have you ever seen a duck in real life, a question posed to the child. Adults felt that details and explanations would be too hard for children to understand. Therefore, providing minimal explanations and simplifications of information during reading sessions. Roadville children had a difficulty sitting through a session of a book reading in preschool. Teachers spent class time reminding students to stay on task during reading, be a quest and pay attention. This was different from Maintown neighborhood preschool children whose teachers did not address behavioral problems such as staying on task during a reading session. Roadville adults did not provide real-life context to the books they read to children. Roadville children do well in the early grades in school; however, as their grade level progresses, children need a great amount of guidance and support from their teacher to complete the required assignment. The children are less likely to perform well in creative thinking, comparisons between two events and retell stories. After the third grade, Roadville children displayed difficulties in behaving well in school, following rules, the decline in grades and less likelihood of knowing how to ask for help from teachers and other adults.

**Trackton: Working class black group.** Trackton, a Black working class neighborhood, the adults in this community believe that children learn through coming across the experience. Adults are not to teach specific task but are to place the child in the experience, and the child learns. Children learn to play with words and create their rhythm by listening to adults talk. From an early stage, children can crawl and move around their environment freely. During this time, children get to experience and learn about the objects in their environment. In the Trackton preschool, children tell stories through their memories from experiences. Children discuss emotional reactions to the events of a story. Storytelling had no beginning, climax or a resolution and the children can continue to tell the story until they have no audience left in the seating. This causes the storytellers to be assertive and aggressive in gaining their audience's attention when telling a story. In school, Trackton children struggled because the adults did not teach the label for things, names of objects, and develop language on their own. Due to the contrasting features of the homes and school culture of the Trackton neighborhood, children score low on standardized reading tests, do not identify names, colors, and labels accurately. They are unable to sit at their desks for a long period to complete reading activities. Trackton children struggle to create meaning from reading. Children often struggle with writing and understanding the relationship between reading and writing. Generally, by the fourth grade, Trackton students failed to learn the content materials in school. Additionally, Trackton students display major behavioral issues in school except for students who accustomed themselves to the school rules and expectations. By the sixth grade, Trackton children who have not adapted to the school environment consider other alternatives such as seek membership to peer-organized groups.

The studies above are diverse and encompass many dynamics of parental involvement such as; parental involvement, parental involvement and conflict management strategies used by teachers, parental involvement and efforts made by school administration to engage with parents, parents' own education, and student's success in school, parental involvement at home and school across grade level, the difference between voluntary and involuntary immigrants school experiences, differences between one-Child only vs. children with siblings school performance, the influence of culture on parental involvement, successful and unsuccessful models of home-based parental involvement. The researcher will use the concepts learned from the literature review to formulate open-ended interview questionnaire and survey to conduct the study on Somali parental involvement. Unfortunately, the literature available on Somali parental involvement is minimal. Therefore, studies from other minority and ethnic groups are used as a supplement for the literature review portion of the thesis.

### **Chapter III: Research Methodology**

#### **Participants**

Participants in the study were a combination of five Somali male and five Somali female parents whose children attend the Public-school district. According to Patton (1990), qualitative data calls for the in-depth purposeful selection of participants using a small sample case with rich information. For the validity of the research, it is vital that both male and female perspectives are analyzed. Analyzing the different perspectives assist in the production of reliable data. The age range of the parents was between the ages 30 through 50. Participants had resided in the United States for a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 15 years. The time that the parents spent in the United States was not significant in this research. However, the greatest number of Somali immigrants who are coming directly to the United States diminished about 3 years ago. There has not been an influx of immigration since 2015. This is due to some changes to the process and procedures of immigration sponsorships. Additionally, a minimum of 3 years provided the participants with rich information and experience to acculturate and transform within the school district. The minimum number of children that the participants had were two and, in some cases, a maximum number of 10 children by participants in varying levels of education. The education levels of the parents ranged from Elementary through High School and some with no formal schooling. All the male participants were employed outside of the home. In contrast, half of the female participants were staying at home mothers, except for single mother participants who worked outside the home.

## **Instruments and Procedures**

The instrument consisted of structured, in-depth face to face, one-on-one interview sessions with the researcher using open-ended questions for participants to elaborate, also, each question had two possible follow up questions. Regarding the development of the research questions, the researcher used Grolnick et al. (1994) definition of parental involvement and the researched information in the literature review was used to formulate appropriate interview questions. These questions were used to elicit responses from Somali parents concerning their experience with the school district, communication with the teachers, interaction with their children, and the environment their children reside. Additionally, the follow-up questions have been used to elicit more information that has not been produced with the original question. After the interview, the researcher formulated patterns and themes that were common and categorized them together using key phrases. At the interview session, background information was collected from the participants regarding the number of years lived in the U.S., highest level of education, some children in school and the levels of children's education. There were 11 original interview questions, and 22 follow up questions. Participants were interviewed privately in private on-campus room, with no distractions. The length of time of the interview session was between 30 and 60 minutes depending on the depth of responses from participants.

Interviews were recorded using a password protected device. Afterward, the recordings were downloaded to a password-protected computer. During the interview session, field notes were taken in a notebook. The researcher brought a notebook and pen/pencil to the interview. The field notes were only used for key points that the interviewer thought would be useful for questioning and data. Then the researcher listened to the recorded interviews individually and



transcribed them word for word. The transcribed interviews were also saved to a secure password protected device.

During the recruitment for the interview process, the researcher used networking and references to find participants. A flyer was given to the neighbors and potential Somali parents whose children are in the school district. The process of finding participants ten participants was easy; however, once the researcher explained to the participants that the interview would be recorded, many participants declined to participate. Others asked for background information on the study and agreed to set up a time to read the consent form and decide to participate in the study. At the time of the meeting, the researcher explained to the participants how the interview would be conducted, the identity of the participants would be protected, and the research will be used to better understand the school and home-based parental involvement of Somali parents. The participants agreed to sign the consent form and proceed with the interview questions. The participants were given the interview questions and the survey for review. The researcher explained to the participants each question in Somali to non-English speaking participants. There were no interpreters at the session. Researcher fluently speaks Somali and English. The researcher also answered any questions regarding the study for the participants. Some of the interview session took place in Somali for participants who spoke Somali. There was no compensation made for the participation of the study. Participation in the study was completely voluntary.

## **Data Analysis Procedure**

This is a qualitative study that adopts the grounded theory approach in analyzing the gathered data. Before collecting the data for this study, the researcher has no preconceived notions, and no hypothesis has been made. According to Mackey and Gass (2016) in grounded theory, the data is the guide used to analyze the research question from different angles (p. 231). To allow for variations of data, the researcher prepared a survey as well as sets of open-ended interview questions to ask participants. The researcher can generate many responses from the participants and can formulate themes and patterns according to groups of responses. The researcher used codes to represent each participant, so all the materials used in the interview were coded differently for each participant. During the interview, the researcher made field notes. The researcher also transcribed the interview sessions. During the transcription period, the researcher made notes of any points that may be possible themes.

The researcher read the transcripts and highlighted themes that occurred in all the interviews. Additionally, the researcher used graphs, and charts to represent information that may be easier represented visually than writing. The interviews were coded using open coding. Mackey and Gass (2016) state that open coding is grounded in the qualitative data. The researcher closely examined the patterns that are emerging from the sets of data and determines the variation in each category (p. 137).

Once the sets of statements that will be used in the research have been established, the data was given to the individuals for member checking. When the participants have approved their statements, and any requested changes have been made, the data will be included in the research.

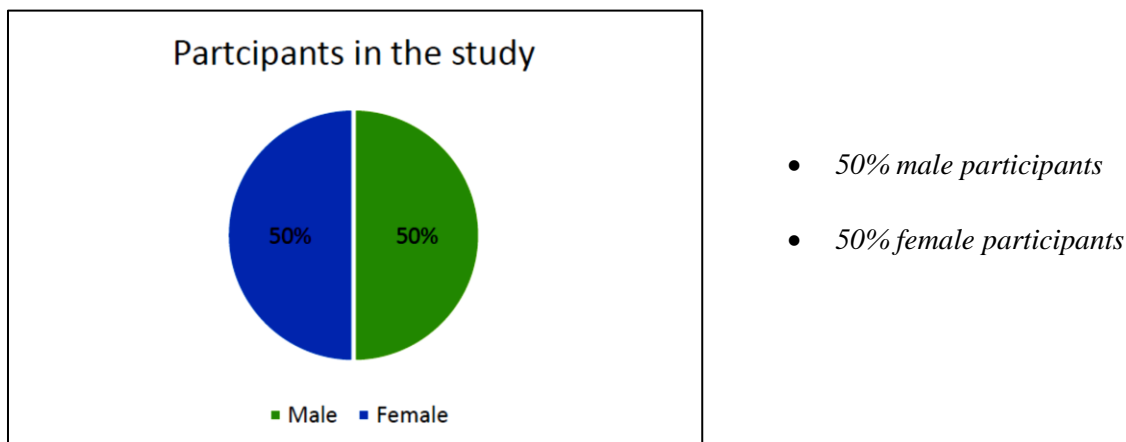
## **Chapter IV: Discussion/Findings**

Through the data Analysis session, there are several identified themes and patterns related to home and school-based parental involvement. The findings will be discussed in the following sections. Responses from the interview sessions will be used as evidence to support the identified themes. The researcher identified ten major themes; concerns about racialization, concerns about their children's academic skills, collectivism and Sibling support system, Somali parents have a strict parenting style, Somali children experience cultural shock in school, and Somali parents expressed issues with school bus, employment, and language barrier as obstacles to school involvement, great relationship with the school faculty, reading and Writing proved to be challenging subjects for students, Somali parents have High Aspirations for their children.

