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Immigrant Learning in Community Colleges: Unpacking Student Experiences in Minnesota

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IMMIGRANT LEARNING IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES: UNPACKING STUDENT

EXPERIENCES IN MINNESOTA

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by

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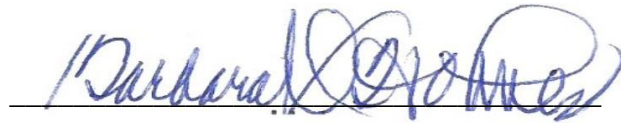In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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This dissertation, submitted by Abdulrazzaq S. Mursal in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Winona State University, Winona, Minnesota, is hereby approved by the committee under which the work was completed.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored lived experiences of Somali immigrant students as they studied at a community college in Minnesota. Although, many Somalis are pursuing educational opportunities in MN community colleges. Little research is available on their community college experiences. The aim of this study was to extend the limited research on Somali immigrant students by providing valuable information regarding their community college experiences. A qualitative study design with a phenomenological approach was employed to examine the lived experiences of six students who participated in semi-structured focus group and individual interviews. Findings of the study show that Somali students face many challenges in the community college setting. Challenges such as language barriers, financial constraints, family and work obligations, struggle with online learning and culture shock/acculturation. Based on the findings, it is clear that more should be done to ease such obstacles for immigrant students in MN community colleges.

Keywords: Community College, Open access, Immigrant, First-generation immigrant student, Phenomenology, Acculturation.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, Shaafi Macalin Mursal and Sahra Khaliif Axmad. My wife Nafisa and my children, Muhammad, Hamza, Mustafa and Ameera who stood by me, providing the necessary support and understanding to pull me through this process. There is absolutely no doubt that I could not have completed this journey without their love, and understanding.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Community colleges in the United States (US) admit an increasingly diverse student population annually. A growing proportion of community college students across the nation are immigrants or students who consider English to be a second language and not their primary dialect; such students require additional support in navigating core curricula in the American higher education system (Núñez et al., 2016). The provision of effective education to pupils of other nationalities is increasingly crucial for their personal success and for the economic and cultural health of the US, as well as the sustainability of institutions (Wisell & Champanier, 2015). The challenge for colleges in the US, particularly community colleges in urban areas with high immigrant population growth, lies in finding appropriate ways to serve the needs of culturally diverse students (Taylor, 2018). According to Teranishi et al. (2011), despite the substantial size of the immigrant student population, there is a lack of research available on the experiences of immigrant students at community colleges from the learner's perspective.

Purpose Statement

This qualitative study explored the experiences of Somali immigrant learners at a two-year community college in Minnesota. Bhatnagar (2017) illuminated that immigrant students require a responsive educational system to navigate the educational landscape in the US, even in secondary and postsecondary learning pursuits. Moreover, it is paramount to understand the perspective of immigrant learners due to the increasingly diverse environment of US cities.

Statement of the Problem

There is a gap in the literature regarding overall experiences of Somali immigrant learners attending two-year community colleges in Minnesota. Little information exists about the types of challenges immigrant learners face and the severity of such problems (Mutai, 2007). Previous research on immigrant learners in the US, however, suggests that students face overwhelming odds, trying to adapt to the norms associated with a new culture, environment, foreign education system, and social orientations (Owens & Lynch, 2012).

Background of the Problem

Immigrant students encounter challenges that differ depending on factors such as country of origin, race, ethnicity, and level of English language proficiency (Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell, & Utsey, 2005). In comparison to native-speaking counterparts, immigrant learners experience more challenges and distress in transitioning to college. Upon arrival in the US, an adult immigrant is responsible for various tasks, including finding accommodations, obtaining a driver's license, and registering for college, if pursuing higher education. Additional necessary tasks often include enrolling children in school, finding a job, getting a car, learning how to use public transportation systems, and identifying shops for groceries and other necessities (Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2015).

Language barriers also jeopardize a learner's well-being and capacity to adjust to college (Yeh & Inose, 2003). The level of an immigrant's oral or written English competency affects the quality of interaction with the host community. The needs of immigrant students in higher education, including those in community colleges, are unique, especially since immigrant

students are likely transitioning between different cultural environments by entering the community college landscape. Research indicates that immigrant students in community colleges, even when academically successful, often face psychological difficulties. Due to these challenges, immigrant students have more academic and career needs than native students (Shizha et al., 2020). To help immigrant students deal with stress upon arrival, researchers suggest that community colleges implement orientation programs addressing a variety of stressors such students are likely to face and providing them with coping mechanisms (Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003). Furthermore, community colleges should facilitate relations among immigrant students to help ease anxiety and stress as early as possible.

Given the situation, immigrant learners often find attending a community college to be more suitable, considering the level of financial challenges and social disadvantages with other college options. In evaluating the experiences of immigrant learners in community college, the strategic sensibility of choosing the community college path must also be considered a vital part of the success evaluation. In other words, the community college path presents its own unique context of challenges deserving consideration when evaluating college experiences. It is also important to compare other career elevating options that are open to immigrant learners. Many immigrant learners select community colleges because of open enrollment policies. (Cohen et al., 2013).

For anyone, studying at a higher education institution comes with an array of challenges and experiences, but being an immigrant adult student further complicates the process, thereby putting such learners in more demanding and stressful situations than local students (Schmidt & Graziono, 2016). For community colleges to assist immigrant learners there is a need for

educational researchers to provide important information related to the adjustment issues faced by immigrant students attending two-year community colleges in Minnesota.

