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The Experience of Somali SLIFE Late Comers Students in the Midwest of the United States

Ahmed Ahmed

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**The Experience of Somali SLIFE Late Comers Students in the
Midwest of the United States**

by

Ahmed Ahmed

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

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Abstract

This research examines the experience of Somali latecomer students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE). SLIFE students are a subset of the larger group of English language learners (ELLs), who come to American schools with unique needs and often face socio-emotional challenges stemming from poverty, war, post-traumatic disorders (PTSD, family separation, language barriers and adapting to a new culture and environment. The participants of this study are Somali males and females who are currently living in the Midwest of the United States. The age of the participants is between 18 and 30 years old and are considered as having limited or interrupted formal education. Many of these SLIFE students experienced interrupted education while fleeing their home country due to instability and conflict. Thus, this study examines and analyzes the academic and non-academic experiences of SLIFE students who enter schools in the United States at a later age. The interviews compare and contrast the education they received in their home country to the one they received in the United States. This research adds valuable insight into the obstacles SLIFE students face as they are adapting to their new home and the factors that contribute to their success or failure in our educational system. For example, SLIFE students need various academic programs to help with their second language acquisition and master content knowledge which they are significantly behind their mainstream peers. They also need newcomer programs that support their social, mental health and economic situations while they are adjusting to their new homes and environment. Moreover, providing ample resources and opportunities would allow SLIFE students to succeed in the classroom and the real world. As a result, these discussions can help teachers, administrators, and policymakers determine how to accommodate best the growing population of SLIFE students in America public schools and how to best improve their education.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Many refugees' students attend our public schools with low English proficiency and often with limited education from their previous schools. These students come from war-torn countries where they have lived most of their lives in refugee camps and United Nation shelters. Majority of these students are considered Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). Freeman, Freeman, and Mercuri (2002) state,

Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE), is an umbrella term used to describe a diverse subset of the English language learner population who share several unifying characteristics. SLIFE usually are new to the U.S. school system and have had interrupted or limited schooling opportunities in their native country. They have limited literacy skills in their native language(s) and are below grade level in most academic skills. (p. 12)

Furthermore, many of the students who are considered SLIFE students come from homes in which English is not the primary language and have at least two years fewer schooling than their peers. Although less research has sought to understand the experience of these students there is still a lot more research that needs to be done. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the SLIFE population is required to learn more about their educational background, culture, history, and future in America.

The goal of this research is to explore the challenges students with interrupted formal education face and how to support them and accelerate their academic achievement. The desire to conduct this research has arisen from working with SLIFE students and also my own experience of being SLIFE refugee student. Like the participants in this research, I also came to

the United States as preteen with no previous education. Born in Mogadishu, Somali I was among the fortunate few that were given an opportunity at a second chance when my family immigrated to the United States in the late 1990s. We were poor Somali immigrants in a city that lacked real cultural tolerance. Thus, as a family, we faced many uphill battles such as poverty and racial discrimination. Though it took many years before my family could achieve the better life they sought, they made sure I knew that education had been our ticket out of hardships. Nevertheless, I lacked the necessary academic skills and content knowledge needed in high school. As a result, I spent much time in remedial courses and had a difficult time communicating fluently in English. I also did not know how to read or write in my native language. I use these obstacles as motivation and put a lot of time to catch up to my peers and excel academically. I graduated from high school and university with high marks and currently finishing my Master in TESL.

Upon graduating from San Diego State University, I became a teacher for the San Diego Unified District, and this gave me the opportunity to work with refugee students and provide services that were not available to me. One of these programs included helping refugee students enter university by assisting with college applications, financial aid, SAT registrations and English tutoring as well as mentoring. Creating this organization allowed me to help people with similar backgrounds get into and excel in higher education. As a result, my motivation to conduct this research has been influenced by my own experience as a SLIFE student and now an educator of SLIFE students. I believe that these findings of this study will help educators and policymakers how to best accommodate these growing population of students.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore the challenges students with interrupted formal education face in the United States and how to best support this growing population. The first section of the literature review will define SLIFE students and provide insight into their history, culture, and immigration to the United States. The second section will cover their psychological stress such as PTSD and adapting to new surroundings and culture. Finally, the third section will examine SLIFE student's educational needs, the challenges they face in the classrooms and what programs are specifically designed for them.

Many refugees' parents come to the United States in search of a better life and a better future for their children. However, their academic achievement in their new country is impaired because of their little or no formal education from their former home country. Many of these students come to the United States not knowing how to read and write in their native language, which hinders them from acquiring English as a second language. Studies have shown second language learners who have strong literacy skills in their native language learn English faster. Cummins (1984) states, "the findings clearly suggest that for minority students who are academically at risk, strong promotion of first language conceptual skills may be more effective than either a half-hearted bilingual approach or a monolingual English 'immersion' approach" (p. 149). Hence, students who are illiterate in their native language are not able to draw on the literacy skills required to master a second language. Furthermore, some of these students come from war-torn countries and face issues such as violence, poverty, and absenteeism of family members, immigration problems and unemployment. These emotional and social instabilities affect students' academic performance. Thus, it's essential to identify these students and find out

the level and quality of their previous education and the cultural beliefs, values, and attitudes about education in their home countries. DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2007) state, “Students with interrupted formal education bring with them not only lost education time, but also a host of social and psychological problems that are usually the result of having been abruptly uprooted from familiar surroundings and transplanted into an alien environment” (p. 45).

Who are SLIFE Students?

Students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE) face many challenges including the educators’ inability to identify this population. Many of these students come to the United States with poor school records and have literacy and academic gaps. DeCapua, Smathers, and Tang (2009) affirm,

The educational resources and/or the education standards previously available to them may not have permitted SLIFE to attain the academic knowledge and higher-level thinking skills necessary for success in U.S. schools. Schools may have lacked sufficient resources, whether well-trained teachers, textbooks, libraries, lab equipment, or even desks and writing implements. (p. 5)

SLIFE students lack an understanding of the basic grade level subject area concepts, content knowledge, and critical thinking skills necessary to succeed in American schools.

According to the Minnesota Department of Education, SLIFE is defined as an English learner with interrupted formal education and, as common characteristics he and she:

1. Comes from a home where the language usually spoken is other than English, or who usually speaks a language other than English.
2. Enters school in the United States after grade 6.

3. Has at least two years less schooling than the English learner's peers.
4. Functions at least two years below expected grade level in reading and mathematics.
5. Maybe preliterate in the English learners native language (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017).

Another acronym that is used to describe these students is called SIFE (students with interrupted formal education). The New York State Department of Education defines SIFE as the student who comes from homes in which a language other than English is spoken and have entered the U.S. schools after the second grade (New York State Department of Education, 2017). These students usually have inadequate education records, low literacy level in their native language and are behind in content knowledge for their age.

Indicators of SLIFE Students

Identifying SLIFE students is the first step in serving this population and providing the educational support they need. Many of these students come from countries where there is civil unrest, poverty, drought, lack of education and persecution based on religion, sex and ethnicity. As a result, SLIFE students usually have a literacy gap in their school records and have their educational opportunities disrupted. Miller, Mitchell, and Brown (2005) argues, "The knowledge of how to 'be a student,' and indeed look like one, entails many skills, behaviours, formative experiences and a great deal of knowledge. These are enormous challenges for students arriving aged 15, with minimal or no schooling" (p. 5). SLIFE students typically do not have an educational experience that is valued in American schools. For example, the skills learned by a student who used to be a goat herder in the village of Belet Weyne, Somalia are not transferable in an ESL course. DeCapua and Marshall (2011) state, "because they have not participated in

academic-style learning, these SLIFE understand and interpret the world around them differently” (p. 36). Nevertheless, there are misconceptions that SLIFE students come to American schools not knowing anything, but the reality is these students bring unique skills and knowledge that most of their peers probably do not have.

SLIFE students are usually refugee students, not immigrant students. The difference between a refugee and an immigrant is that a refugee has been forced to flee their country whereas immigrants chose to resettle to another country for various reasons. Cortes (2001) defines

Refugee immigrants are unable or unwilling to return home for fear or threat of persecution, and thus must make a life in the country that gives them refuge. Economic immigrants, on the other hand, are free from this constraint and can return home whenever they so desire. (p. 465)

Many of the Somalis refugees lived in refugee camps in neighboring countries of Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen, and Uganda. The most popular refugee camp that accommodates most Somali is called Dadaab refugee camp which shelters over 300,000 Somalis according to United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Dadaab Refugee camp is located northeast Kenya near the Somali's border and is the biggest refugee camp in the world. This camp was created in 1991 to house the Somalis fleeing the brutal civil war that took hundreds of thousands of lives and made millions homeless. The people in this camp live in tents and receive food and medicine from various NGOs.