Before the beginning of the interview session, parents took a survey regarding the number of years lived in the States, a parent level of education, number of children in school, and the stages of their children's education. The results have been gathered in a pie chart and are reported as follows.

### **Question 1: What is the Gender Combination in this Study?**

In this study, it was very important to the researcher that a balanced number of gender combination were interviewed. The interviewees consisted of a combination of five male and five female parents whose children attend the K-12 public school and some children in higher education.



**Figure 1:** A representation of the percent of male and female participants in the study.

For this study, having a balanced representation of both male and female is important because it provides rich information that is a representative of a wider perspective to the researcher. However, the conclusion in this study yields that there is no significant difference between genders in matters regarding parental involvement, however, the method of involvement between male and female parents was significantly different. The researcher analyzed that Somali male parents were less likely to use a translator when communicating with teachers. Additionally, in two-parent homes, fathers who spoke the English language were more school-based involved, whereas, mothers', speakers of English or not, were more home-based involved, with the exception of single mothers who were involved at home and school simultaneously. Furthermore, the male participants had more educational years compared to the female participants in the study.

Table 1

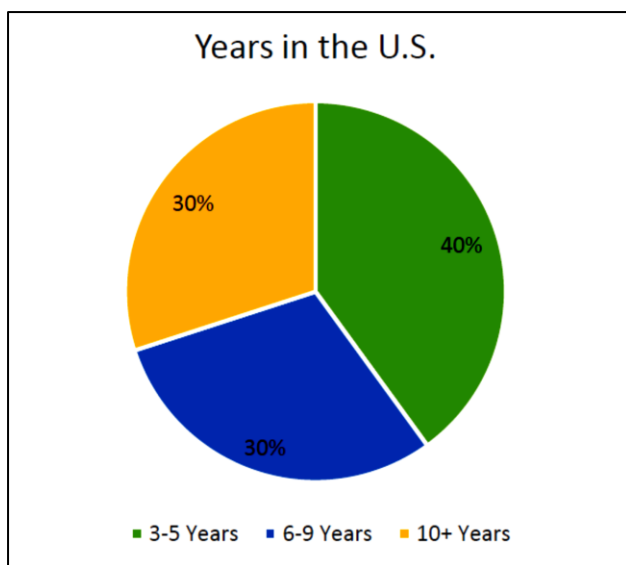
*Code and Gender Identification Table*

Code	Gender: Female (F) Male (M)
1. Participant <u>A</u>	F
2. Participant B	F
3. Participant C	F
4. Participant D	M
5. Participant E	M
6. Participant F	M
7. Participant G	F
8. Participant H	M
9. Participant I	M
10. Participant J	F

Readers of this thesis are encouraged to use the code and gender combination to analyze the statements from the data. Each participant is represented in a code format and followed with gender specification letter; “F” for female and “M” for male participants. There is no specific strategy used in the sequencing of participants from A-J. The researcher labeled participants in the order they were interviewed during the interview session.

**Question 2: How Many Years have You Lived in the United States?**

Though the number of years in the U.S. did not nullify some parents from participating in this study, the knowledge of such information increased the depth and experiences of the parents in this study.



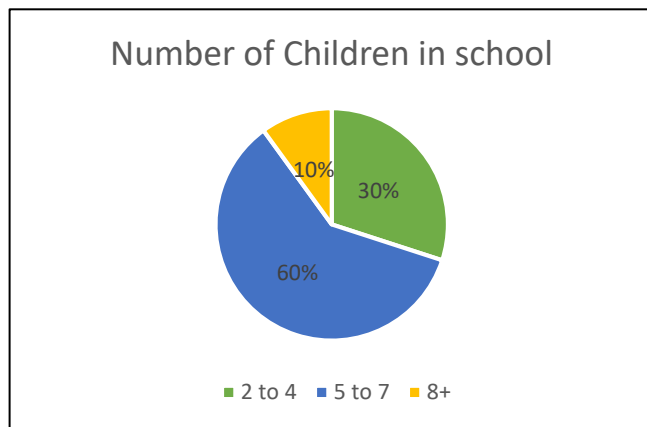
- 40% in the U.S. 3-5 Yrs.
- 30% in the U.S. 6-9 Yrs.
- 30% in the U.S. 10+ Yrs.

**Figure 2:** Of the parents interviewed four out of 10 lived in the U.S. between 3-5 years, three of the parents lived in the United States between 6-9 years and three out of 10n parents lived in the U.S. for over 10 years.

The number of years a participant lived in the U.S. was significant in this study because the researcher wanted to analyze if there are variations in parental involvement based on the time spent in the U.S. The research shows that the number of years in the U.S. impact the strategies and resources that parents employ to help their children with assignments. For example; some of the parents were able to hire paid tutoring services for their children. Sophisticated tutoring services were common among parents who lived in the U.S. longer compared to recently arrived families. Additionally, English language ability did not improve based on the number of years in the States. Educational experiences were more significant to English language ability. The language ability did not correlate with the number of years in the United States. The researcher interviewed parents who resided in the States for over ten years and had limited English language ability. On the contrary, some of the parents who lived in the States for three years and spoke mutually intelligible English.

### Question 3: How Many Children Do You have in the School?

It was important for the researcher to know the number of children in school, considering the small number of parents interviewed for this study, parents with more children in the school provided richer experiences regarding the school culture.



- 2-4 years: 30%
- 5-7 years: 60%
- 8+ years: 10%

**Figure 3:** Of the parents interviewed, six out of 10 parents had five to seven children in the school system, three parents had between two to four children in the school system, and one parent had eight children attending school.

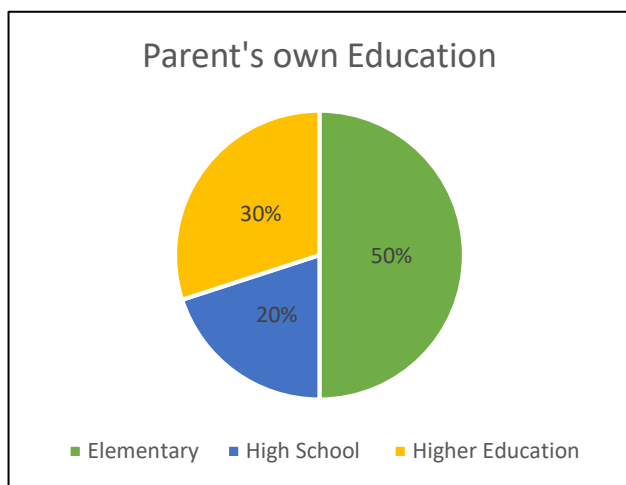
The participants in this study had many children in school. The levels of children in school represented preschool all through college. This dynamic was sometimes present in families, whereas, most of the parents had children from preschool through high school. This is excellent for questionnaire research because families can provide the researcher with a wide range of in-depth information stemming from the experiences encountered with their children of all age groups. In the Somali community, large family dynamics are common, particularly with first generation Somalis.

A study by Wei et al. (2016) states that in China a child with siblings achieves lower academic performances compared to only-child families. In the case of China, only-child parents had a higher education so that they can support their children academically, only-child parents

had a higher income because they had fewer children to support, only-child parents had frequent individualized contact with their child. On the contrary, children with siblings possibly perform better in school because older siblings play the role of the nurture/parent to younger siblings by helping each other with homework.

#### **Question 4: What is the Parents' Education Level?**

The literature review of the study discussed the importance of parents own education as a factor that can contribute or hinder children's motivation towards pursuing higher education.



- *50% elementary level Education*
- *20% high school level education*
- *30% Higher level education*

**Figure 4:** Of the parents interviewed five out of 10 had elementary education level, two out of 10 had a high school level education and three out of 10 are in the process of pursuing higher education.