As a result, community colleges must be ready to respond to these challenges. Lastly, contemporary issues involving immigrant learners and community colleges must always include conversations about immigration, how it has shaped the nation's past and present, and how it enriches the nation's collective identity (Graff, 2010).

Community Colleges: Past and Present

The seeds of the American community college sprouted before the Civil War as the product of the Congressional passage of the Morrill Act in 1862. This legislation was the first concrete expression of the belief that all citizens, not just a privileged few, deserve have access to higher education (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). The year 1921 saw another significant moment in the life of American community colleges: the establishment of the American Association of Junior Colleges. After World War II, community colleges emerged, offering a broader array of vocational programs to accommodate returning soldiers benefiting from the GI Bill, preparing them for jobs and re-entry into a peacetime economy. Receiving the endorsement of the Truman Commission in 1947, the colleges are a primary point of entry into higher education in the US, with the policy setting the stage for a public postsecondary education system for all Americans. Further, the recommendation set a new goal for post-secondary education: a national network of community colleges as a mechanism for providing universal access. The 1960s were the boom years for the community college movement, with about 45% of all 18-year-olds – baby boomers and the children of the returning WWII soldiers – matriculating in college. (Phillippe & Sullivan,

2005). This was a turning point in spurring a college-going culture, which underpins the research suggesting that college is a necessity for children, rather than a luxury.

In the second century of community colleges, new institutions face numerous challenges. American higher education is evolving from a European model introduced in the Middle Ages to one not-yet-fully reflective of the impending paradigm shift (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). Any contemporary model must allow for greater flexibility, fewer boundaries, and more varied structures. The hallmark of community colleges has always been flexible and rapid responses to learners' needs; thus, such schools are well positioned to lead this evolution. In the near future, the colleges must address these significant challenges, such as growing diversity in the student body and constant changes in technology.

The growing diversity of the student body is the foremost challenge over the next 20-to-30 years, based on population projections (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). One group of students includes newcomers who plan to transfer to baccalaureate-granting institutions. Another group is somewhat older, often lacking basic and English-language skills; this group seeks job skills for immediate entry into the workforce.

Community colleges must address the lifelong learning demands of all these groups through a comprehensive array of services that are constantly under scrutiny. This requires greater overall capacity and the willingness to let go of services that are no longer useful while rapidly deploying new services targeted to specific – even individualized – needs (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). Ultimately, this challenge focuses on ensuring an immigrant learner's academic success over a lifetime, regardless of the learner's backgrounds and goals.

Studying in College

The myriad challenges immigrants face in transitioning to the US deserve critical examination. Immigrant students adjusting to a new country must often grapple with factors such as English-language acquisition, post-traumatic stress disorder, inadequate social support networks, racial labeling and categorization, differing learning styles in new and different cultural scripts, a lack of social acceptance, and developmental issues. Immigrant learners must overcome linguistic drawbacks, accommodation issues, and socio-cultural differences in order to fit into and learn in a new environment (Click et al., 2017). As English is the standard of instruction in American classrooms, immigrant students originating from non-English countries encounter communication problems. Such students, however, have the option to learn English through English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. This group includes students from French-speaking, Spanish-speaking, and Asian countries (Rana, 2016). Even students from English-speaking nations sometimes struggle adjusting due to a lack of experience with American idioms, sarcasm, and slang. Further, immigrants may be misunderstood during conversation, unfamiliar with American's verbal and non-verbal clues and signs (Rana, 2016).

In the classroom, language fluency directly influences learning. Immigrants must acquire the specific vocabulary related to a discipline in addition to becoming adept in conversational English needed for everyday interactions between students and faculty (Ryan, 2008). Additionally, such students have to learn how to read academic materials and craft notes during instruction, how to take tests, and how to participate in academic discussions, forums, debates, and other verbal exchanges (Misra et al., 2003).

Immigrant students face a wide range of challenges, including those that are emotional, practical, or financial in nature. In order to achieve success, many students require appropriate

intervention. Immigrant students demonstrate a high level of resilience, able to overcome many challenges when they have support (Owens & Lynch, 2012). This resilience is closely associated with the development of coping strategies. Immigrant students often face language barriers while also juggling work, family, and school responsibilities, and battling a wide range of negative emotions associated with adapting to such changes. Overcoming these challenges often requires students to adjust their expectations and develop coping skills based on the time and situation. While scholars and practitioners should continue to recognize immigrant students' individual responsibilities related to these adjustments, more can be done to help these students adjust to life in America. This can be accomplished through more effective outreach programs and better education programs informing immigrant students about what to expect from community colleges.

Community Colleges as Gateways for Immigrant Learning

An increasing number of immigrant students in the US first enroll in community colleges as steppingstones toward four-year colleges and universities (West, 2018). Immigrants, adult learners, and other non-traditional learners prefer to join community colleges for various reasons. Community colleges have lower costs in terms of tuition and other academic fees. They embrace learners who are less academically prepared, and provide flexible course offerings, including online courses, evening and weekend classes, and hybrid courses. Community colleges incorporate modern technology, and the curricula place emphasis on occupational and technical skills. By offering small classes, such colleges ensure that students receive individualized learning. Community colleges attract immigrant learners, giving campuses diverse needs in terms of academic and social support.

Community colleges offer modularized curricula and certifications, making it easy for learners to acquire credentials in a short timeframe (Brown & Kurzweil, 2017). These institutions also have flexible entry, reentry, and exit procedures, and they often work hand in hand with local employers. Many of the immigrant learners may also grapple with entering a new educational environment, facing unfamiliar social and academic rules and the related challenges. Examples of community college classroom norms include the academic expectations of the teacher and the expected ways of addressing the teacher and fellow students. Furthermore, test taking, becoming accustomed to different teaching and learning styles, and the given activities/assignments often create further difficulties for immigrant students transitioning into community colleges.