Also, to the stress of migration and acculturation, SLIFE students deal with the stress of learning a new language and struggling over their identity. Language and identity are intricately

related and dependent on each other. Thus, language always carries meaning and reference beyond itself. Li (2007) explains further this notion of language and identity, “Through language we express our identity. People identify themselves and are identified through the language they use in expressing their cultural background, their affiliations, their attitudes and values” (p. 262). Therefore, SLIFE students usually use their language to express their culture and beliefs and are not prepared for discrimination based on their identity in American schools. For example, some Americans still carry the stereotypes that African people are savages who live in tribes; carry spears, and their women are bare-breasted. Although, identity is a phenomenon that is always evolving and language influences this evolution, many SLIFE students continue to struggle over identity, and systemic and individual discrimination. Moreover, Wenger (1998) separates the process of identity formation and learning into three different categories, which are “engagement, imagination, and alignment” (pp. 173-174). For instance, a Somalia SLIFE student who partakes in creating a relationship with his or her community first learns the language and culture and history of his or her people. By doing this, they show the desire to be identified as Somali. Furthermore, they are also aligning themselves with the Somalia community by following the cultural protocols and demonstrating respect for cultural traditions and history. Through engagement and alignment, they feel they belong to the Somali community and share the same cultural identity. Wenger (1998) states “Building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities and the concept of identity serves as a pivot between the social and the individual, so that each can be talked about in terms of the other” (p. 5). SLIFE students are always trying to figure out how to please both their Somali and American culture.

Psychological Factors

Many SLIFE students experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which can lead to psychological problems such as depression, increased anxiety, and emotional arousal. Nicholl and Thompson (2004) state that

Many refugees will have experienced or witnessed events such as rape, torture, war, imprisonment, murder, physical injury and even genocide, prior to fleeing their homes. Such events can clearly be described as traumatic and not surprisingly many refugees may experience psychological trauma-related distress. (p. 353)

Thus, without treatment of this mental illness PTSD can have a detrimental impact on a student's life. These students are at risk for academic, social and emotional problems. For instance, some of the long terms effects for untreated PTSD is substance abuse, isolation, and suicidal thoughts. Kataoka, Langley, Wong, Bawjea and Stein (2012), explain,

Parents of children suffering from PTSD or other sequelae of traumatic events should know that they can play a very important role in supporting school efforts to assist their child. Things that parents can do to support their child with PTSD include helping their child to reestablish a sense of safety, providing their child with the opportunity to talk about their experience in a safe, supportive environment, by expressing positive thoughts about the future, by helping their child to cope with day to day problems, and by providing predictable routines, clear expectations, consistent rules, and immediate feedback. (p. 2)

Somali SLIFE students, in particular, have experienced PTSD from terrorism and ongoing civil war. These conflicts have eroded the sense of security and safety students usually

feel. Al-Shabaab, the militant terrorist group in Somalia, has brought a disproportionate amount of stress and fear to SLIFE students. This terror organization group not only operates in the capital of Somalia, but they also control large portions of Somalia countryside. Although the African Union-led military campaign called African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) pushed back the insurgents, they remain a major security challenge in Somalia. The Al-Shabab terror group seeks to establish an Islamic state and opposes the presence of foreign troops. Therefore, in their fight against the government, bystanders are regular killed or wounded by its indiscriminate bombing and attacks. On April 2, 2015, Gettleman, Kushkush and Callimach (2015) of the *New York Times* reported “Somali militants burst into a university in eastern Kenya on Thursday and killed nearly 150 students in the worst terrorist attack since the 1998 bombing of the United States Embassy here, laying bare the nation’s continuing vulnerability after years of battling Islamist extremism” (p. 1). These kinds of terror attacks have created a climate where parents are afraid to let their children leave for school.

SLIFE students also face discrimination and bullying at their schools. McCall-Perez, (2000) states, “ELLs face many psychosocial and psychocultural challenges, including the prejudices, discrimination, outcomes of increased English literacy, improved mas- and racism of many adults and peers in U.S. schools” (p. 19). SLIFE students’ discrimination can come in many forms such as individual, institutional and structural. For example, a SLIFE student can be victimized based on his or her accent. Moreover, schools sometimes discriminate against these students by placing them in special education when they do not have a learning disability. According to Scherr and Larson (2010), a high percentage of children and youth are bullied based on their race, ethnicity and immigration status. Thus, these emotional factors related to

discrimination and bullying can affect SLIFE students' academic achievement and also question their identity and culture. Gitlin, Buendia, Crosland, and Doumbia's (2003) study states, "The roots of the racism is also embodied in every-day practices, discursive systems of reasoning, and economic directives that help to shape a type of institutional racism that significantly pushes immigrant students to the margins of the school (p. 116).

Another stress SLIFE student encounter is adapting to their new environment. These students usually feel isolated and alone when they arrive in their new home country. They also are not familiar with basic tasks such as buying food from the grocery store and using public transportation to get around the city. DeCapua et al. (2007) reveal, "Some newly arrived students may never have seen indoor plumbing or toilet facilities. Students arriving from cultures in which males are educated in one facility and females in another may be uncomfortable in the coed environments of U.S. schools" (p. 45). Furthermore, adjusting to American culture can also be very difficult for SLIFE students. For example, In Somali culture friendships are held in high regard. They typically keep many of their friends for a lifetime. Also, Somalia has a collectivist society. Everyone is responsible for the other member of their group and loyalty is an important trait in their culture. Thus, in the classroom, many SLIFE Students cannot differentiate between academic dishonesty and acts of kindness for a friend. In addition, many of these students do not see plagiarism as the act of stealing the idea of another as their work. Sutherland-Smith (2008) states,

Plagiarism presents the most difficulty for student because for many it is a new concept, whereas for others, although the notion of acknowledgement of sources is not new, the actual point of such acknowledgement continues to elude them. In other words, some

students understand that they should not take words or ideas without attribution to the source, but they do not understand why not- other than to avoid university penalties. (pp. 154-155)

As a result, SLIFE students encounter these challenges because of the lack of knowledge about plagiarism and western academic culture. In the western education system, plagiarism is considering the stealing of intellectual property and not teamwork or helping a fellow friend. Furthermore, American society values originality and individual ownership ideas, whereas Somali is a collectivist society in which sharing work and plans are the norms. Friendship and sharing have a crucial role in Somali students' daily lives. When it comes to offering help to other group members, Somalis students who are willing to serve and support their friends, this behavior goes against the American tradition of independence, especially in academia.

Other challenges SLIFE student's faces are the neighborhood they live in and the schools they attend. These students usually live in highly segregated areas, and their schools tend to lack educational resources such as qualified ESL teachers, extracurricular activities and advanced placement courses. According the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2017)

The report, Low-income pupils' progress at secondary school, suggested that the outcome had been partly due to the treatment of children on free school meals who were more likely to be placed in lower sets, have access to less qualified teachers and have lower expectations set for them by the school. Home life could also have a big impact on the progress of children from low-income families because they were less likely to benefit from effective homework routines, access to books and computers, or cultural and sporting experiences. (p. 16)

Furthermore, students who live in a poor neighborhood also lack in literacy and language development. Neuman (2008) states that more than 50 years of research indicate that “children who are poor hear a smaller number of words with more limited syntactic complexity and fewer conversation-eliciting questions, making it difficult for them to quickly acquire new words and to discriminate among words” (p. 5).

Education Needs

One of the main obstacles students with limited or interrupted formal education encounter is a language barrier. These students are often assigned in classes that correspond to their age level instead of their language proficiency. Although some SLIFE students may speak “survival English” this does not mean they have mastered the academic and cognitive language needed in the classroom. Cummins (1984) points out, “the fact that immigrant students require, on the average, 5-7 years to approach grade norms in L2 academic skills, yet show peer-appropriate L2 conversational skills within about two years of arrival, suggest that conversational and academic aspects of language proficiency need to be distinguished” (p. 149). SLIFE students need more than 2 to 3 years of ESL classes to grasp the academic language.

Furthermore, another issue these students face is the overwhelming pressure being put on them by educators and politicians who want higher state test scores. Collier (1989) states, “adolescent arrival who had no L2 exposure and who are not able to continue academic work in their first language while they are acquiring their second language do not have enough time left in high school to make up the lost years of academic instruction” (p. 527). When SLIFE late comers students schooling is severely interrupted, the students not only are missing many years of academic knowledge, but they also lose on learning the language skills and content area

knowledge necessary for success in American schools. Cummins (1981) explains that two set of skills that defines language proficiency are the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS refers to the language skills needed in social situations such as conversation with friends, informal interactions and the language necessary for day to day living. On the other hand, CALP refers to the language necessary to understand and discuss academic content. This includes listening, speaking, reading and writing about subject area content material. These language skills are needed to engage effectively in academic studies.

SLIFE students are usually preliterate in their native language and often struggle with academic courses. DeCapua et al. (2007) state, “they may not even read or write in their home language. Nevertheless, they will be expected to develop higher-order thinking skills and prepare for high-stakes tests while mastering basic literacy and math skills in a language other than their own” (p. 40). Thus, it is critical for educators to address SLIFE student’s literacy needs and figure out how to develop their literacy and language skills. Short and Boyson (2003) points out that “traditional English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual education programs are not designed to serve the specific needs of newcomers, in part because at the secondary level, the curricula and materials are predicated on the belief that students have literacy skills and are acculturated to school” (p. 5). Moreover, it is important that SLIFE students are encouraged to continue to use their first language at home to not only get the cognitive benefits of being a bilingual student but to also help them with their second language. Cummins (1981) argues that the cognitive academic skills in the first language transfers to the second language. This

hypothesis predicts students who have mastered the basic literacy skills such as reading and writing in their first language will be able to transfer those skills to their second language.

Consequently, SLIFE latecomers will also have difficulties graduating from high school and college because of the time they need to become proficient in academic English. Collier and Thomas (1989) found out in their research that ESL students who have arrived between the ages of eight and eleven and who had received at least two to five years of schooling taught in their first language in their native country will have better chance of meeting the timetable of 5-7 years it takes to approach grade norms in academic English. Collier and Thomas (1989) state, “How many years depends on the student’s level of cognitive maturity in first language and subject mastery in first language schooling” (p. 35). The authors also point out that other key factors that might also influence this process are students receiving continuous cognitive academic development in their first and second language and developing a robust bilingual education program. As a result, providing instructional support for student’s first and second language will help them excel academically in their second language and acquire the second language faster.