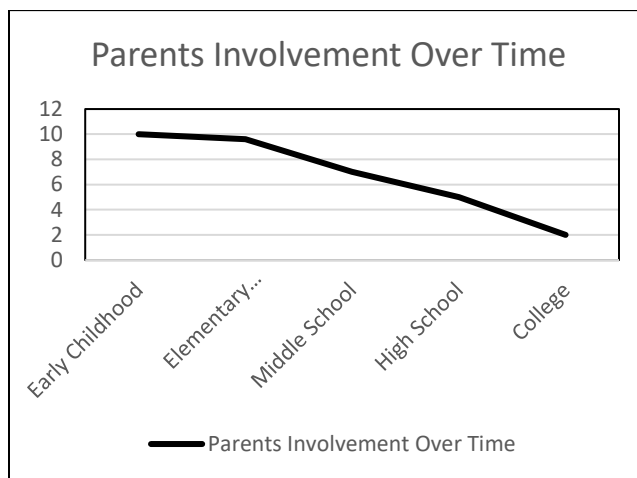
The range of parents' education extended from informal theological studies that were difficult to categorize due to its complex levels. So, all the Somali parents mentioned attending "Dugsi." A Dugsi is a theology school that people attend to study the biblical teachings of the Quran, the holy book of Islam. However, regarding formal secular education, five of the parents have elementary level education, two of the parents have a high school education, and three of the parents are currently pursuing a college education.



Bui and Rush (2016) examined the relationship between college attendance among students and the education level of parents. The study found that students whose parents held at least a bachelor's degree were over 50% more likely to pursue higher education. Students whose parents lacked a college education and students whose parents had some college education were over 20% more likely to pursue a college education compared to parents who lacked a college education. However, the distinguishing factor among all the students in the study who attended college was the parents' expectation and encouragement of their children to pursue a college education.

#### **Question 5: What is the Parents' Level of Involvement across Grade Levels?**

The researcher needed to examine at what education level are parents more and less involved with their children's education between Early Childhood through College.



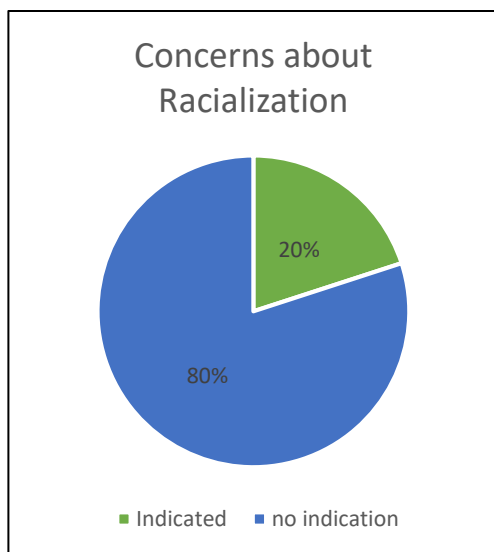
**Figure 5:** Of the parents interviewed, all of them expressed being involved during early childhood. However, the level of involvement began to severely decline in high school and through college.

Participants shared that they are involved in their children's education throughout their school career in various ways. During early childhood, Somali parents know the names of the teachers of their children and check the book bags of their children after school to check for any

communication sheets and assignments. This behavior continues through Elementary school but slightly diminishes at an Elementary school. In middle school, parents are involved with their children's education through communication with the teacher and dependency on the children to complete their homework with slight reminders and reinforcement. In high school, parents are involved but not consistently communicating with teachers and allowing children to be more independent at school, but are involved at home through monitoring friends, social activities and making sure children are getting to school on time. In college, parents allow their children to be fully independent with minimal home involvement.

**Theme One: Somali Parents Expressed Concerns about the Racialization of Somali Students**

When parents were asked about some of the concerns they have about their children's obstacles among their social groups and peers, some of the parents expressed concerns about racialization in school.



- *20% Reported about racialization*
- *80% not concern about racialization*

**Figure 6:** Two out of 10 parents had racialization concerns.

**Participant H, M:** Participant H states that there are many issues faced by the Somali youth, they feel that they are lower than the other students academically, as well as socially. Children may see the color of their skin as inferior to those who have a lighter complexion.

According to a study mentioned in the literature review by Bigelow (2007) particularly Somali male youth experience a lot of challenges due to the color of their skin. Among the issues is racial profiling. An additional study by Ajrouch and Kusow (2007) continues to explain that concern for many Somali parents is the tendency for Somali youth to take on the culture and attitude of the Black youth culture and leaving behind their home culture.

**Participant H, M:** Participant H said that the Somali children take the negative aspects of the American school culture, Somali students easily leave behind the teachings of the home culture and values of the school, the children did not take the academic values, but they took on the attitudes of the pop culture, they act on the perceived culture of blackness...Somali male students are sagging their pants, growing out their hair and persistently using foul language.

This is consistent with the findings of Ajrouch and Kusow (2007) who confirms that Somali parents are concerned about the tendency of Somali youth to take on the fashion, music, and attitude of the Black youth. Additionally, Somali youth are learning African American vernacular to gain group membership among their peers

Due to these concerns researchers such as Goodwin (2017) suggests that schools can make the transition easier for students who are struggling with issues of racialization, and identity by making changes to the curriculum and design a culturally responsive instruction, increase of students of color, and educators should learn about the respective student population in their classroom.

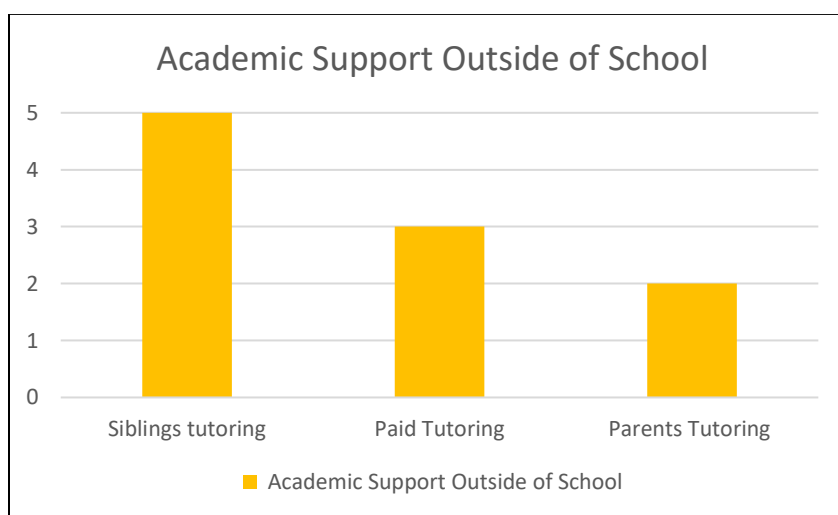
**Participant G, F:** Participant F states that they teach their children to behave well in school because she wants to enforce the positive image of the Somali Identity.

The concerns that this participant shared about preserving a positive image of the Somali students by teaching his children proper behavior and conducting behavioral management strategy is consistent with the reports of Bigelow (2007) in which students stated that teachers in class would redirect their behavior by reminding that this is not Somalia. The children felt that they had to be defensive of their Somali identity. Whereas, others saw their identity as less than their peers who are in the classroom. Therefore, Somali parents want to be aware of their children's behavior and manage it so that they are not being categorized as negative behavior.

### **Theme Two: Somali Parents Concern about Their Children's Academic Skills**

The parents that were interviewed in this study were all concerned about the academic progress of their children. Discussing items such as state exams, homework, and extra assistance.

The bar graph below demonstrates the dynamic of off-campus support systems that parents are using to strengthen the educational development of their children.



**Figure 7:** About five out of 10 parents expressed using siblings as tutors, three out of 10 parents paid for tutoring and two out of 10 parents tutored their children on a regular basis.

**Participant B, F:** Participant F said that they used to take her daughter to someone that had better academic skills to help her daughter with homework.

**Participant F, M:** Participant F stated that his children have intervention programs in school, there are teachers that are helping to ease some of the difficult coursework...he said that he helps his children with their homework when he is available, some of the homework can be difficult for home, but at least he tries... Reading and writing are difficult for him.

**Participant A, F:** Participant F states that they take their children to Kumon center to build academic skills and work on their homework.

Bower and Griffin (2011) conducted a study at a high minority lower income families elementary school, the results of the study showed that parents who attempted to help their children with their homework were extremely frustrated because the methods used to teach their children was different than the one their parents learned at school. Therefore, in the case of Somali parents, the only option to ensure their children are successful with their homework is to seek paid tutoring services or help from other members of the family and friends.