Not only is the transition of immigrant students from their cultural environments to the community college classroom challenging, there may also be challenges outside of the classroom. Immigration transitions place stress on family relationships, often affecting performance in the college setting. Immigrant students have difficulties in learning the language and finding jobs, making it even harder for immigrant students in community college to achieve academic success (Brown & Kurzweil, 2017).

Experiences of Immigrant Students

The United States of America has always been a land of opportunity, where newcomers can achieve better lives through hard work and perseverance. The issue of higher education for immigrants is not just narrowly focused on the well-being of the immigrants as individuals, as it has major implications for the nation as a whole. As the US moves into the 21st century as part of a global economy in which postsecondary education is a key to economic competitiveness, it

is imperative to develop policies at the federal, state, local, and institutional levels to help immigrants gain access to and succeed in higher education. Without such policies, the nation may find itself with a workforce that does not have sufficient education to enable the US to remain economically competitive (Erisman & Looney, 2017).

During the 19th century, the percentage of foreign-born immigrants in the US was close to 15 percent; in 1924, when the US imposed a numerical limit on immigration, the percentage dropped dramatically, before rising again in the 1960s. Currently, the percentage of non-native-born persons living in the US is back up to approximately 13 percent of the total population. This number includes undocumented immigrants, green card holders, and naturalized citizens – in short, anybody who was not born here (Kelly, 2018).

Events related to immigrants and immigration continue to dominate the daily news cycle to this day. The US and other nations devote significant attention to issues faced by immigrants. Shifting demographics suggest that institutions of higher education will be impacted in the future as more prospective immigrant students pursue access to postsecondary opportunities. The US receives the largest number of immigrants in the world, with over a million legally receiving permanent residence each year (Camarota, 2010).

When immigrant students eager to take English classes visit a community college today, the students often hear about applying online for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and are told that they cannot register for classes until completing that application. Students who know little English and have limited computer skills can find this requirement daunting. Most give up after this initial visit, but if they persist and meet with an advisor, who explains they may not be able to receive any financial aid depending on immigration status, and that tuition is higher than tuition for US-born students. For recent immigrants in the 18-40 age

bracket, learning the language for communication and becoming gainfully employed, the situation can feel hopeless (Miller, 2016).

Immigrant students deal with language barriers, poverty, visible minority status, and unequal educational obstacles. Moreover, obstacles arise in the form of racism, neo-racism, discrimination, and microaggressions in society and school. These compounded disadvantages place an immigrant student, especially an undocumented student, among the most disadvantaged minority groups in the US today (DeAngelo, Schuster & Stebleton, 2016). These multiple disadvantages make it more difficult for community members to complete formal education, gain access to information about higher education, prepare for college, and have the financial resources sufficient to pursue a degree. It should not be surprising that many immigrant students on college campuses today are involved in activism (DeAngelo, Schuster & Stebleton, 2016).

First-Generation Immigrants

First-generation community college students with immigrant backgrounds are the first in their families to go to college in the US, and possibly even the first in the family to graduate from high school. This places them at the beginning of a very long and often confusing journey through the complex systems of higher education in the US.

The present reality is that community college campuses are becoming more diverse, which means that educators must be more aware of the complex cultural layers contributing to student experiences in the community college system (Perez, 2010; Vega, 2016). First-generation students from immigrant backgrounds go to college with a dream of securing a future that starts with earning a college degree. Unlike their peers with college-graduated parents, however, first-generation immigrant students come to college with little-or-no

knowledge of the US higher education system, and often exist in campus environments where very few people share their history. In the absence of family or anyone else to guide them, first-generation students from immigrant backgrounds are alone in navigating the spaces between home and community while adjusting to life as a college student (Alvarez, 2011).

Although some immigrants have exceedingly high qualifications, they often work in jobs that are below the knowledge or skill level for which the students have prepared. This is often due to the difficulty in transferring credentials of foreign diploma and training, especially those from third world and developing countries, which are not automatically equivalent in the US. This serves as an obstacle, denying immigrants the opportunity to access well-paying jobs in the American labor market. On the positive side, Porter's 2011 study on African immigrants indicated that they possess special cultural traits that make them persistent and employable. These traits include perseverance, hard work, education, dedication, self-awareness, self-responsibility, family values, and faith, which equip African immigrants with the strength and dedication to withstand challenges as they assimilate into mainstream American society (Chikanda & Morris, 2020).

Research Questions

To accomplish the purpose of this study, the researcher will explore the following questions:

Research Question 1: How do immigrant students describe learning in a community college setting?

Research Question 2: What academic support structures are used by immigrant learners in community colleges?

Research Question 3: What are the challenges faced by immigrant learners in acculturating to academic and social norms in community college learning?

Definition of Terms

This study explores the academic success of immigrant learners at a Minnesota community college. The terms used in this study are defined as follows:

Academic Success is whether a student fulfills the goal of completing the community college curriculum and transferring to a four-year college, or graduating with an associate's degree within the community college (York et al., 2015).

Cultural Adjustment is when individuals leave their own culture and move to another, naturally carrying personal backgrounds and life experiences to another country. A person's reactions to the new culture and how well they adjust to it often reflect the environment and expectations. This study refers to the process of adapting to the host culture with the community college educational setting as a backdrop (Cody, 2021).