SLIFE students also care about the way they are represented in their school and community. These students do not want to be viewed as incompetent and dumb by their peers or teachers. Shapiro (2014) explains, “They wish to be portrayed as intelligent and resourceful, and may be critical of group labels and reports that do not reflect their individual abilities and achievements” (p. 401). Furthermore, these students want to be challenged in the classroom and are motivated to become the leaders of their schools and communities. Shapiro (2014) states that; “study also highlights the need for more attention within English education to the relationship

between schooling and society” (p. 402). Thus, these students genuinely care about their education and want to have a brighter future.

Moreover, Studies suggest that teachers’ belief and expectations can influence student success. According to Lee (2005), he argues that U.S school tends to underestimate the academic abilities of a student of color and immigrants. Lee (2005) states, “I will argue that the school’s culture reflected, perpetuated, and privileged white middle-class cultural norms” (p. 3). Although many teachers believe they do not see color in their classroom, teachers tend to have different expectations for their white and black students. A 2016 study done by John Hopkins University (Rosen, 2016) found that:

- White and other non-black teachers were 12 percentage points more likely than black teachers to predict black students wouldn’t finish high school.
- Non-black teachers were 5% more likely to predict their black boy students would not graduate high school than their black girls.
- Black female teachers are significantly more optimistic about the ability of black boys to complete high school than teachers of any other demographic group. They were 20% less likely than white teachers to predict their student wouldn’t graduate high school, and 30% less likely to say that than black male teachers.
- White male teachers are 10% to 20% more likely to have low expectations for black female students.

Frankenberg, (2010) believes it is important for teachers to learn how to teach in an increasingly diverse classroom. Frankenberg, (2010) argues, “The growing diversity of America’s public school enrollment makes it essential that all teachers be prepared for teaching students from

diverse backgrounds” (p. 44). Consequently, recruiting a more diverse workforce in the classroom and creating programs that train instructor to teach students who come from a different background will improve students’ teaching experience.

Culture and education are intimately connected. Culture influences how students approach education while society determines how students should be educated. Therefore, many educators usually put together curriculums with culture in mind. However, this can be difficult when students are from diverse backgrounds. Gay (2000) sees culture as a tool for understanding different learning styles. He states “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 29). Teachers sometimes are not aware of how their culture can influence learning and hinder student’s achievements. For example, when SLIFE students are quiet and reserved some might rush to negative conclusions without considering the cultural differences.

In the American educational system students are encouraged to be active learners and discuss materials with classmates and teachers. On the other hand, African educational systems the teacher does all the talking. The classes are lecture-based, and students are expected to take notes and memorize essential information. Students rarely participate in classroom discussions or debate classroom topics. According to Dale (1986), he states “students and their parents need a network of support to familiarize themselves with school routines, so they make understand and comply with school rules and regulations, take advantage of many school0related services, and successfully follow their course of study” (p. 1). Furthermore, the relationship between students and teachers are different in both cultures. In American culture, the teacher and students

relationship is more casual. Students speak to their teacher more freely and have the platform to voice their opinions without being judged. On the other hand, in Somalia culture, there is high respect for teachers. Parents are more likely to take the side of the teacher during disputes instead of their children. There is no friendly relationship between students and teachers. Students are taught to obey the teacher and not talk back. Somalia teacher and student relationship are more like father and son relations that are built on respect and gratitude.

Furthermore, non-verbal communication is essential in Somalia culture. Somali students are much more likely to touch a person when they are speaking to them and stand close to them during interactions than the typical White Anglo-Saxon American. Furthermore, in the United States eye contact during conversation is a sign of respect and showing interest whereas in the Somalia community it is considered as a sign of defiance to authority and disrespectful. Thus, when a student looks down and avoids direct eye when their teacher is speaking, he or she are showing respect and listening. Direct eye contact with the teacher is seen as challenging the teacher and being rude. Thus, since culture influences education, teachers must be mindful of students' culture when interacting and teaching them. Students will be more engaged when their positive student-teacher relationship and they feel that their culture is respected and valued.

Decker, Dona, and Christenson, (2006) state that,

Having a positive relationship with one's teacher may be a factor that promotes positive outcomes and ameliorates risk for students who may be considered at-risk for negative outcomes such as school dropout. However, having a negative relationship with one's teacher may further promote negative outcomes for at-risk students as well” (p. 85)

Moreover, while there are not many programs specifically designed for SLIFE students, some districts have established newcomer programs to help this population get the extra support they need academically. For instance, certain school districts provide small classes that allow SLIFE students to receive individualized attention and support they need to succeed. Some schools modify course structure so that students can learn at their own pace. DeCapua et al. (2007) mention, “Several school models can improve the chances for students with interrupted formal education to succeed academically. Programs that focus on learning the basics and adapting the mainstream curriculum have had success at the secondary level” (p. 42). For example, in one model students are pulled out of the mainstream classes for a short period of the day to attend lessons that focus on academic skill development, literacy and content area support. The advantage of this model is that students get individualized instructions and can ask questions freely without being judged by their peers. The disadvantage of this model is that some students might feel embarrassed or singled out when asked to leave the class to get the one-on-one sessions. Another model schools use the push in the model. This model places SLIFE students in regular mainstream classes rather than separating them from their peers. The advantage of this model is that students are given all the materials they need to master before graduating. On the other hand, the disadvantage is that students get less attention to their individual needs.

Research Questions

- For SLIFE students, how does their previous education in their home country compare to the education they receive in the United States and what are their expectations from their new education?
- What are the experiences of SLIFE students in U.S schools?

- How do SLIFE students acculturate to the U.S school system and manage stress related post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), immigration, family separation, tribe conflicts, language barrier and poverty.

Chapter 3: Method of Research

This research used a qualitative methodology to examine and analyze the experiences of SLIFE students in the United States compared to their home country. The researcher relied heavily on up-close, personal experience to understand the difficulties these students encounter in American public school and how to best improve programs for SLIFE students. Qualitative research is used to understand and interpret information shared by participants. Mackey and Gass (2016) describe, “Qualitative researchers aim to interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people attach to them- that is, to adopt an emic perspectives, or the use of categories that are meaningful to members of the speech community under study” (p. 217).

Participants

The participants of this study were Somali males and females who are currently living in Columbus, Ohio. The age of the participants was between 18 and 30 years old. These participants had their education interrupted in their native country and are considered to be newcomers in the United States. A total of 10 individuals were selected and interviewed for this study. These participants were willing to share their experiences as SLIFE and refugees students. The primary languages used during the data collection were English and Somali. The participation in this study was voluntary, and participants were able to end the interview anytime without reason. Furthermore, written permissions were obtained before the participation of this study. The participants in this study were given a fictitious name of protecting their identity, and all document and transcripts also had pseudonym instead of their real names.

The first participant was Hussein (a pseudonym) a 23-year-old student at Columbus State Community College. He was born in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Hussein and his family immigrated

to the United States in 2010. He started school in the 10th grade. Although he had a tough transition to the American educational system, he did not take for granted the opportunity he had in the United States. Hussein was not allowed to go public school in Saudi Arabia because he was considered foreigner with no rights even though he was born in Saudi Arabia. Thus, he attended a private all boys' Pakistani school in Jeddah where he learned Arabic and Urdu. Hussein plans to study electrical engineering at university in the fall, and hopes to fulfill his dreams by taking advantage of every opportunity comes his way.

The second participant was Aisha (a pseudonym) a 26-year-old student at Columbus State Community College. She was born in Mandera, Kenya. She attended public school in Nairobi, Kenya for nine years. She is fluent in Swahili and Somali. Aisha got her GED from State Community College after failing to graduate from high school. She arrived in the United States at the age of 17 and was placed in the 11th grade with no transferable credits from her previous schooling. Aisha had a difficult time assimilating to her new environment and learning in English in time to meet Ohio's Graduation Requirements. Aisha plans to continue her studies at State Community College and become a social worker.

The third participant was Asma (a pseudonym) a 29-year-old student at State Community College. She was born in Somalia raised in Kenya. Her family moved to Uganda and Ethiopia before settling in Columbus, Ohio. She arrived in the United States at the age of 18 and was placed in the 11th grade at a local high school before dropping out to attend State Community College 22+ Adult High School Program. This program is intended for adults who are over 22 years old, living in Ohio and do not have a high school diploma or GED. This program is free to students and is a credit-based diploma program; in which students can finish the credit they

missed when they were in high school. Asma received her high school diploma at the age of 23 and currently is working on her Associate Degree in business administration.

The fourth participant was Jama (a pseudonym) a 30-year truck driver in Columbus, Ohio. His family moved to Kenya in 1992 after the outbreak of civil war in Somalia. He lived there until his sister, who was living in the United States, sponsored him to come to Ohio in 2006. Jama started his schooling at a high school in Cleveland in the 12th before enrolling at a local adult school. Jama struggled balancing school and work while learning Academic English in his new country. As a result, Jama decided to dropout out of the adult school and enrolled in Truck Driver Training and become a full-time truck driver. Jama currently drives for Ohio Based Trucking Company that delivers loads from Ohio to Florida.