### **Theme Three: Collectivism and Sibling Support System**

In the Somali culture, there are many analogies that parents use to teach and instill values of collectivism between siblings'. There are limited opportunities for individualized ventures, and any such ideas are discouraged. One of the most famous Somali proverbs used is “farkaliya folmamaydho” this loosely translates to “one cannot wash their teeth with just one finger” citation so basically, one needs to use the effort and energy of all of the fingers to hold the toothbrush and clean ones’ teeth. Similarly, Somali parents depend on the efforts brought forth

by other siblings to support the learning development of their children. Younger siblings rely heavily on the older siblings to mediate difficult coursework.

**Participant D, M:** Participant D states that their children, help each other with the homework.

**Participant A, F:** Participant A states that her older daughter helps her younger siblings with their homework.

Wang, Hill, and Hofkins (2014) African American parents connected the success of the future to the well-developed educational background. However, their children were less equipped for independence from their families and among each other. Similarly, Somali families link the connection between education and success in the future. However, there is more dependency among siblings for academic support. Moreover, European American families linked success to education and emphasized independence and individual achievement. This is opposite to the Somali parents' style of upbringing who linked success in school to the collective effort. Somali parents rely on siblings to support each other's educational development.

#### **Theme Four: Somali Parents have a Strict Parenting Style**

Somali parents discussed being involved with their children in the home environment. Somali parents managed their children's time, friends, school, and their leisure activities.

**Participant B, F:** Participant B said that she has an allotted time for her children to do homework, once the homework is completed then they can go to sleep.

**Participant C, F:** Participant C manages the time of her children, they like to watch TV, but she diverts their attention from that by bringing them to the study room where they are monitored, the participant states that it is better to monitor the children during study time.

**Participant F, M:** Participant F wants their children to know that they are involved, the teachers to rely on him when it comes to his children, there are times that he sits with his children and times they are unaware of his visit to the school, the participant behaves this way so that he can observe his children. When they come home, he has scheduled time for everything, a time to do homework, etc.

**Participant H, M:** Participant H states that there are influences such as social media that are impacting the learning opportunities of the Somali children. He manages his children through a schedule, he manages their phones, creates a study session for his children at home and emphasise time management.

**Participant I, M:** Participant I states that during the study hours in the home, there no traces of technology usage in his home. He and his wife turn off all electronic devices until the children have been helped with their school work.

**Participant J, F:** Participant J states that If her children misbehave, there will be no TV in the home, the only time that television will be used is if homework is finished and good behavior is established in the home.

Renzaho, Green, and Swinburn (2011) discovered that Somali parents are strict with their children, Somali parents heavily supervised their children in their homes. This is consistent with the findings of Wang and Sheikh-Khalil (2014) similarly African American parents are more involved with their children in the home compared to European American parents. Parents mentioned that there are technological gadgets such as television, phones, as well as video games in the home that can be disruptive to the educational development of the children. However, they manage these devices by scheduling a time to use them; technological devices are also used as

rewards for behaving well and restricted during negative behaviors. Renzaho, Green, Mellor, and Swinburn (2011) found that African immigrant parents use discipline and reward behavioral management strategies. Regarding disciplining negative behaviors parents do not always follow through with their proposed consequences for bad behavior but often reward positive behaviors. The combination of using technology as a reward system for good behavior shapes the children's mentality that the more well behaved you are the more likely users will interact with the technological devices in the home. This form of thinking forces children to gain an attachment to technology. Though Somali parents are against the excessive use of technology in the home, the use of technology as a reward reinforces only the positive elements of technological devices that may hinder the learning opportunities in the home. Additionally, parents' usage of excessive threats to punish negative behavior can create more negative behaviors because the parent is not consistent with the proposed consequence. A reasonable explanation for threats that lack consequence is the number of children that parents are monitoring daily.

#### **Theme Five: Somali Children Experience Culture Shock in School**

The parents I interviewed discussed some challenges experienced in the process of adapting to the school culture. After reinforcement and practices, however, the families adapted well and thrived in the school community.

**Participant D, M:** Participant D states that at the beginning his children were unfamiliar with the school system, moving from one class to another was also a challenging transition because the children are used to staying in one class all day, and the teachers alternated.

**Participant B, F:** Participant B states that her younger daughter who was in preschool had a difficulty adjusting at the beginning because she wanted to play with her peers and reach



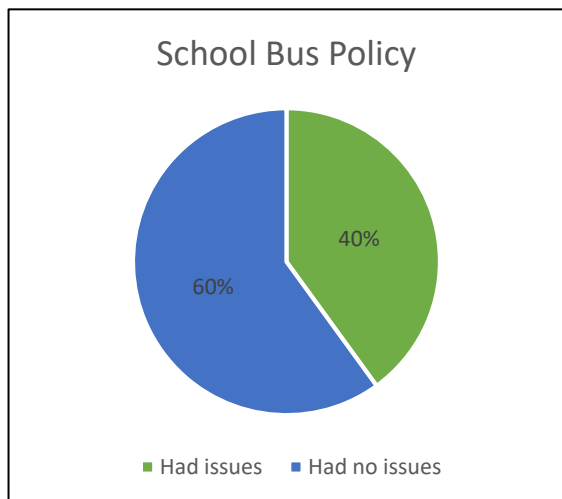
out to students' hands as a form of playing and interacting, but the behavior was addressed at home. Also, adjusting to light skin complexion of her daughter's white teachers and the white community was difficult for her child because of the unfamiliarity with the people, but now she would much rather spend time with a white person than anyone else, she plays with her white neighbors all the time.

**Participant C, F:** Participant C states that she taught her children to act at school as is expected by the teachers and when they come home, her children should do as is expected by the parents. The participant said that there are some students who use bad language at school, but that language is learned elsewhere not in the classroom, there are only positive things that the students are learning at school.

Somali parents expressed their encounters with cultural issues, the children, however, adapted as they were forced to interact with the hosting community. One of the most difficult situations regarded a parent who was involved with their child and risked having their child taken away due to weight concerns. According to a study by Renzaho, Green, Mellor, and Swinburn (2011) African families prepare their meals at home, but the children would much rather eat fast food. Meat is the heart of the African meal and children are not as physically active as they were in their home country. This results in a sedentary lifestyle that parents know will lead to weight gain and health concerns.

### **Theme Six: Somali Parents Expressed Issues with School Bus**

When parents were asked about some challenges they encountered with them, the school bus came up as the main issue for parents whose children are taking the bus or those whose children use to take the bus previously.



- 40% reported issues with school bus
- 60% reported no issues with school bus

**Figure 8:** Out of the 10 parents interviewed four of them expressed having issues with the school bus. These issues were mainly misbehavior by students in the bus and displeasure with the way the issues were handled by the school.

Somali parents discussed encounters they have had with the school bus and the ways that this impacted their children and some parents' decision to drive their children to school. Somali parents who were newly arrived and had not established themselves in the city were particularly affected by the school bus policy.

**Participant A, F:** Participant A states that when there are struggles at school with the school bus, they hold the school and their children accountable.

**Participant D, M:** Participant D states that he had an issue with the school bus policy because when the children make a mistake in the bus, they are not allowed to take the bus anymore, telling the parents to pick up their child, but what about the parents that do not have a car? They are forced to walk to school and walk back with their child in the cold weather.

**Participant E, M:** Participant E states that he had issues with the bus, sometimes the bus came too early or too late, there have been times that the children came back to the house thinking the bus left and then it showed up.

**Participant I, M:** Participant I states that his children came home after they began taking the school bus using some curse words and he had to have a lengthy conversation as to why those words are inappropriate.

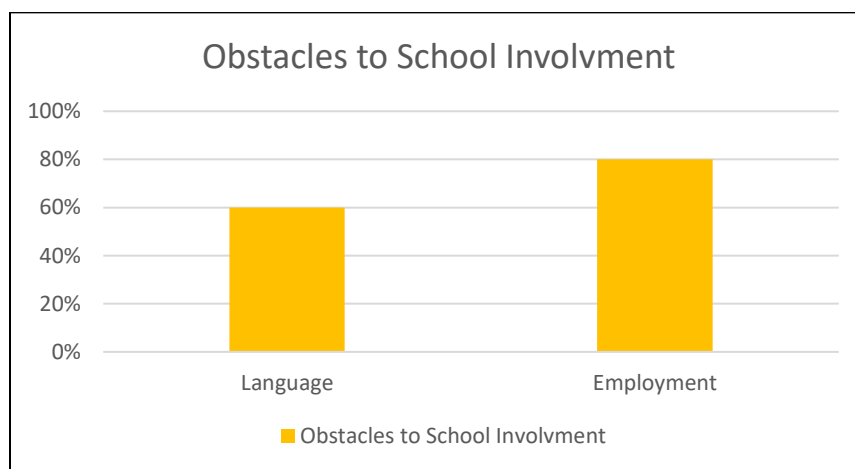
Dockett and Perry (2007) found that almost all the minority groups that they interviewed experienced barriers to school-based involvement compared to European American parents. Transportation to school is among the barriers that impact Somali parents. For some parents, it was the lack of personal transportation to pick up and drop-off their children to school. Additionally, children who misbehave in the bus results in the possibility of no longer taking the school bus. Though the policy is reasonable for the school to create, Somali immigrant parents are at odds with the policy because they have no way of bringing their children to school on their own.