Community College refers to a two-year college or technical institute, public or private, that provides a curriculum that leading to an associate's degree. Other programs in place include a transfer program toward a four-year degree and occupational programs, as well as one- and two-year programs of study (Chen, 2021).

First-generation immigrant student refers to a student born outside the US who resides in the US and possesses US citizenship or legal resident status (Horowitz, 2018).

An immigrant is any person making the decision to relocate and establish a new, permanent home in a different country (Budiman, 2020).

Significance of Study

This study is significant because community colleges continue to serve as gateways to opportunity in the US, offering high-quality education programs and services that meet the needs of an increasingly diverse national population. Students, whether enrolled for a few courses or a full-degree program, expect to leave with the knowledge and skills needed for effective participation in the country's workforce and civic life. Community colleges open the door for those who aspire to a higher standard of living (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). The reasons for choosing to attend such colleges are as diverse as the students themselves: ease of access, low cost, excellent academic programs that meet learners' and employers' needs, a broad array of support services, proximity to students' homes, the flexibility of scheduling, a welcoming campus environment, and links to other levels of education. In an era when most jobs require at least some college education and most people expect to work outside the home for a major portion of their lives, the decision to attend college is not a luxury, but a necessity. For the more than 6.5 million students taking courses for credit each fall, such institutions are often chosen for college (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005).

Immigrant learners find community colleges to be excellent entry points into higher education. At present, the majority of newcomers in this country begin postsecondary studies at community colleges, and the low tuition is undoubtedly an essential factor. Greater diversity in the student population may help immigrants – who are often the first in their households to attend college – feel at home on campus. Many colleges offer targeted services for immigrant students, including English language studies and social activities (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). In general, community colleges play an essential role in educating and providing immigrant students with an entry point into higher education and beyond. Community colleges offer a broad

array of educational opportunities, including liberal education; vocational and technical education; adult, continuing, and community education; developmental, remedial, and college-preparatory education; and counseling, placement, and student development services. Community colleges are the arteries running into higher education for many working-class and minority students, who are more likely to be non-white, with parents holding working-class jobs and making less than the median family income. Contemporary community colleges are the destination for many students with diverse objectives and backgrounds. Today, immigrant students are found in any given community in the US. The distinctive contribution made by community colleges to American higher education is interfacing the adaptive, transmutable mission of education with front-line, local society. Because of this, community colleges are increasingly popular choices for those wishing to pursue higher education, and are especially attractive to immigrant learners.

Summary

The chapter provided an overview of this research study on the factors contributing to overall college experiences of immigrant learners at a community college in Minnesota. The chapter included the purpose of the study, problem statement, background of the problem, and three major research questions. Moreover, the significance of the research and key terms were covered. Chapter II presents a literature review exploring research relevant to immigrant learners and academic success in the community college setting. Chapter III explains the methodology used in this qualitative study. Chapter IV details the findings of this study, followed by a discussion of those findings in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore Somali immigrant learners in community colleges and their experiences. The chapter began with a brief explanation of the search strategy used in this chapter, followed by historical perspective of community colleges. Chapter two will cover Somali immigrant learners in Minnesota, their culture, values, struggles and support system. This chapter will explore other major elements, variables, and subsections of research about Somali students attending MN community colleges. The final section will discuss the theoretical connection to the study of immigrant learners in community colleges.

Search Strategy

The search strategy for this study starts with forming a literature review components outline. The literature review comprises peer-reviewed articles, books, dissertations, professional journals, and web-based information from government offices and nonprofit organizations. Winona State University's online library database search engines provided the researcher with multiple resources using the following search terms: *community colleges, open access, immigration trends, and Somali community in Minnesota, struggle for education, remedial instruction,* and *acculturation in community colleges*. To search for information the researcher uses following sources; the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), Google Scholar, ProQuest, Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCO), and SAGE databases. Over 60 sources, dating

from the 1980s to the present, were identified with relevant material. The majority were

published within the last 10 years. Older sources will include providing the reader an outlook of

the permanency and history of the topic. Reference management software (Zotero) will be

utilized to help manage bibliographic data and related research materials.

Historical Overview of U.S. Immigration

Across America, in small rural towns and metropolitan cities alike, the United States,

more than ever before is a nation of immigrants. The Asian ancestors of Native Americans

arrived first, crossing the land bridge that linked Russia and Alaska sometime between 25,000

B.C. and 10,000 B.C. Barbour (1995) stated, during the Colonial period, most immigrants came

from Northern Europe, mainly Britain, France, Scandinavia and the Netherlands. Then came the

next wave of European immigration, which continued for most of 1800s. This group included

Irish, Germans, and people from Greece and Turkey. More than 11 million or about 30 percent

of all immigrants are from Mexico, one of the nearest neighbors of the United States. Another 20

percent of immigrants are from other countries in Latin America, with the largest numbers from

Central America and the Caribbean. The largest group of immigrants, those from Mexico and

Central America, has less education, on average, than the native-born American population.

Acts of Congress on Immigration

After certain states passed immigration laws following the Civil War, the Supreme Court

in 1876 declared the regulation of immigration to be a federal responsibility. The outbreak of

World War I reduced immigration from Europe, but mass immigration resumed upon the war's

conclusion, and Congress responded with a new immigration policy: the national-origins quota

system passed in 1921 and revised in 1924. Immigration remained relatively low during the 20 years following World War II, because the 1920s national-origins system remained in place after Congress re-codified and combined all previous immigration and naturalization law into the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952.