The fifth participant was Ali (a pseudonym) a 21-year-old Central Ohio Technical College. His family left Somalia in 2000 to escape the renewed violence in Mogadishu. He moved to Kenya and lived in the refugee camps until his family moved to the U.S. Ali learned English in the refugee camps so when he came to America at the age of 15, he did not struggle as much as other SLIFE participants. He started school in the 10th grade and is currently working on getting his Respiratory Care Associate Degree in Newark, Ohio. Ali hopes to work with children at the Nationwide Hospital in Columbus, Ohio soon.

The sixth participant was Khadra (a pseudonym) a 28-year-old, mother of two children. She is the second oldest of ten siblings. She was raised in Bosaso, Somalia. She moved to the United States when she was 16 years old and was placed in the 11th grade. Khadra struggled in high school in San Diego, California. Khadra could not pass the exit exam to earn a high school diploma. This exam was intended for students to prove their skillsets in reading, math before

California Governor Jerry Brown permanently repealed the requirement in 2017. Khadra has since moved to Columbus, Ohio with her family and works full time at Amazon Warehouse. She plans to go back to school soon and complete her high school diploma.

The seventh participant was Mohamed (a pseudonym) a 24-year-old truck driver from Toledo, Ohio. His family left Somalia during the civil war, and he grew up in Uganda. Mohamed came to the United States in 2010. He started high school at the age of 16 as a sophomore. Mohamed and his family struggled to assimilate in Toledo where there was no Somalia community. Thus, they moved to Columbus, Ohio in which he finished high school and got his CDL license to become a truck driver. Mohamed enjoys being his boss and the perks of a truck driver. However, his parents want him to go back to school and get a college degree.

The eighth participant was Mushin (a pseudonym) a 25-year-old student at State Community College. Mushin was born in Hargeisa, Somalia. He and his family moved to Egypt as a refugee during the Somalia civil war. Mushin learned Arabic and English at a primary school in Cairo. He moved to the United States at the age of 15. He started school in 9th grade. Mushin wants to become United Nations interpreter after he graduates from college.

The ninth participant was Fatima (a pseudonym) a 19-year-old student at Columbus State Community College. Fatima was born in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. She went to primary and secondary school in Nairobi, Kenya before resettling to the United States with her family in 2014. She moved to the United States at the age of 15 and started school in the 9th grade. Fatima graduated last year from high school and is currently taking classes at State Community College. She wants to study lab technician or pharmacist at four years State University. Fatima enjoyed

her science courses because she was able to access and share her prior science knowledge with her teachers and classmates and feel empowered, despite her language barriers.

The tenth participant was Asha (a pseudonym) a 22-year-old student at State Community College. Asha was born in the United Arab Emirates, but her family moved from Somalia in 1992. She went to private school in UAE before the 2008 financial crisis in which her father lost his job. Asha was unable to attend public school in UAE because she was not considered a citizen. Thus, her family moved back to Somalia when their residency card expired. They lived there until a relative, who was living in the United States, sponsored them to come to the United States in 2013. Asha arrived at the United States when she was 17 years old and placed in the 11th grade. She received her GED in 2017 from Ohio Dominican Adult & Continuing Education Program after failing to meet all the requirements needed to graduate from High School. Asha is currently taking prerequisites classes to get into a nursing program in Ohio. She aspires to become an ER nurse at a local hospital.

Table 1.1

SLIFE Student Demographics

| Student Pseudonym | Age | Gender | Country of Origin | Country of Studying | Years of Prior Schooling | Age of arrival in US | Grade level first in US | 1 st lanaguage literacy | Language of Previous Instruction |
|-------------------|-----|--------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Hussein | 23 | Male | Somalia | Saudi Arabia | 7 | 15 | 10 th grade | Arabic | Arabic |
| Aisha | 26 | Female | Kenya | Kenya | 9 | 17 | 11 th grade | Swahili | Swahili |
| Asma | 29 | Female | Somalia | Kenya | 5 | 17 | 11 th grade | Swahili | Swahili |
| Jama | 30 | Male | Somalia | Kenya | 5 | 18 | 12 th grade | Swahili | Swahili |
| Ali | 21 | Male | Somalia | Somalia | 4 | 15 | 10 th grade | Somali | Somali |
| Khadra | 28 | Female | Somalia | Somalia | 2 | 16 | 11 th grade | Somali | Somali |
| Mohamed | 24 | Male | Somalia | Somalia | 6 | 16 | 10 th grade | Arabic | Arabic |
| Mushin | 25 | Male | Somalia | Egypt | 4 | 15 | 9 th grade | Arabic | Arabic |
| Fatima | 19 | Female | Kenya | Kenya | 3 | 15 | 9 th grade | Swahili | Swahili |
| Asha | 22 | Female | Somalia | Somalia | 10 | 17 | 11 th grade | Somali | Somali |

Materials

The main tool that was used for this study was a series of one on one interview which mostly was open-ended about their experiences as SLIFE students. Questions were asked to explore the challenges SLIFE students face and gather information about their previous and current schooling experiences. Students were asked to describe their previous school experience. For example, students were asked to tell me about their school experiences here in the United States compared to their home country? Also, they were also asked what difficulties they face adjusting to American schools and how they thought there schooling, and family experience will

help them prepare for their future goals? The interview questions were designed to be open-ended and flexible and allowed me to find more about SLIFE students and the challenges they face.

Procedure

I passed out flyers to Somali SLIFE students in Columbus, Ohio at the local community colleges, learning center, mosques, Somali shopping centers, and local restaurants to solicit participants. The primary languages used during the data collection will be English and Somali. All the participants that were interviewed were Somali SLIFE students. Questions were asked about their previous schooling experience in their native country compared to their new schools in the United States. The questions were divided into two categories. The first set of questions focused on their learning experiences in their native country. Participants were asked about their schooling experiences before coming to the United States and their home life. The second set of questions asked about their experiences being in American schools and their future education plans. The participants were encouraged to elaborate their answers on issues facing SLIFE students. Furthermore, A pilot test was conducted to reduce the number of unanticipated problems and design a more successful study. The participants were given a consent form before starting the interview which states they can withdraw from the study at any time. Once signed the consent form we scheduled a time for the interview that works for both of us. A total of 10 participants were chosen for an interview from the initial survey that is completed by many individuals who were interested in participating in this research. The interviews were conducted in comfortable, quiet areas such as the library, coffee shops or mosque. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

Analysis

Data and findings from interviews and questionnaire were transcribed and coded. From the results, the researcher was able to get a deeper understanding of the experiences of SLIFE students and how to best assist them to adjust to schools in the United States. Furthermore, data collected during this research were divided into two categories. The first category focused on participants' academic experience in their native country. For example, individuals were asked why they left their country and how was education like in their home country. The second category focused on their educational experiences in the United States. Some of the questions that were asked are how satisfied are you with your current education and what are some of the positive and negative experiences of attending American schools.

Chapter 4: Results

The first part of the results discusses the participant's immigration story and their experiences in their native country. For example, participants in this study shared stories about their educational background, school structures and some of the obstacles they encountered while trying to get a quality education in their home country. Then, participants discussed their experiences in American schools and the numerous challenges they face such as adjusting to their new lives in America, navigating their new educational system and adapting to the new culture. The participants also talked about frustrations associated with taking academic courses and their experience in a non-academic context. Afterward, participants discussed these following questions: knowing what you know now, what would you have done differently if you can go back to when you first arrived in America, what should be done to support SLIFE students and what advice would you give to future SLIFE students. Finally, during the analysis stage, the themes that will be covered are challenges SLIFE students encounter such as adapting to a new environment, linguistic barriers, literacy needs, financial barriers, communication challenges, psychological support and meeting the needs of the diverse SLIFE student population by providing bilingual program and address teacher qualifications and trainings.

Previous School Experience

Although some SLIFE students arrive in the United States with strong academic preparation and only need English language support, many SLIFE students do not have a strong educational background in their native countries due to various reasons. My first participant named Hussein emigrated from Saudi Arabia. He was born and raised in Saudi Arabia but is a Somali descendant. In Saudi Arabia, children born to foreigners do not have the right to

citizenship, which means they cannot attend public schools or get a work permit. Therefore, Hussein went to all boys' private Pakistani school in Jeddah. Hussein said, "I did not go school the first three years of elementary school because my family could not afford to pay the tuition of all my five siblings." Many foreigner families in Saudi Arabia cannot afford to pay for school tuitions, books, and learning materials. As a result, their children do not go to school, or they drop out. Girls are particularly often the ones who do not get an education. Hussein's academic courses were taught in Arabic and Urdu. Hussein reveals, "Initially I had difficulties learning both languages because most of the students in my class were fluent in one of the two languages before the school year so I had a hard time making friends since I only spoke Somali and no one else did in my class." Hussein also pointed out his classes had students of varying educational backgrounds and his teachers had minimal educational preparation and was not trained as a teacher. Therefore, most of the students had private tutors at home or went to private afterschool programs, but he did not. Similarly, seven out of the ten participants in this research said their parents were not able to afford decent schooling for them in their native country.