### **Theme Seven: Somali Parents Reported Employment and Language Barrier as Obstacles to School Involvement**

Somali parents want to communicate with the school regarding their child's progress. However, language barrier becomes a shield that hinders the parents from fully participating in the communication inquiries regarding their child's schooling. Though the school has interpreters available for parents to use, some parents would avoid communicating with the school if one of the partners is an English speaker. In such a case, the English-speaking parent communicated with the school. However, single parents who have a language barrier used the translator services more often. And regarding the gender differences, men who understood

English but could not fully respond in English did not seek interpreter services. Female participants used the translation services even if they could partially understand the English language.

The researcher found that previous studies have mentioned parents' involvement with their children's education were hindered by employment and language barrier the same was true for Somali parents as well. The use of a bar graph to demonstrate the obstacles to school involvement resulted from the researchers' intention to provide the reader an opportunity to compare the variation between language and employment barriers to school involvement.



**Figure 9:** Six out of the 10 parents interviewed experienced language barrier when communicating with the school and eight out of 10 parents considered employment as a hindrance to parental involvement in school and at home.

**Participant A, F:** Participant A states that when communicating with the teachers, they are welcoming, and have not had any issues with them, but when one does not speak English, the communication is mostly done for you by the translator, and there is a middleman. Also, the school knows the father of her children because they communicate more often, and he speaks English. The participant also shared that the teachers do not know her as the mother of her children.

**Participant B, F:** Participant B states that there are interpreters at school, so she brings along one of them before she meets with the teachers, though she understands the speaker, she has a challenge responding accurately when speaking English. Participant B said that one day she had a doctor's appointment and her interpreter was late, so the doctor proceeded with the appointment, and the doctor was impressed with her English speaking ability.

**Participant E, M:** Participant E states that he has a difficulty with the language when it comes to responding, but he can understand most of it. So, he does not use interpreting services.

Turney et al. (2009) found that immigrant Hispanic parents reported language as a barrier to school involvement. Similar to the Hispanic immigrants who reported limited language skills as the reason for not communicating with the parents, Somali parents also feel that language barrier has made them unconfident with the ability to fully discuss the issues, whether positive or negative their children experience in school. Despite the fact that language has proved to be an obstacle, Somali parents maintain to feel welcomed and accepted by the school community. Though the study by Turney et al. (2009) found that Native born Black parents and foreign-born Asian parents felt unwelcomed into the school premises, Somali immigrant parents felt that their presence was welcomed by the teachers as well as their children school administration.

Another obstacle that parents encountered is employment commitments. Hayes (2012) found that employment status and home involvement combined had an impact on students' grades. Dockett and Perry (2007) reported that 51% of parents reported that employment demands hinder them from school involvement.

**Participant B, F:** Participant B stated that she is a single mother, and works outside the home, but she attends when the school requests for her or there are school conferences. She said

that she used to work a night shift, but she would still go to the school to check on her children. She said that she knows that it is important to communicate with the school, but does not do it often because she works outside the home.

**Participant D, M:** Participant D he works outside of the home during the time that his children study sessions, and he has limited finances that may be keeping me from building a home library.

**Participant H, M:** Participant H stated that there is a financial deficiency, the time that the children should be spent with is being worked by the parents, to meet with the teacher there is also a language barrier.

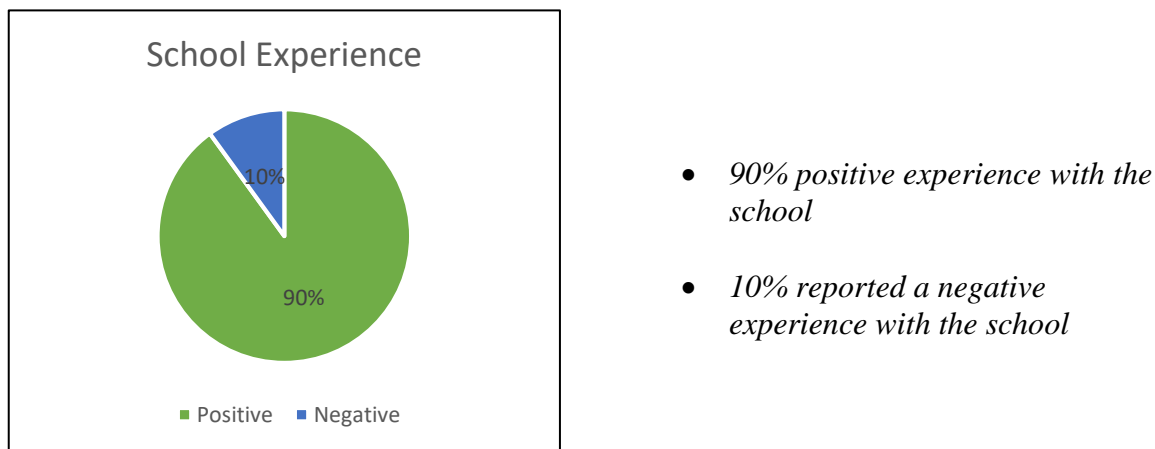
The participants want to do the maximum amount of work possible to support the educational development of their children's educational success, however, working long hours that interfere with the school hours or homework times places the parents in a difficult position. Parents are often conflicted with teaching their children at home or earning to maintain a reasonable living for their children. Additionally, there are possibilities that the parent/guardian who is watching the children at home may not have the academic background to assist the children with homework and read books to the children. And in some cases, the siblings at home can help each other with homework but are not skilled in providing structure to work through other academic materials.

### **Theme Eight: Great Relationship with the School Faculty**

Goodwin (2017) states that changes that are made in the school curriculum instructional design concerning changing demographics, teaching style, teacher training programs should all be a reflection of the culturally responsive teaching environment. This is so because the

dynamics of the American schools are changing with immigration. Culturally responsive schools can make the transition of immigrant families easier. The author suggests that teachers need to make intentional effort to create personalized curriculum in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers should make an effort to advocate for immigrant students and families. The statements that the participants made below are a reflection of culturally responsive encounters with the school community.

The researcher considered the relationship between parents and teachers to be the key to the foundation of the children's positive educational development. This chart shows that more parents reported positive experiences compared to parents who reported having negative experience or relationship with school faculty.



**Figure 10:** Out of the 10 parents interviewed nine of them reported positive encounters with the school and only one parent had a difficult experience with the school teachers.

**Participant A, F:** Participant A stated that when she communicates with the teachers, they are welcoming, and have not had any issues with them.

**Participant C, F:** Participant C stated that she attends conferences, volunteers at the school so that she sees the teachers often, she said that she has not experienced challenges with

the school. The communication with the teachers is that they know that she is the parent of her children and they can contact her about any issues.

**Participant D, M:** Participant D states that the teachers are easy to communicate with, some teachers give him recommendations; they let him know of any services that can be helpful to his children.

**Participant E, M:** Participant E stated that the schools are supportive regarding communication. And has no issues with the teachers.

**Participant F, M:** Participant F stated that he is happy with the current school his children are attending. He said that he contacts the school once or twice a week, he communicates with them without getting called by the school. However, prior in the previous school that my child attended I had an issue with the school faculty who gave much negative attention to one of my children who was overweight, they have gone as far as reporting to the child protective services as child neglect.

**Participant I, M:** Participant I stated that he always communicates with the school administration and teachers through phone e-mail or texting, and has a great relationship with them.

**Participant H, M:** Participant H stated that the communication with the school is always successful. Teachers are trained to work and welcome the parents.