The 1990 Immigration Act modified and expanded the 1965 act; it significantly increased the total level of immigration to 700,000, increasing available visas 40 percent. The act retained family reunification as the major entry path, while more than doubling employment-related immigration. The 1990 Act also mandated a study of immigration, later known as the Jordan Commission. The Commission covered many facets of immigration policy, but started from the perception that the "Credibility of immigration policy can be measured by a simple yardstick: people, who should get in, do get in; people who should not get in, are kept out; and people who are judged deportable are required to leave." From there, in a series of four reports, the commission looked at all aspects of immigration policy.

The most recent amnesty, passed in 2000, was the Legal Immigration Family Equity Act. In 2006, the issue of immigration reform was once again discussed in Congress. In 2012 president, Obama announced an executive order entitled Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which resulted in renewable two-year grants of protection from deportation plus work permits and identity documents for approximately 700,000 illegal immigrants who arrived in the country as children.

Trump-era Immigration

Donald Trump won the 2016 presidential election in an unexpected upset, with immigration at the heart of his campaign rhetoric. Trump made a number of pledges on immigration throughout his campaign. Build a border wall and make Mexico pay for it, deport all illegal aliens, defund sanctuary towns, prevent Muslims from entering the US, and limit legal immigration are just a few of the pledges.

Trump's tough immigration positions helped him to shock the 16 other prominent Republican contenders in the primary contest. Trump went on to defeat Hillary Clinton in the general election, despite the fact that he was running unopposed.

After inauguration, President Trump made varying degrees of progress on his campaign trail immigration pledges. In 2017, he signed several executive orders. He signed a travel ban that restricted admission of the citizens of what was ultimately seven Muslim countries including Somalia. In addition, Trump banned over 135 million potential immigrants and nonimmigrant visitors. Furthermore, Trump announced plans to phase out DACA, making the potential recipients eligible for deportation. A federal judge ruled the program must resume processing new applicants, and Totenberg (2020) reported that in a major rebuke to President Trump, the U.S. Supreme Court has blocked the administration's plan to dismantle DACA.

Fifty years ago, the U.S. population was 89 percent white and 10 percent black. Latinos, Asians, and other minority groups constituted a very small of the demographic pie. Due to immigration, everything has changed. Today, more than one-quarter of Americans are not white. Hispanics now account for 18.5 percent of the population ("U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States," n.d.). Frey (2020), the new 2020 U.S. Census Bureau of race and ethnic

population estimates show that nearly four of 10 Americans identify with a race or ethnic group other than white, and suggest that the 2010 to 2020 decade will be the first in the nation's history in which the white population declined in numbers. The Latino or Hispanic and Asian American population shares showed the most marked gains, at 18.5% and nearly 6%, respectively. Since 2010, the white population share declined in all 50 states, and in 358 of the nation's 364 metropolitan areas and 3,012 of its 3,141 counties.

Historical Background of the Community College

Community colleges are uniquely American concept, typically public, two-year institutions closely associated with the geographic regions they serve. With an open-door policy, community colleges provide a wide range of educational programs. The origins of American community colleges are openness, access, and flexibility (American Association of Community Colleges, 2017). Community colleges are well known for capacity and preparedness to add, modify, or change educational programs and course offerings. This advantage is particularly relevant to career programs, as it enables community colleges to remain current and relevant to the work environment. Students are able to graduate with current skills that lead to sustainable occupations, getting a competitive salary. Chen (2019) agreed with this view, stating that, community colleges are quickly transforming their curriculum to meet today's economic demands. Whether one is unemployed or considering a career shift, the local community college may be the best foundation for a new career.

In an article published in 2017 by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), for over 100 years, community colleges have played a unique and important role in the American higher education system (American Association of Community Colleges, 2017).

Throughout this period, many things have changed in the country and in higher education. The mission of community colleges has centered on providing affordable and accessible postsecondary education opportunities for those they serve. Today, a national focus on increasing the number of postsecondary graduates has placed community colleges in the forefront of this effort. Across the country, they are responding to the demands of various stakeholders, including students, business and industry, state and federal governments, and accreditation agencies (American Association of Community Colleges, 2017).

The roots of the American community college system of education can be traced to the beginnings of the 19th and early 20th centuries (Cohen & Kisker, 2003). Many of the early forerunners of community colleges arose in response to federal initiatives, including the Morrill Act of 1862, which encouraged students to study agriculture as well as mechanical arts (American Association of Community Colleges, 2017), to promote the education of the industrial classes at that time in the nation's history.

Some of the early higher education systems became extensions of high schools, such as with the creation of Joliet Junior College (JJC) in 1901 in Illinois, the first community college in the United States (American Association of Community Colleges, 2017). JJC was established for students who wanted to go to college but did not have financial means, and who wanted to remain in their communities while attending classes. From their origins at JJC, community colleges have always existed all across the United States for people who needed affordable and accessible higher education. Public demands for more post-secondary education have grown considerably in response to increased numbers of students graduating from high schools over the decades. Some of those students, however, were not qualified for university admissions. Increasing the numbers of community colleges was seen as the solution to the increasing

pressure for four-year academic institutions to admit freshmen, whom the universities viewed as unqualified for their level of learning. Although two-year colleges can be private, public, or proprietary, public institutions embody the majority of community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 2017).

In 1920 - 1921, a milestone in the development of the community college system of education was met through the founding of the American Association of Junior Colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 2017). Later named The American Association of Community Colleges, the association delivers a national focus and leadership for the country's community, junior, and technical colleges.