Another participant named Aisha went to public school in Kenya. She talked about the lack of adequate infrastructure at her primary school in Nairobi, Kenya. She recounts, "My school did not have sufficient electricity, so we did not start classes until noon when it was bright enough inside the classroom to read and write." The lack of electricity also meant lack of Internet or slow connectivity. That leaves teachers without many modern educational tools such as computers, projectors, and printers. Moreover, Asma who also went to another public school in Kenya complained about classrooms being overly filled. She said, "My class had 79 students and one teacher." She also shared that she was absent a lot from school because she had to take care of

her siblings as her parents looked for manual day work. Consequently, nine out of the ten SLIFE participants in this research claimed to have gone to school with poor infrastructure and unbearable conditions. Fatima states “the desks in our classrooms are arranged specifically to avoid the leaky ceilings. ”

Academics in Native Country

Although academic coursework in their native countries varied from one student to another, they all had one thing in common which was the pressure of passing the national exam. Eighty percent of the SLIFE participants I interviewed discussed the importance of the national exams in their school and that their educational system heavily focused on passing the national examinations. A few of the participants shared how their teachers provided the answers in advance of Kenya National Test and also turned the blind eye to students cheating during the exam. Jama who also attended a public school in Kenya said, “National test results are tied to teachers jobs, and schools funding and the local government expects teachers to improve test scores by any means necessary.” On the other hand, Somalia, which has been without an effective central government since 1991, does not have an effective educational system or state curriculum. Most of the schools in Somalia are private schools and lack quality in terms of teaching, training, and performance. Each school has its own rules and regulation, policy, curriculum, education, and certification. There is no high education commission in Somalia, which controls and evaluates the quality of education and gives accreditation of universities and higher education. Ali who attended his secondary school in Mogadishu, Somalia said, “Many of the students in Somalia want to go to other countries to study because no one believes in our education system even us.

Most of the schools in Somalia are considered business shops by many and anyone can open and operate a school that has the money and land.”

Majority of the participants had no literacy in their first language. Jama talked about how most of the Somali millennials were not taught formally how to read and write in their first language. He states, “The Somalia language spreads only in oral form.” Ali also added that since the collapse of the federal government there had not been much printing of books or literature in the Somalia language. He points out, “most of the billboards and advertising signs are in a foreign language such as English, Arabic, and Italian.” Furthermore, math and foreign language are two of the most important academic course for SLIFE students in their native country. Participants said they achieved below averages results in their mathematics courses in their native countries because they did not understand basic math concepts and teachers also were not specialized in mathematics majors. Teachers had too many students and no time to help individual struggling students. One of the participants said, “teachers lectured all day and there was no participation or group learning. The teachers get mad when you ask a question, which he thinks it is a dumb question because you didn’t study or understand anything he is saying”. Furthermore, students also pointed out that the math and English they were learning were not meaningful and could not be applied in a real-life situation. Schools did not do a good job incorporating lessons to solve real-life problems so that more interest is created in the subject. On the other hand, English and Arabic were taught as foreign languages. Participants talked about how they did not have significant exposure to spoken English outside their classrooms and how they only had few opportunities to use English in their daily lives. Also, out of the ten participants only three

participants can read and write in their first language, and all the participants claimed to have very little exposure to natural English speaking environment in their home country.

Moreover, though English is considered either the official language or their country's second language, many of the SLIFE participants in this study did not consider English as their first language. They spoke mostly Arabic, Somalia, Swahili, and Amharic at home and in the classroom. Jama pointed out that in all the subjects except Swahili are taught in English. However, most of the students rarely use English to communicate with each other. He said, "Teachers used Swahili a lot in class to explain material they said in English, and the class focused on grammar and reading." Using the students first language is considered in the classroom is a controversial issue in the EFL community because it denies students the opportunity for interaction in their second language. Also, students also had varying levels of English language proficiency in the classroom, which was a challenge for teachers. Asma mentions that while some students were nearly fluent in English in her classroom others like she had had difficulties just grasping the English alphabets.

Another obstacle most of the participant encountered in their native country was the lack of textbooks and supplies. Majority of the participants noted that they went to school with inadequate or no supplies. Thus, they were not able to perform a simple task such as reading from a textbook or writing in an unused notebook. Ali and Khadra whom both attended different schools in Somalia shared that no students had textbooks in their classes. Khadra said, "we recited after the teacher and copied everything on the board whether we understood it or not." Many of the participants indicated that their schools implemented the traditional teacher-centered pedagogy where teachers lectured and used rote learning.

Teachers

SLIFE participants in this study have also seen the challenges of teacher shortage and the lack of qualified teachers in their classrooms. Hussein discussed how the shortage of teachers and the Saudi Government excessive bureaucratic rules for obtaining work permit led to the keeping of poorly qualified teachers in place. He affirms “we want to learn English from the natives, but we get teachers who do not speak good English himself.” In Saudi Arabia, it is difficult to get Iqama or residency card as results employers try to solve this problem by hiring unqualified teachers who already have residency status. Teacher motivation is another challenge SLIFE participants encounter in their schools. Jama and Ali both discuss how their teachers are expected to maintain high ethical standards when their salaries do not meet the living standards. Jama reveals, “teachers in my school take bribes from parents during enrollment and exams period.” Students who excel in their academics can sometimes apply for scholarships to study abroad in China, United States, England, and Canada. Thus, the opportunity to study abroad in one of these developed countries has put a great amount of pressure on students, parents, and teachers to achieve higher scores on state exams. Furthermore, teachers also face insecurity and terrorism in these countries. Al-Shabaab militants routinely target teachers and schools in Somalia and Kenya. Kenya News (KTN) reported on October 10, 2018, that Al-Shabaab attackers killed two teachers in Mandera, Kenya. Inspector General of Police Joseph Boinnet stated that “Suspected Alshabab terrorists threw an explosive device at a teacher’s house that had two teachers setting off a fire that sadly killed the two teachers.” The lack of secure and safe schools is a widespread concern in many of these regions and also contributed to the high rates of teacher absenteeism. The SLIFE participants from Somalia discussed how teachers are absent when they hear credible threats of

workplace violence. Sixty percent of the participants in this research said they did not feel safe on school property while forty percent claimed corruption exists in their school.

Teacher interactions varied among the different participants of this study. Many of the schools the SLIFE participants attended were teacher-centered rather than learning centered. Asma mentions, “classroom interaction was discouraged, and only the teacher did all the talking.” Although teachers were friendly and were impartial toward all the students some of the SLIFE students from Kenya talked about how their teachers were unhappy about the recent banning of corporal punishment. Some of the teachers believe that corporal punishments help student behave and teaches them right from wrong. However, in Somalia where corporal punishment is not banned and regularly used, many of the SLIFE participants see this method as physical abuse rather than discipline tactic. Khadra explains, “Students with disabilities or comes from poor household often get the hit most and most frequently.” Corporal punishment also promotes violence and creates unsafe and violent school environment. Hence, out of the ten participants, only four participants claimed their school used physical punishment toward the student.

Extracurricular Activities

The participation of extracurricular activities is something that many SLIFE participants in this study agreed were missing in their educational experience of their native country. Jama recalls, “participation in activities outside the classroom is nonexistent because our teachers and parents do not value sports or volunteering services.” Although participating in organized athletics especially team sports can teach values such as teamwork, work ethic, fairness many of the schools in Somalia and Kenya have ignored these activities and would instead focus on academics. According to Eccles (2003), she states,

Organized activities are a good use of the adolescents' time because such activities provide opportunities (a) to acquire and practice specific social, physical, and intellectual skills that may be useful in a wide variety of settings including school; (b) to contribute to the well-being of one's community and to develop a sense of agency as a member of one's community; (c) to belong to a socially recognized and valued group; (d) to establish supportive social networks of peers and adults that can help in both the present and the future; and (e) to experience and deal with challenges. (p. 886)

Participation in organized extracurricular activities has not only been linked to positive academic outcomes, but it also helps protect SLIFE students from falling victims to extremist ideologies carried by the Al-Shabaab terrorist militant groups. Nonetheless, out of the ten participants, only one participant participated in extracurricular activities organized by the school.

Academics in the U.S.

Many of the SLIFE participants in this study share difficult experience whether it is their journey to the United States or acquiring the necessary skills to be successful in American schools. Hussein talked about how he had ambitious goals and expectations such as graduating from high school and attending a prestigious university, but he did not know how to achieve these goals. He recalls, "I was struggling in ESL and other classes that were noncredit high school courses that did not even count towards my high school graduation credits." Other SLIFE participants also discussed their aspirations to do great things in the US and their lack of lack of knowledge of the US educational system such as high school graduation requirements and college admission requirements. Furthermore, SLIFE students were also expected to do well in the standardized test and graduate on time without having the necessary support to achieve these

goals. Asma remembers, “I was confused about going to different classes and having different teachers for every subject because I was used to having one teacher for the whole day and same classmates for the entire school year.” Asma also came to America with high hopes, but when she started school in Columbus, Ohio, she felt lonely, confused, scared and overwhelmed. Asma and other SLIFE participants not only had to learn English but they also had to learn how to go to school in the US. Thus, out of the ten participants, seven participants felt they were not prepared to take high school academic courses.

Coursework

Majority of the SLIFE participants in this study took ESL classes on top of their mainstream courses such as mathematics, science, history, physical education, and other electives. Although these students were not prepared for the mainstream classes, they were not interested in taking noncredit remedial courses that did not count toward their high school graduation. Khadra asserts, “I cared more about graduating from high school than anything else.” Khadra did not have an official transcript from her school in Somalia and was unhappy; she was placed in a lower grade for her age. Not only did she not like the fact that she was the oldest in her class, but she was also embarrassed at her inability to speak English fluently in front of her peers. Furthermore, although math is considered to be universal language regardless of where one is from, some of the concepts may vary depending on the country one studies. For example, many countries SLIFE students studied used the metric system in weights and measures while in the United States they had to learn Imperial System (IS). Hussein recollects, “I had a hard time learning the different system Celsius, Fahrenheit and also the vocabularies that are used in word problems and also not to forget Arabic use different number symbols than the US which was

tough for me as well.” Many of SLIFE students in this study did not have a good grasp of academic English used in their classrooms, which made it more difficult learning new concepts.