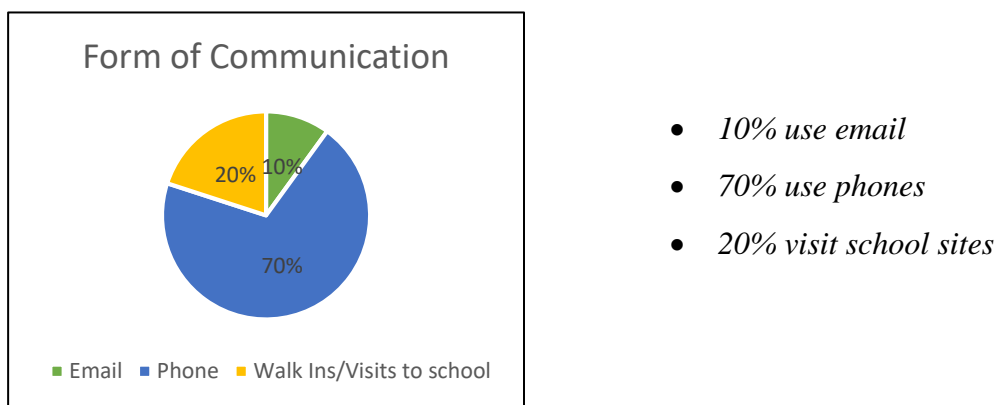
Nine out of ten participants shared positive experiences with the teachers and the school administration. They felt that the schools were including the parents as partners in the educational development of their children. Somali parents engaged with the school as often as they could though there are some obstacles that are getting in the process of their involvement.



However, there was one parent who encountered a negative experience with the school that their child attended. The parent felt that the report made to the child protective services was unwarranted because his child was well cared for, and the weight was part of natural growth. But the school viewed it differently.

The parents communicated with the school in different formats. Some parents volunteered at the school, others engaged with the school through phone and others used emails. Most of the parents used phones as a channel of communication with the school. The figure below is a graphic sample of Somali parents' forms of communication. Some parents visit the school only when they are called in for a parent-teacher conference, or there is a behavioral issue. Some parents shared attending school as a form of avoiding any negative behavioral problems from occurring.

This figure shows the communication dynamics that parents are using to initiate contact with the schools that their children attend.



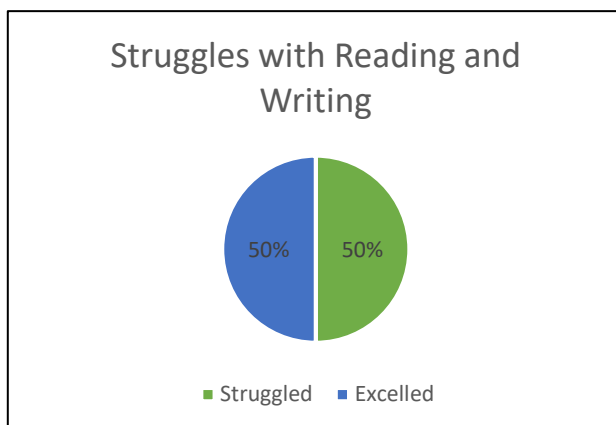
**Figure 11:** Out of the 10 parents interviewed, seven out of 10 parents expressed using phones as a channel of communication with the school. One parent emailed the parents, and two parents visited the school when they needed to communicate with the school.

This figure represents the forms of communication that parents use to engage with the school. About seventy percent of parents communicate with the school through the phone. This can include announcements, and shared information with the school through the automatic phone system. About twenty percent of parents communicated with the school during pick up or drop off times, whereas, only ten percent of the parents communicated with the school through email.

### **Theme Nine: Reading and Writing Proved to be Challenging Subjects for Students**

Cummins (1984) states that second language learners acquire the target language proficiently through retracing the skills used to learn the first language or mother tongue. This cross-linguistic transfer is unavailable for Somali students who do not have Somali language literacy skills and in some cases, Somali is linguistically different from English. Though there has been growing number of L2 learners in the U.S. school system, the performance of students at school is lower in comparison to students whose L1 is English. In the Assessment of Educational Progress (2005), over two-thirds of students whose English is a second language scored lower in the standardized tests at the 4th and 8th-grade level when compared to the other students in their grade level whose English is L1.

This figure is a representation of the dynamic of some parents' perception of their children's struggles with reading and writing as well as some parents who feel that their children are excelling in reading and writing.



- 50% *struggled with reading*
- 50% *didn't struggle with reading*

**Figure 12:** Out of the 10 parents interviewed five parents think their children are struggling with reading and writing and five parents feel that their children are doing well in reading and writing.

**Participant A, F:** Participant A stated that her children struggle with reading and writing.

**Participant J, F:** Participant J shared that her children had an issue with reading and writing.

**Participant F, M:** Participant F said that when he asks his children to read or write they have issues with the sentence structure and grammar.

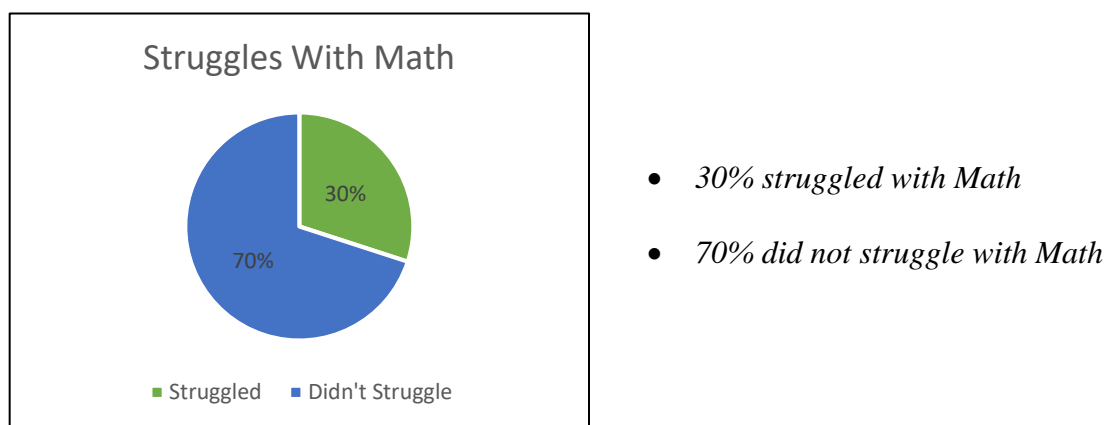
**Participant H, M:** Participant H believes that there are many efforts that the school is exerting to improve the students' literacy skills.

The participants felt that their children struggled with reading and writing greatly. Though there are some parents who mentioned Mathematics was a difficult subject for their children, the majority were concerned about the reading and writing ability of their children. An exemplary study that was conducted by Shirley Health (1983) compared three different communities whose literary culture at home was different and the impact those home literacy practices have had on the reading and writing ability of the children at school. The names of the

towns are “Maintown, Trakton, and Roadville.” The data collected from these communities showed that "Maintown” neighborhood children were more successful in school because the adults in the home read bedtime stories to children using children’s literature. The Somali community has oral traditions which include storytelling. However, the oral storytelling traditions are not rewarded in the school. Therefore, the implementation of bedtime book reading would improve the reading and writing skills of the Somali children because it is closer to the traditions of the American school system.

Among the Somali parents, some reported that their children struggled with mathematics. However, most of the parents reported their children are better in mathematics than they are in reading and writing. The pie chart below is a representation of the percentage of students who struggle with Mathematics compared to children who did not struggle with Mathematics at all. Some parents reported that their children are taking a higher grade level Math than their peers.

This figure displays the percentage of parents whose children are struggling with mathematics and the number of parents whose children are not struggling with mathematics.



**Figure 13:** Out of the 10 parents interviewed, seven parents stated that their children did not struggle with reading and three parents stated that their children struggled with mathematics.

**Theme Ten: Somali Parents have High Aspirations for Their Children**

Somali immigrant parents have high aspirations for the future development of their children. Participants in the study said that they had found opportunities that were not available in their home country for their children. Somali parents expect their children to utilize all the opportunities that the United States has to offer and improve future generations.

**Participant A, F:** Participant A stated that their children won awards such as; the students of the month, spelling bee champion, a national spelling bee. She said that she always talks to her children about their goals and future desires. She attends the school conferences to discuss the level, behavior, and progress of her children when her children became the students of the month; the whole family attended breakfast. She understands the value of attending school functions and supporting her children's education.

**Participant B, F:** Participant B stated that they are impressed with their children's progress, even though she does not speak English she attends school conferences. She has no complaints about the school and believes that education is the key to success.

**Participant C, F:** Participant C is happy with their children's progress, her son is taking Spanish, when he earns an A it makes her happy, she is grateful to God that they have not come across challenges that are unique to them. Her son takes advanced Math, and that can sometimes be a challenge. Her children are not the types of children whom she receives many complaints about not returning work to school; she does not get asked to come into school for issues as often.

**Participant J, F:** Participant J said that she thinks that the progress of the schooling of her children is positive, they are respectful and have a positive interaction with the school, teachers and their peers.

**Participant G, F:** Participant G wants her children to be doctors, lawyers, and nurses, help her when she gets older and the community. Also, she wants her children to be contributing members of society.

**Participant E, M:** Participant E said that he wants his children to reach a level that they are living a comfortable life, and can help his parents when they get old.