During first half of the 20th century, 4-year colleges and universities, the destiny for many who finished their secondary education, were expensive, often far from home, and seen as opportunities for more elite citizens. At this same time, 2-year institutions were being formed across the country, changing the way Americans perceived postsecondary education. These 2-year junior colleges were advantageous for students needing to be closer to home, requiring a less expensive college experience, and who were not ready academically to be successful at a university (Cohen & Kisker., 2003).

As community colleges grew, 2-year junior colleges began to form their own visions and missions. They were quick to respond to the needs and pressures of their communities to meet the many educational and training demands. Cohen & Kisker., (2003), stated that community colleges thrived on the new responsibilities because they had no traditions to defend, no alumni to question their role, no autonomous professional staff to be moved aside.

Consequently, the greatest demands placed on junior colleges were created by World War II and needs to provide higher education services to service men and women returning to

their communities. Financial aid programs were established that assisted veterans with tuition for higher education and provided them with living expenses while attending college (Cohen & Kisker., 2003). The G. I. Bill contributed greatly to the growth of postsecondary institutions. According to the AACC (2017), after World War II, the conversion of military industries to consumer goods created new, skilled jobs. This economic transformation along with the GI Bill created the drive for more higher education options.

In 1944, Congress passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, known as the GI Bill of Rights, which was instrumental in helping scores of Americans gain a college level education. The "GI Bill" was instituted to provide financial assistance to veterans of World War II who wished to pursue a college education after the war. Serving as a milestone of federal funding, the bill helped remove social and economic obstacles for millions of American war veterans, including thousands of women and African-Americans who wanted to attend college but who would have otherwise been unable to do so (The Pell Institute, 2013).

In 1946, Jesse R. Bogue, then the executive secretary of the American Association of Junior Colleges, popularized the term "community" college. About this time, American colleges and universities were overwhelmed by a sudden increase of the numbers of new and often underqualified students, draining financial and human resources. To resolve this, United States President Harry S. Truman and the United States Commission on Higher Education in the summer of 1946 met with a national panel of educators and consultants to study solutions to the growing higher educational dilemma. The commission's result, referred to as the Truman Report was released in 1947 (Cohen & Kisker., 2003) made dramatic recommendations focusing on higher education opportunities for all students regardless of religious, race, or economic limitations.

In 1947, President Truman established the President's Commission on Higher Education. The Truman Commission report affirmed that everyone, without regard to sex, race, or wealth, should have access to higher education. The report identified 2-year postsecondary institutions as a conduit for Americans to advance their career goals. In 1948, the Truman Commission concluded that "at least 49 percent of the population had the capacity to complete fourteen years of schooling and at least 32 percent were able to complete an advanced liberal or professional education (The Pell Institute, 2013).

The impact of the Truman Commission on the significant expansion of community colleges over the next 20 years cannot be understated. The movement also came with a progressive renaming of this 2-year system. The Truman Commission suggested that the term junior college be amended to community college and its mission be redefined to more accurately reflect the functions being performed. The Commission recommended that number of community colleges be expanded across the country to meet the needs and demands of American citizens.

In the mid-1950s, many of the Truman Commission's initiatives were realized as the development of new community colleges and the expansion of existing campuses began. As a result, community colleges saw progressively greater student enrollments over the next 20 years. Construction of new community colleges across the nation soared in the 1970s. Community colleges could be found in every state across the country. The Truman Commission had encouraged accessible and affordable education for those entering into the community college system. Cohen & Kisker., (2003) stated, the democratizing pursuit was realized as the community colleges became the point of first access for people entering higher education in the late 1970's". Although community colleges still held many of the core functions outlined by the

Truman Commission and its historic mission, they needed to change with the times and retool.

Vocational technology and working with students who enter the system less prepared than others

became a challenge for the community college system.

In fall 2019, there were 1,044 community colleges that served nearly 6.8 million full-time

and part-time students across the United States. About 2.4 million were full-time students, and

4.4 million were part-time (American Association of Community Colleges - Fast facts, 2021). To

this day, community colleges operate under the original vision of William Rainey Harper at the

turn of the century. The mission and vision have not changed, and community colleges continue

to provide the first two years of baccalaureate education for students who want to pursue higher

education before transferring to a four-year institution. The community college "open door"

policy and its basic mission of being accessible, affordable, and providing life-long- learning is

central to its core (Cohen & Kisker., 2003).

Minnesota Community Colleges

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU) consists of 30 separately

accredited two-year colleges and seven universities which offer more than 4,000 programs on 54

campuses and online. The MnSCU system serves about 340,000 students annually in both credit

and non-credit courses, with more Students of Color and American Indian Students attending

MnSCU schools than all other higher education providers in Minnesota combined (MnSCU).

Tuition is approximately $6,639 per year for in-state students and $7,204 for out-of-state

students. The average community college acceptance rate is 85%. Minnesota community

colleges have a diversity score of 0.58, which is lower than the national average of 0.73.

Minority enrollment is 37%, majority Black and Hispanic, and the student: teacher ratio is 29:1 (Community College Review, 2021).

MnSCU's student population also includes nearly 25,000 Minnesota high school students who earn college credit through the Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) program. Students participate in the PSEO program by attending college classes at a MnSCU institution, enrolling in on-line courses, or attending college-level courses taught in their high school through the PSEO concurrent enrollment option. MnSCU serves approximately 82 percent of all the state's PSEO students.

Data Limitations

Johnson (2017) explained that education information to identify Somali students is unavailable at the state level as a result of the MN Department of Education presently uses solely the federal race categories. Anyone of African descent would only elect the "Black and African American" category. In addition, the American state Language Survey has limitations because not all families indicate whether their children speak their native language. There are "foreigners" data showing that there were 25,668 people in Minnesota in 2016, but it is difficult to use because their offspring born in the United States are not counted in this census. Another solution is to select "black" and "English learner" in the education data, but this does not include Somali students who have not been identified as English Learners. Therefore, student data at the state level on test scores or graduation rates is unavailable.