Science classes also presented many challenges for SLIFE students in this study. The language of science can be confusing for SLIFE students because everyday words such as family, culture, and table have a different meaning in the science world. Mushin states, “I hated the lab experiments in chemistry and biology because I never knew what we were supposed to do and teachers were always busy so I did nothing for the period and got zero on the assignments.” Only one participant liked their science courses and doing experiments that were handed in school during their high school years. Fatima mentions, “I liked my labs because we did experiments on stuff I studied back home, so I felt really smart when my friends asked me for help.” Also, participants also discussed how they enjoyed the hands-on activities more than the traditional teacher lecturing style. The hand on experiments allows learners to be more engaged and make connections between concepts in the classroom and concepts in the real world. Ninety percent of the participants in this research enjoyed doing hands-on projects where you worked together to figure problems out instead of traditional classroom learning.

Furthermore, SLIFE participants also faced the challenge of understanding the expectations in a physical education class. Physical education course is required for all high school students in Ohio as they learn about the importance of health and how to an active lifestyle. Asha explains, “PE was fun, but the gym outfits that were required were not appropriate for my culture and games were also new to me.” Few of the SLIFE participants had a different experience in their country with physical education courses while the majority did not have PE classes in their schools. In Somalia, physical education classes were removed from the

curriculum when the local government collapsed, and Al-Shabab militants took over many of the public and private schools. On the other hand, in Kenya, although educators see the importance of physical education in the curriculum, they do not have the staff or facilities to offer these classes.

Technology

Technology in the classroom has helped many SLIFE participants learn English while having a tremendous positive impact on their education. For example, students were able to benefit from the digital tool such as pictures, graphics, and video to see real-world examples of what they were learning. Mohamed points out, “technology has helped show my knowledge of the subject to the teacher without the stress of everyone watching me.” The use of technology also provides students with comprehensible input and also increases the possibilities of differentiated instruction. The participants in this research regularly used technology in the classroom such as SmartBoard, Ipads, and computers. They also had access to computer labs and the school library’s technology rooms. Furthermore, participants also pointed out that teachers regularly used software applications to assign homework and monitor students’ progress. One obstacle that many of the SLIFE participants encounter with technology is the lack of Internet at home. Ali states, “its difficult to complete online homework when you do not have Internet at home.” As teachers increasingly expect students to use technology in their learning many SLIFE students do not have Internet at home, which affects their academic performances. Students without Internet cannot complete online homework, do independent research or communicate with their teachers and classmates when needed. Consequently, out of the ten participants, eight participants said their Internet connection was weak at home and were able to connect to the

Internet through the only Smartphone or Tablet. Mushin says “I don’t like watching school materials or downloading large homework files because I have limited data plan and I try to avoid hitting my phone data limit quickly.”

School Culture

The SLIFE participants in this research were surprised that American students could wear whatever they want in their school. Ali discussed how he wore blazers and dress shirts to school for the first couple of months of his first school year in the United States. He recalls, “everyone thought I was a weirdo because I wore professional clothes like I was going to an important meeting.” Many of the SLIFE participant’s native countries required students to wear a uniform that consists of a dress shirt, dress pants, and a tie. Furthermore, their school schedule was 7:30 am to 3:30 pm unlike in their native countries, which were only a couple of hours of schooling. Majority of the participants had four classes block schedule, which included core classes and electives. Moreover, these participants were also fascinated that the school offered breakfast and lunch. Although many Americans complain about school lunches being unhealthy and tasteless, these SLIFE participants enjoyed their school meals. Mohamed remembers “I loved the French toast and waffles we had for breakfast and the burgers for lunch.” The SLIFE participants had seen the school lunches as a break from their traditional food that consisted of rice and meat. Eighty percent of the participants in this researched enjoyed the free or reduced lunch at school. Nonetheless, some of the SLIFE students did notice that there was a stigma associated with receiving free lunch at school. Asha claims that “the cool and popular kids at school did not eat free lunch so most of the time she skipped eating lunch in order to fit in with her friends.”

Furthermore, riding school buses was also a new experience for SLIFE students in this research. There were no school buses in their native country, so students had to walk or find other means of transportation to get to school. In the United States, SLIFE participant was able to take the school bus to school. Fatima states, “first I saw the school bus as a VIP status because only rich families put their kids on the bus back home, but then it got embarrassing because my friends all had cars and did not take the bus.” Ninety percent of the participants in this research rode the school bus to school.

Bullying was another problem SLIFE students experienced in their American schools. SLIFE participants in this research felt discriminated and marginalized by their peers and teachers. Mushin mentions, “students made fun of my strong African accent which was hurtful, and I started disliking coming to school.” SLIFE participants had to deal with the challenges of adapting to a new culture and being victimized due to race, religion, ethnicity and family income. Participants discussed how they were teased about their clothing especially the girls who wore the hijab (head scarves) and how their classmates associated them with pirates or other negative stereotypes.

School Safety

Different participants had a different view on school safety. Majority of the SLIFE male participants felt unsafe at school while the female’s participant felt safe. Mohamed recalls, “there is racial tension between the Somali students and other students such as African Americans and the white students.” Some of the SLIFE participants feel their peers do not welcome them, which makes them feel alienated. As a result, there have been some fights in school that aroused because of a rift between Somali and African American students. There is a misunderstanding

between the two cultures, which has created tensions. Some Somalis SLIFE students have a negative preconceived notion of African Americans living in their neighborhoods while African Americans feel that the new Somali immigrants are stealing their jobs and are taking advantage of government benefits. Nevertheless, six out of the ten participants said they felt safe at American schools.

Teacher Interaction

Interaction with teachers varied among the participants in this research. Some of the participants had a positive relationship with their teachers considered them to be supportive and engraining while others thought their teachers were unhelpful and discouraging. For instance, Khadra discussed how her teacher was discouraging and considered her career aspirations as unrealistic goals. She discloses, “my English teacher was always negative, and she always talked about how I was so behind and needed to focus on this task only.” On the other hand, Ali’s teacher was supportive and caring. He recalls, “my teacher always listened to me, and she took the time to get know me and she make me feel relaxed in her class, and I can be anything I want to be if I worked hard at it.” Moreover, SLIFE participants in this research agreed that a positive teacher-student relationship could have long-lasting effects on students’ social, emotional and academic development. Seventy percent of the participants in this research had a positive interaction with their American teachers and considered their teachers to be supportive.

Additionally, SLIFE participants felt more comfortable speaking when the teacher created a positive classroom culture, and everyone was accepting. Students did not fear failure in classrooms, which mistakes were seen as an opportunity to learn and grow by the teacher and classmates. Fatima points out, “my teacher did not accept students who are laughing at each

other for giving the wrong answer, and she kicked out anyone who did that.” Furthermore, teachers who were perceived to be busy did not have a strong relationship with the participants. The participants in this research gravitated to teachers who had an open door policy and who listened to students concerns and helped resolve their issues. Aisha recalls, “Ms. Johnson class was the hangout place for my friends and me during lunch, and after school, we talked a lot there and sometimes we did our homework there.” Participant also mentioned that they avoid seeking help in classrooms in which they felt like their peers or teachers would judge them negatively.

Future Goals

Many of the SLIFE participants in this research were optimistic about their future in the United States. Asha was discussing her future said she wanted to continue attending State Community College and become a nurse after she transfers to a 4-year University. She was confident she would become the first in her family to graduate from college and achieve success. On the other hand, Mohamed thought the school was too difficult for him, and he wanted to get his Commercial Driver License (CDL) to drive a Semi-trailer truck. He reasons, “I have a family to support, and I need work; that is why I cannot continue school.” Mohamed felt that his English was good enough to get him driving on the road. Furthermore, Khadra also had an aspiration to go to college. She currently works at a warehouse and dropped out of high school last year. She plans on going back to school to get her GED and eventually becoming a social worker. Also, Hussein is currently working on getting his Associated Degree and plans to study electrical engineer at State University. Ninety percent of the participants of this research were optimistic about their future and held a positive view of future goals.

Some of the SLIFE participants in this research, however, were not sure how to achieve their future goals. For example, Mushin discussed how he hoped to become a translator for the government but was not sure how to pursue his goal. He states, “I never sat down with a counselor at my school to talk about my future.” Moreover, Fatima discussing her future also had no idea the requirements needed to attend State University in which she hoped to apply in the future. Lastly, many of the SLIFE participants did not know about scholarships, school loans such as subsidized government loan and interest rates. These students are not able to make informed decisions about their future without understanding the US education system and its requirements.

Moreover, many of the SLIFE participants in this research agreed that their current education would not prepare them for their future. Jama states “I do not think my school prepared me for the real world because I do not have the skills needed to be successful in the real world.” SLIFE participants feel that they are not prepared to navigate the US education system on their own. They also feel that they forgot most of what they learned in high school. Participants would like their schools to teach them critical life skills such as how to manage money, find the right job, and communicate effectively with potential employers. Aisha mentions, “I wish I had a support team at our school to help me with career planning and different ways to reach my goal.” SLIFE participants believe that their schools only focused on them catching up to their peers rather than getting them the knowledge and skills they need to be successful after high school. Consequently, eight out of the ten participants in this research do not feel like their school prepared them for college or the world of work.