The participant in the study expressed in many ways wanting their children to gain solid education and aspiring future. This is consistent with the findings of Ogbu (2003) voluntary immigrants compared to involuntary immigrants have higher educational aspirations. This is due to the efforts made by the parents to provide an opportunity that would not have been available to their children otherwise. Somali immigrant parents understand that the path to a better future for their children is related to performance in school. Pinder (2010) conducted a comparative study that compared Afro-Caribbean and African American students' performance in Chemistry. The study found that Afro-Caribbean students performed better in Chemistry than African American students. The study found that parental encouragement to perform better in science courses became the major factor of different performance between African American and Afro-Caribbean students. Fisher (2005) conducted a study with a total of 26 high school students representing African heritage. Fisher found that all the students whom the teacher identified as high achievers were immigrant parents from the Caribbean, Africa or second-generation U.S. citizen. Also, teachers classified these students as having strong parental support and high

academic expectation. Similarly, Somali parents have high expectations for their children's academic expectations.

### **Summary of Themes/Patterns**

A total of ten major themes related to the involvement of home and school-based Somali parents' involvement were identified by the researcher during the data analysis process of this qualitative study. The first theme focused on the concerns of the parents regarding the racialization of Somali youth. The participants were concerned because they felt that their children were assimilating into the "Black" culture and leaving behind the values of the Somali culture. Participants expected their children to attend school to learn academic skills and continue to maintain the Somali way of dressing, speaking, and engaging. The participants stated that their children were easily influenced because they see their cultural values as less than the American values. The goal of Somali parents was for their children to take the positive aspects of the American culture such as work ethic, academic skills and all the things that were unavailable to them in Somalia. And, in the process, preserve and be proud of the Somali cultural identity.

The second theme demonstrates the concerns that Somali parents have about the development and the academic skills of their children. Somali parents find it difficult to help their children with homework due to content and language material. Somali parents understand that the only possible way that their children can succeed in school is to expect more from their children. Somali parents want their lack of formal college education to become a motivating factor for their children to attend college. On the other hand, Somali parents do not want their children to become demotivated from pursuing higher education because the parents did not have

an opportunity to pursue a college education. Somali parents seek tutoring services for their children. The parents manage to find a combination of free and paid tutoring services for their children. Among these services is the Kumon center where the students get helped with their homework, after-school programs as well as intervention programs during school. There are also parents who seek homework help for their children from family members and neighbors.

The third theme is with regards to the collective efforts that siblings practice to ensure that every member of the family is successful in school. Siblings are expected to support each other in doing homework and preparing each other for exams in school. This is so because Somali culture emphasizes success to be in collectivism as opposed to individualism.

The fourth theme discussed the parenting style of Somali parents. Somali parents are highly alert when it comes to their children's movements. The parents expressed being overly involved in the activities of their children at home. There is a present parent/adult even when there are older children in the home. Parents manage every aspect of their child's life in the home and outside the home. Somali parents are also in a conflicting relationship with social media, and the influences of technology on their children.

The fifth theme discussed culture shocks that Somali children/families experience when they first arrived at the school. Among the cultural transitions are seeing a white complexion for the first time. Transitioning between classes. Learning about personal boundaries and different perception about weight and "body shaming."

The sixth theme is with regards to emotional encounters that the parents developed towards the school bus and its policy. The parents felt that the policy to remove students from the bus as a consequence for misbehavior placed hardships on newly arrived parents that did not



have access to reliable transportation. This caused some children to miss school due to lack of transportation. Other parents felt that their children were learning some inappropriate language on the school bus. As a result, some parents decided to drive their children to and from school.

The seventh theme discussed language barriers and employment as obstacles to school involvement. Somali parents encountered a language barrier when communicating with school faculty. The interpreters at school were helpful to parents who did not speak English. Some parents had difficulty responding in English but can understand. So there are varieties, but overall, parents communicated with the teachers either through a third party or directly. Parents work long hours outside of the home. The hours of employment interfere with school schedule. Thus parents expressed the desire to do more but employment commitments as an obstacle.

The eighth theme provided an insight into the relationship between the parents and the school faculty. Somali parents were extremely proud of the relationship they formed with the school teachers. They view the teachers as a leader in the classroom. Parents took suggestions and concerns that were provided to the teacher very seriously. Parents felt welcome in the school.

The ninth theme discussed concerns that parents shared about subjects that are difficult for their children in school. Among those subjects are reading, writing and Mathematics. The ways that parents are facilitating these difficult subjects are through interventions as well as tutoring services.

The tenth theme is about the aspirations of Somali parents for their children. Somali parents expressed the desire to see their children succeed in the future. Among those dreams are to see their children live a comfortable life, some parents stated that they wish to see their efforts

pay off. Among the careers that Somali parents want their children to pursue are medical, law and education.

## Chapter V: Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to investigate how Somali parents are involved with the educational development of their children at home and school. The study used a qualitative grounded theory approach, utilizing interview sessions with the target community. The goal of the research was to gather information from participants that would answer the following research questions.

1. What are the parental home and school-based involvement of Somali parents?
2. What are the identified obstacles to Somali parents' involvement at home and school?

The data of the study shows that there are ten identifiable themes that were produced by the qualitative investigation regarding the experiences of Somali parents' home and school-based involvement: Racialization, concern about their children's academic skills, academic support, sibling support, strict parenting style, culture shock, school bus issues, language barrier and employment commitment, relationship with faculty, , difficulties with reading/writing/Mathematics and high aspirations for the future.

Provided the lack of strong influence of Somali culture in the American schools, Somali children easily integrate themselves into the closest ethnicity/race of the American culture they most identify. Somali youth easily assimilate into the Black culture because of their darker skin complexion. In the process of seeking membership and belonging some Somali youth change their way of being. This is a huge concern for Somali parents because they feel that their efforts have been reverted. Most Somalis are Muslims, and Islam is their way of life. Therefore, certain trends and youth culture can be opposite to the goals that the parents have in place for their children. This conflict between parents' goals for the children and the youth's desire to become part of a culture that is opposite to their upbringing leads to some parents feeling helpless.

Somali parents are determined to divert their children's attention from the assimilation into the popular youth culture and focus on developing strong academic skills. Somali parents consider the immigration to the United States to be an ultimate sacrifice they have made for their children. Therefore, seeing their children achieve well academically is the most important goal for their children. Somali parents encourage their children to study more and take advantage of any educational opportunities that are available to them. Parents have shared paying for tutors that work to develop the reading and writing abilities of their children. Parents encourage family members to support one another in achieving high educational goals. Helping each other with homework. Somali parents are extremely strict with their children. They want to protect their children from making mistakes that are detrimental to the future success of their children. Somali parents maintain a watchful eye with their children constantly because they view their children as their future. Somali parents expect their children to care for them in old age, therefore, making sure their children are well off is also part of securing their future. Additionally, Somali parents have a great deal of pride, thus seeing their child fail will bring undesirable shame to the reputation of the family. Somali parents want their children to pursue well-respected careers. Achieve goals that were unimaginable in the least.

In addition to all the goals that Somali parents have for their children, they are not oblivious to the obstacles that are hindering them from being fully involved with their children's educational development. Some parents stated that transportation, language barrier, and employment outside the home were an obstacle to their involvement with the school. Regarding transportation, parents consider the school bus a place where children can easily influence each other negatively. Regarding the language barrier, some parents stated that they are making

efforts to learn the English language. Other parents do their best to communicate with the school even if they may not fully understand the language.

Somali parents consider the American school system a well-organized system. The participants stated that the teachers were well trained to create a positive relationship with parents. Parents consider the schools culturally responsive and sensitive to the needs of their children/families. Some parents mentioned that their children understand that there is a way of being at school and a way of being at home. The difference between the two settings dictates the way children are allowed to act and the language that children are expected to use. Somali parents considered American teachers friendly, welcoming and easily communicative.

Considering the larger discourse about parental involvement, it can be concluded that Somali parents are involved in the educational development of their children at school as well as within their homes. This is in accord with the definition of parental involvement by Grolnick et al. (1997) defining parental involvement as managing a child's behavior, attending school functions, communicating with school faculty, assisting children with homework as well as communicating with the child. There are no identifiable theories that came from the investigation of this study. But overall, Somali parents are involved with their children's education. From the data that was collected in the study, there are no identifiable theories that recognized. Overall, the data indicates Somali parents are similar to all the other minority parents mentioned in previous studies, the only significant factors unique to Somali parents are language barrier in some instances and cultural adaptation process that Somali families have to learn to integrate into the American school culture, furthermore, immigration has made Somali parents set higher standards and expectations for their children.