Minnesota State Data for All Immigrants

Higher Ed Immigration Portal (2021) states that higher education in the U.S. benefits

from the participation of immigrant and international students. First and second-generation

individuals comprise 28% of all students enrolled in higher education, a growing figure that

underscores the importance of immigrant-origin students in the classroom and our workforce

("Minnesota," 2021).

Type of Student	Number of Students
All Students in Higher Education in Minnesota	409,000
First-Generation Immigrant Students	12,000
Second-Generation Immigrant Students	26,000
International Students	15,378

Source: Higher ED Immigration Portal

Definitions of Key Terminology

First-generation immigrants were born abroad and immigrated to the U.S. First-generation

immigrants include undocumented immigrants. First-generation immigrants do not include

international students on a visa.

Second-generation immigrants are U.S.-born individuals with at least one immigrant parent.

Open access: access to the full range of college experiences, including all those of a personal,

social, and economic nature

History of Somalia

Somalia is located in eastern Africa, bordered by Kenya to the south, Ethiopia to the west, Gulf of Aden to the north, and Indian Ocean to the east. Traditionally, Somalis are nomadic pastoralists, though agricultural systems developed in the nation's southern river valleys. The capital city of Mogadishu and other urban areas have been important sites for industrial development and trade. Topographically, there are plains in the south, mountains in the north, and deserts in the middle and the west. The land of Somalia is about 637,657 square miles with an estimated population of 10,085,638. The country has the longest coast of mainland of Africa. Putman & Noor (1993) point to that, climate is the primary factor in much of Somali life. With hot, dry weather year-round, except at the higher elevations in the north. Most of Somalia has a somewhat dry climate suitable primarily for the nomadic pastoralism that more than half the population practices.

The more than 1,880-mile coastline of Somalia has supported a fishing industry and been a center for maritime trade for centuries. Somalis have used these trade routes to migrate to the Middle East, Asia, and Europe in search of economic and educational opportunities. Somalia had special importance for the ancient world. Somalis controlled parts of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea and dominated the regional trade. Archeological facts connect Somalia to merchants from ancient Egypt (Farid & McMahan, 2004).

In the early twentieth century, European governments gained control of Somali lands and divided up the area. The British claimed northern Somalia, now known as Somaliland; the Italians seized southern Somalia, and the French took northwestern Somalia, which is now the country of Djibouti. During the colonial period, Somalis resisted foreign occupation but failed to

gain independence until after World War II, when both Italy and England were pressured to end their colonial regimes in Africa.

Somalia became a democratic nation in 1960, after gaining independence from Great Britain and Italy, through a peaceful transition of power. In 1969, however, General Mohamed Siad Barre led a military coup, forcing Somalis into political, economic, and social turmoil.

On Oct. 21, 1969, the Somali president was assassinated and General Mohamed Siad Barre led a successful and bloodless coup. General Barre ruled the country for more than 20 years. Many Somalis organized a resistance movement that intensified in the late 1980s and forced Barre out of office. Since the fall of General Barre's administration in 1991, many Somalis fled the violence and sought refuge in other countries.

Somalis in the United States

According to Putman & Noor (1993), the first Somali immigrants came to the United States in the 1920s and settled in the New York area. Most were sailors. Although some worked in steel mills, and most came from northern Somalia. These early immigrants became naturalized Americans.

In the 1960s, Somali students began coming to the United States, mostly on U.S. government or U.N. scholarships or through the support of relatives who were living in the United States. Many returned home after their studies and contributed greatly to the development of their country. In the mid- I 980s, small numbers of Somalis were admitted to the United States as refugees. In 1991, as a result of the civil war, their numbers increased. Today, the heaviest concentrations of Somalis in the US are found in Minneapolis and Saint Paul, followed by Washington, DC; Columbus, Ohio; New York City; Buffalo, New York; Kansas City; San Diego; San Francisco; Seattle metro areas (Wilhide, 2018).

Somali Community in Minnesota

For decades, Minnesota has been a favorable destination for immigrants coming to the

U.S. (Ibrahim, 2017, p. 27). Ibrahim continues with, unlike Somalis, Scandinavians and Germans

moved to Minnesota because the climate was much like their homeland, as was the soil for

farming. Somalis hail from an arid land on the horn of Africa.

Somalis started arriving in Minnesota in 1992. Nearly all the Somalis in Minnesota are

refugees admitted into the United States under the Refugee Act of 1980 (Potocky-Tripodi, 2004).

Most Somalis came to Minnesota as secondary immigrants, meaning that they lived in other

parts of the United States previously. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on

it's "Somali refugee health profile," page indicated that, Minnesota receives a significant number

of secondary refugee arrivals, with the largest numbers coming from New York and Texas. From

2010 to 2016, the Minnesota Department of Health was notified of 3,740 secondary arrivals.

However, the true number of secondary Somali arrivals is likely much higher, as the state is not

always notified.

In 2021, Minnesota hosts one of the largest Somali communities in the Somali diaspora.

The majority of Somalis in Minnesota live in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, while others

have settled in smaller towns throughout the state. Many Somalis have chosen Minnesota

because of their social networks, for educational and employment opportunities, and to access an

array of services. Somalis arrived in Minnesota with social and cultural resources to help them

adapt. They have built extensive social and professional networks that have helped them find

housing, employment, and educational opportunities. They have faced challenges, too, including

separation from family and friends, learning English while preserving their native language, and

maintaining cultural and religious practices in a multicultural society. Some struggle to obtain

housing that meets their needs, to find jobs that meet their skill levels, and to succeed in secondary and higher education systems.