Support System

SLIFE students often have significant adjustments to life in their new communities and schools. Many of the SLIFE students in this study relocated to Columbus, Ohio where there is a large Somali population already existing. Mohamed asserts, “I was happy when I came to Columbus because I got help from family and friends with interpretation and housing.” Some of the SLIFE participants also took advantage of community programs such as the Somali Community Association of Ohio (SCAO), Metropolitan Library Programs and International Rescue Committee (IRC). These programs provided participants with employment and job training, ESL classes, legal support and interpretation services. Asma recalls, “when we first came to America we landed in Michigan, and we had no help, and we did not know English it was very tough winter.” SLIFE participants who settled in communities were people from their native country did not live, had a difficult time adjusting to their new environment and felt a sense of isolation and abandonment.

SLIFE Advice

SLIFE participants in this research were excited about giving advice to other SLIFE students and helping them avoid some of the mistakes they made. Their advice touched on different topics such as academics, financial management, careers and building strong relationships with family, friends, teachers and other supportive adults. For example, the participants discussed the importance of asking for help and asking questions. Khadra affirms “if you are having problems in school or at home, many people can help you as teachers, counselors or family and friends.” She also noted that no one would help if you if you do not ask for help or ask questions. Supporting SLIFE student’s academic success and educational process will

encourage them to stay engaged in school and seek help when needed. Furthermore, the SLIFE participant also discussed the importance of participating in extracurricular activities in school. They talked about how college admission officers and job recruiters want well-rounded students who can multitask with their academics and service to their communities. Hussein explains, “being involved in clubs gives you the opportunity to talk to native English speakers and practice your speaking skills.” Moreover, SLIFE participants also discussed taking ownership of your learning and future. Participants talked about the importance of understanding how you learn best and finding how to make the right choices for you. Asma stated, “it can be fun to do everything with your friends, but sometimes it can be a distraction because some of your friends might not have the same interest or goals as you.” Thus, becoming independent thinker allows SLIFE students to be more confident in their abilities and have the opportunity to explore and do new things, which can lead to the discovery of unique talents and skills.

Another advice SLIFE participants in this research gave to other SLIFE students is setting up your budget and prioritizing your spending to meet your financial goals. Nine out of the ten SLIFE participants in this research sent money back to their families in Africa every month. Ali reveals, “I sent \$400 a month to my parents in Somalia, so I have work full time and go school which is tough for me because I do not have much time to study and plans my future.” Many of the SLIFE participants felt stressed and disconnected from school due to the many hours they work at their jobs. They are struggling financially and academically and are on the edge of dropping out of school. Participants discussed the importance of time management skills and creating schedules to reduce procrastination and stress associated with being burned out. They also learned the value of time and realized that time is too short and they should have to

concentrate what matters the most to them rather than getting distracted. Aisha frustrated said, “You cannot work at warehouse standing all day and then go school period.” The SLIFE participants in this research felt that their jobs interfered with their learning and college experience. They are not able to get into clubs, organization and participate in social gatherings, which can assist them in getting better jobs after they graduate.

SLIFE participants also advised building good work relationships with coworkers, teachers and fellow peers. Mushin states, “I believe living in America is similar to Africa and the Middle East because it is not what you know, but it is whom you know is important.” These participants have now understood that building a relationship and making new connections can open doors of opportunity for them that would not have been available before.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This research has examined the issues and challenges students with interrupted formal education (SLIFE) face in Columbus, Ohio and how to support them and accelerate their academic achievement. After 6 months of SLIFE students' interviews, my analysis explored the experiences of SLIFE students to understand the needs of these students. One of the goals of this study is to assist educators and lawmakers in finding out ways to provide opportunities for these students to flourish in our schools. This study also adds valuable insight into refugee students and the factors that contribute to the success or failure in our education system.

SLIFE students who are in the United States encounter monumental challenges related to experiences as a refugee, language barrier, race and socioeconomic status as they adapt to their new environment. These obstacles can affect their learning in school and prevent them from reaching their highest potential. Getting high-quality education is very important for this population of students because it provides them the skills they need to fully participate in their communities and also gives them the opportunity to help rebuild their home country. Furthermore, with the recent immigration debates and significant increase of immigrant and refugee students in American public schools, it is imperative that educators create programs that help ensure academic success for this population. Students only then will be in a position to take advantage of educational opportunities and benefit from the different options available in this country. Thus, DeCapua and Marshall (2011) believe one of the ways to help the unprecedented number of SLIFE student coming to our school is by supporting them in their adjustment to culturally different ways of learning and developing their basic skills.

SLIFE students face a new social environment in which they are not prepared for and feel displaced. As a result, a significant number of SLIFE students experience interpersonal difficulties in which they feel isolated and marginalized at their schools and communities. These students also encounter bullying and racial discrimination because of their race, religion, ethnic, language and immigration status. For example, participants in this research discussed being rejected by their native-born peers and being overlooked by the nationwide effort of stopping bullying. Although bullying is a serious public health problem with a range of short and long-term consequences for those students who are bullied, less attention has been given to immigrant's students who experience bullying victimization. Moreover, participants in this research also expressed frustration in their new educational system, which is different from their home country. They discussed how they are not able to make an informed decision about their future goals and are not equipped with skill sets they need to take on the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Furthermore, many of the participants in this research also face linguistic barriers and do not have the academic language necessary to succeed in American schools. Thus, these students fell academically behind their peers and are more likely to drop out of school. SLIFE students have to learn English and catch up to their peers in a relatively short period. The participants emphasized that they are not less intelligent than their peers but simply need more time and opportunity to learn their new language and adjust to their new schooling system. Cummins (1984) emphasizes that it takes longer years to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) than the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). SLIFE students who have mastered everyday survival English still need additional support in mastering their

academic English necessary to succeed in school. Consequently, since these students have low literacy, they are not able to build on existing literacy skills to acquire their second language or understand content area instruction. Many of these participants are also over-aged and under-credited in their new schools and are expected to meet graduation requirements in 4 years what their peers have 13 years to complete. As a result, these students need alternative pathways to graduation for those students who are considered overage and under-credited.

Majority of the SLIFE students also lack basic literacy skills in their native language and have missed years of education because of frequent moves from one place to another. They have gaps in their education, and the majority are not able to prove their academic achievement due to missing documents. Moreover, some students also discussed how they fled their home country without proper identification documents, which led to their previous education not being fairly assessed. As a result, it is crucial that school administrators provide alternative evaluation methods that are flexible and understanding. Freeman et al. (2002) research points out that some of the characteristics that define SLIFE students are having different needs than the newly arrived ESL students and struggling in all contents that require literacy. Thus, it is important to understand that each student has unique needs and circumstance, which needs to be evaluated accordingly. Furthermore, some of the participants also talked about how their previous education needs to be recognized and credited because they do not have the time, money and energy to repeat every course they took in their home country. These students are also demoralized when they see family members who were prominent professionals in their home country such as doctors, engineers, and professors but now are currently taxi drivers and warehouse workers because their overseas education is not recognized and accredited in the

United States. Therefore, it is essential that students feel that their previous education has been fairly evaluated and they understand how to build on what they already have learned.

SLIFE participants in this research also face financial barriers and have to bear the burden of providing for themselves and family instead of focusing on their education. Having a job takes priority over education for students who need to earn a living. Participants talked about how they are unable to concentrate on their studies because they have to worry about rent and paying bills as high school students. Also, they also talked about the pressure they put on themselves and the pressure from their family to graduate high school so that they can become financially independent. Neuman (2008) discussed in her research on how poverty negatively influences learning. Low-income students not only suffer from a lack of resources at home, but they also end up at schools with less experienced teachers and fewer resources available to them. Thus, school and policymakers must help find ways to help these students break the cycle of educational failures so that they can continue their higher education. Many SLIFE students who are admitted to college and universities are not eligible for federal funding until they have a permanent resident card, which can take some time. One option that can help SLIFE students is employing them on campus through the work-study program. This program is beneficial for SLIFE students because the jobs are convenient and their income will not affect their financial aid eligibility. Taking a part-time job while going to school will also help SLIFE students develop better time management skills and get early work experience in their desired fields.

Another obstacle SLIFE students face is the failure of communication between students and school guidance counselors. Communication between school guidance counselors and SLIFE students was also another challenge this population faces. Effective communication

between students and school counselors has the potential to not only improve student's learning experience, but it also has the potential to help them plan their careers beyond high school. SLIFE students often get contradictory information on graduation and college admission requirements by different adults. SLIFE participants discussed the fact that there is a misunderstanding between SLIFE students and guidance counselors because there is no relationship between both parties. School guidance counselors are essential team members in helping students reach their academic goals and helping them find success after high school. Decker et al. (2006) emphasized the importance of having a positive relationship with students especially in a manner that shows care and concern for each student. Therefore, regular collaboration and goal planning between SLIFE students and guidance counselors will help students understand the school requirements and its policies and procedures. Students would no longer feel like they are being set up for failure and will know they can trust their teachers and their school support teams.