Provided the small sample and time constraint of this research, it's difficult to cover the full scope of school and home-based involvement of Somali parents and to the extent of this involvement. Additionally, if Somali parents are involved to the extent that the sample data indicated, the future of the Somali students will be bright. Future researchers can expand on the research question by including teachers of the students as well as viewing sample work and progress report of the students whose parents are interviewed. This would provide the researcher the correlation between the involvement of the parent and the impact on the students' progress at school.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

Analyzing the results of this study, there is an implication for educational institutions to consider with regards to making policies that impact Somali families. Analyzing the circumstances that are unique to Somali families and being responsive to the needs of the newly settled immigrant community. Though this research does not provide all the necessary information to understand Somali parental involvement and all the surrounding issues, it attempts to develop a better understanding of Somali parental involvement in American schools.

There are limited studies that are conducted on the parental involvement of Somali parents in American schools. The data collected in this study can bridge the knowledge gap that is available to school administration as well as faculty members directly working with families. Teachers can better understand perspectives that may not have been clear to them and were unable to ask the parents. School administration can use this study to provide services and create policies that may accommodate the unique situations of immigrant parents. For example, the issue of the language barrier and having some interpreters at school to meet the linguistic

demands of Somali parents. Or parents who chose to not use interpreting services even with a language barrier. Regardless of the issue, this study is full of information that provides a unique perspective to the teachers and school administrators.

This research also sheds light on the efforts Somali parents are placing on the education of their children. Additionally, the level of appreciation and trust that parents have on the institutions that their children attend. This research can be the beginning of panel discussions that Somali parents and the institutions can have to better improve the educational achievement of children at school. This study promotes understanding of Somali parental involvement and seeks to become a positive literal addition to the conversation of ways to make schools culturally responsive environment for parents, and students alike.

### **Limitations of Study**

The present research study collected their data from interviews from a gender-balanced combination of ten male and female participants in a small city in the Midwest. It is difficult to represent the experiences, and perception of all Somali parents through a data collected from a small sample group. The interview was conducted in Somali and English. The researcher spoke both languages and did not elicit the use of any particular language. The participants naturally spoke the language of their choice, and the researcher proceeded based on the participants' language of choice. The study relied on the statements that were provided by the participants and did not verify any information for clarification. The data was collected at face value. The researcher did not change or alter statements made by participants. It's possible that Somali parents have withheld information.

## **Future Research**

The motivation for conducting this study is the fact that there are limited studies on the topic of Somali parental involvement. The recommendation from the researcher is to encourage more published works in the field of Somali parental involvement at home as well as in school.

Following this study, a wider scope of Somali parental involvement and parenting style, in general, would be beneficial for teachers and school community. The current research is contextual and limited to only participants that are in the Midwest, exploring Somalis in other parts of the country and Canada would be ideal. This study did not discriminate the number of years that parents have lived in the U.S. However; it would be interesting to expand the sample size and explore if there is variation in involvement concerning the number of years parents have lived in the country.

Another possibility would be to study Somalis and another immigrant community's parental involvement and compare the similarities and differences between the two groups and how that may impact school performance.

Another factor that researchers can explore is if there is a correlation between the parents' hours at work and academic and behavioral performance in school. Additionally, it would be interesting to get the perspectives of the teachers concerning the parental involvement of Somali parents.



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## Appendix A: IRB Approval



### Institutional Review Board (IRB)

720 4th Avenue South AS 210, St. Cloud, MN 56301-4498

**Name:** Noorayn Muhumed  
**Email:** nmuhumed@stcloudstate.edu

### IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION: Expedited Review-1

**Project Title:** Parental Involvement of Somalis

**Advisor:** James Robinson

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your protocol to conduct research involving human subjects. Your project has been: **APPROVED**

Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of participants in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).

- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.

- Exempt review only requires the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.

- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.

- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

If we can be of further assistance, feel free to contact the IRB at 320-308-4932 or email [ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu) and please reference the SCSU IRB number when corresponding.

**IRB Chair:**

Dr. Benjamin Witts  
 Associate Professor- Applied Behavior Analysis  
 Department of Community Psychology, Counseling, and Family Therapy

**IRB Institutional Official:**

Dr. Latha Ramakrishnan  
 Interim Associate Provost for Research  
 Dean of Graduate Studies

#### OFFICE USE ONLY

SCSU IRB# 1769 - 2245	Type: Expedited Review-1	Today's Date: 2/9/2018
1st Year Approval Date: 2/9/2018	2nd Year Approval Date:	3rd Year Approval Date:
1st Year Expiration Date: 2/8/2019	2nd Year Expiration Date:	3rd Year Expiration Date:

## Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

### Involvement of Somali parents in school Consent to Participate

You are invited to participate in a research study about the home-school based involvement of Somali parents.

If you agree to be part of the research study, you will be asked to complete a survey including questions about general information about you as the parent. You have the option not to answer questions that you are not willing to share. There is no incentive given to you as a participant and participation in the study is voluntary. Interviews will be conducted at Saint Cloud State University at a convenient time for parents. Firstly, parents are asked to sign the IRB consent document. Secondly, interviewer proceeds turn on the recorder and proceeds with the recording of the interview session. There is a total of 11 interview questions that have two follow up questions as well as parent survey regarding educational, income, and occupation of parents. The interview questions pertain to parent's involvement of their child's schooling. The interviewer is bilingual. Therefore, a parent is able to speak English or Somali so there is no need for language interpreters or services. When the interview is completed, the researcher thanks the parents and the family for the opportunity.

The potential benefits of the research is to provide sufficient information to the schools about the involvement of Somali parents in school and possible explanations for differences and similarities between Somali parents compared to other parents with children in school. There are no anticipated risks or discomfort associated with the research study.

Data collected will remain confidential. Data will be reported and presented in aggregate (group) form or with no more than two descriptors presented together. An example for interviews, *explains that responses will be kept strictly confidential, your name will not be disclosed nor will identified direct quotes be used. During the interview you may refuse to answer any questions. After the completion of the interviews, you will receive your transcribed interviews. At this point, if you wish to make expand responses or note omissions to the transcription, you may*].

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University, or the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

If you have questions about this research study, you may contact:

Noorayn Muhumed  
Saint Cloud State University  
[nmuhumed@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:nmuhumed@stcloudstate.edu)  
602-405-5117

Dr. Robinson  
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320-308-4956

St. Cloud State University  
Institutional Review Board  
Approval date: 2-9-18  
Expiration date: 2-8-19

Results of the study can be requested from the researcher or the *published works at the St. Cloud State University Repository*].

Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age, you have read the information provided above, and you have consent to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



### Appendix C: Participants Survey

1. How long have you lived in the United States?

- a) 0-2yrs
- b) 3-5yrs
- c) 6-9yrs
- d) 10+yrs.

2. What is the highest education level you completed?

- a) No schooling
- b) Elementary Ed.
- c) High school
- d) College

3. How many children do you have?

- a) 0-1
- b) b. 2-4
- c) c. 5-7
- d) d. 8+

4. What are the different stages that your children represent at the school level?

- a) Early Childhood
- b) Elementary Education
- c) Middle school
- d) High school
- e) Higher Education

### **Appendix D: Participants Interview Questions**

1. How do you see the progress of your child's education in school?
  - a. Tell a story of school success by your child?
  - b. Tell a story of a challenge that your child had?
2. How often do you engage a communication about school with your child?
  - a. Tell a story of successful communication with the school?
  - b. Tell a story about communication with the school that frustrated you.
3. How often do you contact the school regarding your child?
  - a. What are the main reasons you contact the school?
  - b. Is the school supportive of your efforts in connecting with the school?
4. Do you attend school conferences and parent-teacher meeting?
  - a. If so, what are some benefits of attending these school functions?
  - b. If not, what are some of the reasons you are unable to attend them?
5. What do you perceive your child struggles with at school?
  - a. Are there subjects that your child needs to work on?
  - b. How do you facilitate subjects that are difficult for your child?
6. How do you see your child's education prepared him/her for the future?
  - a. What aspirations do you have for your child's schooling?
  - b. Is the coursework too difficult or easy for your child?
7. What is your relationship with your child's school teacher?
  - a. How often do you communicate with them?
  - b. Do you feel that your child's teacher reciprocates your level of communication?

8. Culturally, how do you perceive your child adapted to the American school culture?
  - a. What are the positive and negative cultural practices that your child acquired in school?
  - b. Are there some concerns that you have about your child's adaptation in school?
9. Do you help your child with homework?
  - a. How often do you help your children with their homework?
  - b. Do you find it easy or difficult to help your children with their homework?
10. How do you create a home environment that supports learning?
  - a. Do you have a structure that supports learning at home?
  - b. Are there things at home that can be disruptive to your children's learning?
11. What are the obstacles to your involvement in school and home?
  - a. Are there employment commitments getting in the way of your school involvement?
  - b. Is language barrier hindering your level of involvement in school?