Moreover, as SLIFE students adjust to their new environment, many need psychological support, which is often not available to them. Many of these students fled their home country due to extreme poverty and fear of persecution because of their identity and beliefs. This trauma nonetheless, followed them to their classroom. Participants in this research discussed how they felt withdrawn from their classmates and the different social gatherings at school. They felt isolated and have difficulties making new friends. These issues are rarely addressed because mental illness is a stigma in many SLIFE students' households and communities. Nicholl and Thompson (2004) discussed the importance of addressing the mental health of refugee students who have experience prior trauma and how they are at higher risk of developing mental health

problems in the future. Nevertheless, negative perceptions of mental illness mean those confronting the disease or seeking treatment can be ridiculed and excluded from the community. Thus, there should be more community education and more outreach to raise awareness of mental health issues and destigmatize this disease. Schools should also provide mental health services to those students who are still struggling with mental health disorder and are suffering in silence. Schools are the ideal place to provide mental health services for SLIFE students because it is a safe zone from the community stigma and mental illness shaming.

The rising number of SLIFE and immigrants have also brought challenges to local schools who do not have enough qualified teachers to handle this growing population. As a result, SLIFE students are often placed in mainstream classes with teachers who have no ESL teaching experience or training. These teachers are overworked and are overstressed because of the lack of resources available to them to deal with these students. Frankenberg, (2010) in his research discussed the need to prepare teachers for a multicultural and diverse population. Therefore, teachers must be prepared with a thorough understanding of the culture of their students and how that affects their learning style and needs. SLIFE participants in this research also discussed how they struggle more in mainstream classrooms than their regular ESL classes because they are prematurely placed in these classes without additional language support. SLIFE students are also more comfortable talking to their ESL teachers and seeking help from them than their mainstream teachers. Therefore, it is essential that mainstream teachers work closely with ESL teachers in helping SLIFE students perform better academically. For instance, aligning instructions between classrooms will not only help the student learn the language quicker, but it would also help them master content area subjects. Students would be able to transfer knowledge

across disciplines as they get meaningful comprehensible input. Furthermore, the collaboration will also enhance teacher' knowledge and professional growth while meeting the student's needs.

Additionally, school administrators must take the lead in adjusting the changes in their school demographics so they can help teachers tackle the challenges they face in their classrooms and for example, transforming instructional practices so that instructions meet the need of the diverse student population. A more personalized instruction will lead to more actively engaged students who are connected to their schools and the broader community. Also, the school must also offer a range of opportunities for SLIFE students to contribute and learn within the community at large, which includes community service projects, workshops, and internships. These projects will provide an opportunity for SLIFE students to apply academic learning to real life events while finding their passion and interest, which may lead to a career choice.

SLIFE students would also benefit from a bilingual program, in which schools provide support mechanisms such as instruction in native student language, regular access to bilingual counselors and teachers. Many people carry the misconception that English immersion results in faster language acquisition although research has shown that instruction in student's native language helps the acquisition of their second language. Supporting SLIFE students in their first language will not help them learn English but also develop their academic identity. A bilingual program for SLIFE students will provide an effective instructional approach that supports the acquisition of their second language and improve the student's first language. Furthermore, the benefit of bilingualism is that it enhances the executive control, which focuses on reasoning, task flexibility, code-switching and updating information on the working memory. Bialystok (2008)

states, “the research with children has shown that bilingual children develop the ability to solve problems that contain conflicting or misleading cues at an earlier age than monolinguals” (p. 5). Also, when it comes to metalinguistic tasks that require controlled attention and inhibition, bilingual children performed better than monolingual children. Children who develop strong metalinguistic skills early will be better communicators and have a better understanding of how language works. As a result, it is vital that educators provide a bilingual program for SLIFE students that is tailored to meet their linguistic, academic and emotional needs.

SLIFE students have also struggled to find programs and services for them that can effectively engage and educate them. Students who are given appropriate support in their education are less likely to drop out. Goodwin (2002) points out that “immigrants lack a strong or vocal political base from which to advocate for their needs” (p. 161). Majority of SLIFE students and their parents do not understand their rights in the United States and are uncomfortable discussing their concerns with educators and policymakers. Therefore, advocacy groups like the International Rescue Committee (IRC) help improve the situation for many SLIFE students. They provide an educational opportunity for underserved students to improve their lives while removing barriers that prevent these students from succeeding. Another group organization that also helps SLIFE students is the Somali Community Association of Ohio (SCAO) located in Columbus Ohio. This organization provides ESL classes for students and their parents while giving special attention to new immigrants who are struggling in Columbus, Ohio.

As our nation is becoming more increasingly diverse, it is important that teachers embrace diversity in their classroom and prepare students to work and live with people who

speak and look differently. One of the ways to promote diversity in the classroom is for teachers to take time to understand each student's abilities, background and learning style and then incorporate that in their lessons. By providing an inclusive classroom, teachers not only ensure each student are learning the material effectively, but they are also broadening students' abilities. Students would have the opportunity to bring valuable perspectives to the content being learned. Furthermore, no two SLIFE students are the same, as each SLIFE student brings a different culture, language, beliefs, and life experience. Thus, it is important that teachers provide a safe community in the classroom in which everyone is welcomed and appreciated. When teachers lead the way by making their instruction reflect the different faces in their classroom, this would not only enhance their trust in the learning process but also prepare them to become a more productive global citizen.

Despite the obstacles, SLIFE students encounter in the United States such as poverty, lack of resources and discrimination, many of them are very appreciative of the opportunity available to them in the United States and the support they get to receive from generous American people. This appreciation stems from their experience of dealing with war, poverty, and life threatening experience to arrive in their new home. As a result, many SLIFE students understand the opportunity they have in America and how they can succeed with hard work and dedication. The American dream is a realistic aspiration for many SLIFE students.

Limitation and Future Research

This study relied on a small sized sample of ten participants from Columbus, Ohio, which means that the ability to draw generalization of the result is limited. Recruiting a larger with diverse student population sample would provide richer information and multiple perspectives

that lead to greater generalizations. SLIFE students come from widely different backgrounds which means every group has its specific challenges and needs that need to be taken into consideration. Furthermore, since this study used the interview as its main method for data elicitation, it is possible that participants withhold some information because they might feel uncomfortable sharing personal information with the interviewer. Somali immigrants generally do not like disclosing elements of their personal lives or participating in studies because of fear of government or legal repercussions for their answers.

Research on SLIFE student's personal experience is relatively new while there are a growing number of SLIFE students enrolling in American public schools. Thus, there is a need for further research that seeks to understand the experiences of this population and how to help best they achieve success in U.S public schools. I believe it would be beneficial to compare and contrast the experience of different ethnic SLIFE groups to see if they encounter similar challenges and whether they assimilate differently to their new environments. I would also recommend further research on effective ways to train teachers who teach SLIFE students and effective programming options for this population.

Recommendations

Based on our collaborative data collection and data analysis, I have made the following four recommendations to educators, policymakers, and parents and how to best help SLIFE late comer students succeed in American schools.

1. Provide a supportive environment that responds to the immediate social, cultural and linguistic needs of SLIFE students—offering opportunities to SLIFE students and

- their families beyond academics such as ESL classes, employment, and job training, interpretation and translation services.
2. Creating a newcomer program center and program to help ease transitions for newly refugee students. This program can provide SLIFE students and their parents with resources they need to adjust to their new environment such as transportation, social and cultural support, legal advice and also connecting them with other SLIFE groups who have been in the country longer and have gone through similar challenges.
 3. Encouraging parents to assist their children using the parents' first language and fostering an additive bilingual environment at school where bilingualism seen as an enrichment rather than subtraction.
 4. Preparing all teachers including mainstream teachers to meet the needs of English Language Learners. All teachers should get training and development in order to provide effective instruction to SLIFE and ESL students placed in their classrooms.

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Appendix A: Participant Questions—Home Country

Name: _____ Date _____

Home Country

1. Could you tell me when and how you immigrated to the United States
2. What made you leave your country and what are the experiences you remember from your home country?
3. Tell about your and family life?
4. At what age did you start school in your home country? What are some of the schooling experience before coming to the United States?
5. How many years did you go school in your home country?
6. What language did your teacher speak in school and what classes did you take in school?
7. What textbooks did you have in school what materials were available to students?
8. Do any of the people you live with now speak English? Who has the highest level of education in your family
9. How do you deal with stress?
10. How is your support system? Who do you like to spend time with or talk to?

Appendix B: Participant Questions—United States

Name: _____ Date _____

United States

1. How many years did you go school in the United States and what grade did you start?
2. Which subjects are you favorite and why? Which subjects are you least favorite and why?
3. What are some of the similarities and difference between American schools and your native country schools?
4. What are some of your positive and negative experience being at American school?
5. What did you do if you don't understand or have difficulties with assignment in your class?
6. Who supports you to do well at school how important is this to you?
7. Do you believe your current education will help you prepare for the future? Why or why not
8. What are your future education plans and how will you achieve them?
9. What would you have done differently, if you knew what you know now.
10. What advice would you give to future SLIFE students?

Appendix C: IRB Approval



Institutional Review Board (IRB)

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

Name: Ahmed Ahmed
Email: aahmed@stcloudstate.edu

IRB PROTOCOL DETERMINATION: Expedited Review-1

Project Title: The experience of Somali SLIFE Students in the Midwest of the United States

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 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

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| SCSU IRB# 1824 - 2332 | Type: Expedited Review-1 | Today's Date: 6/11/2018 |
| 1st Year Approval Date: 6/11/2018 | 2nd Year Approval Date: | 3rd Year Approval Date: |
| 1st Year Expiration Date: 6/10/2019 | 2nd Year Expiration Date: | 3rd Year Expiration Date: |