Although, many Somalis are pursuing educational opportunities in MN community colleges. Little research is available on their educational experiences. Sutherland (2011) studied, seven foreign-born Black immigrant men in a community college found that family, peers, and community played an important role in these Black male immigrant students' academic achievement. Black students developed their own strategies to cope with institutional obstacles such as being given misinformation and being treated poorly. There are no collected data on educational achievement and graduation rates specific to Somalis, anecdotal evidence is encouraging. Somalis in Minnesota are in classrooms at every educational level from kindergarten to college. Somalis see education as a way to achieving a better quality of life. The aim of this study is to extend the limited research on Somali immigrant students by providing valuable information regarding their community college experiences.

A Strong Sense of Communal Identity

Kapteijns & Arman (n.d.) contended that Somalis have a strong sense of communal identity and cultural confidence and pride. Recent Somali immigrants often go out of their way to live together in the same towns, neighborhoods, and buildings, and almost immediately establish dugsis, or informal Quranic schools, for their children. Their solidarity and mutual support in times of emergency, such as labor disputes, illness, or death, are extraordinary. Somali immigrants are often entrepreneurial, undertaking joint economic ventures and pooling financial, labor, and other resources. They have their own well-established ways of settling disputes and disagreements within the community, courts of law have become a crucial instrument for many.

The Somalis certainly appear to form the strongly knit, inward-looking ethnic community that, according to the scholarship, might ground immigrant youth in their own ethnic culture.

Attitudes toward Children and Education

Somali parents have been extremely family and child oriented, with motherhood and childrearing central to women's social status and self-perception. From the 1950s onward, Somalis have had strong positive attitudes toward, and expectations of, modern education.

Even if many Somali youth do not have parents with adequate English proficiency to help them with their homework, most parents, as well as the community at large, see education as the major strategy to escape poverty. They have great respect for the university graduate (Kapteijns & Arman, n.d.) Somali parents have shown that they are ready to move to find optimal conditions for family life, especially housing, employment and education.

Many books, articles and studies were examined, all bringing up the experiences of immigrant students as they pursue higher education in the United States. This study pursued to explore the lived experiences of Somali immigrant students in Minnesota community colleges. However, given the background of limited literature on Somali or East African immigrant students, the literature review revolved around literature on the experiences of immigrant students, the large group that also includes Somali immigrants.

The Immigrant Struggle for Education

When they arrive, adult immigrant learners are challenged to overcome linguistic drawbacks, accommodation issues, and socio-cultural differences in order to fit into and learn in a new environment (Wu et al., 2015). Porter & Umbach (2019) conducted a "Revealing Institutional Strengths and Challenges (RISC)" survey in which they asked students about challenges they face while in community colleges. Personal issues, such as balancing work,

paying expenses, and meeting the demands of family and friends all present obstacles for a large

percentage of community college students who responded to our survey. Many students report

obstacles in areas directly related to academic experience, including online classes, parking on

campus, developmental courses, faculty, doing college-level work, and registering for courses.

Community college students have considerable demands of time and resources that

present obstacles to college success. Work-related challenges are at 61 % and community college

students indicated that work hours did not leave enough time for study, and an additional 36 %

said that work prevented them from using campus resources. Approximately half reported that

their pay was not enough to cover their expenses while in school, and one-third said their work

schedule conflicted with class times (Porter & Umbach, 2019)

Farid & McMahan (2004) cite that Somali immigrants also face stress in social areas such

as housing and financing. Due to the financial strains and burdens faced by many in the Somali

immigrant community; they are left with no option but to live in Minneapolis in low-income

apartments. This affects the education opportunities the school children have. Yet, the benefits of

living in the inner city include social activity, availability of religious services, and for the social

support of the larger Somali community.

One of the most noticeable barriers new arrivals experience is the English language.

Somali immigrants enter an environment very different from the one they left behind. The

language barrier often hampers immigrant's efforts to communicate, find a job and navigate

through the education system. As English is the medium of instruction in American classrooms,

immigrant students who originate from countries that do not use English encounter

communication problems. However, they are able to learn English through English as a Second

Language (ESL) classes. This group of students includes those who come from French-speaking

nations, Spanish-speaking countries, and Asian countries (Wu et al., 2015. Even students who come from English-speaking nations sometimes struggle adjusting due to a lack of experience with American idioms, sarcasm, and slang. Further, immigrants may be misunderstood during conversation, as they may be unfamiliar with American's verbal and non-verbal cues and gestures.

The language barrier impact students' performance in the classroom and on standardized exams used as part of the admissions process. In the classroom, language fluency directly impacts learning. Immigrants must acquire the specific vocabulary related to a discipline, as well as become adept in conversational English in order to negotiate the daily interactions between students and faculty (Wu et al., 2015. Moreover, they have to learn how to read academic materials; craft notes during instruction; take tests; and participate in academic discussions, forums, debates, and other verbal exchanges (Misra et al., 2020).

Limited English proficiency would cause students to take developmental education, which adds time towards degree completion and cost of a degree. Rowland and Davis (2014) stated that language barrier could be one of the obstacles that immigrant learners have to deal with. There could also be problems such as course subjects studied which are unfamiliar to immigrant students due to unfamiliar cultural orientation. New arrivals with English Language proficiency find more opportunities in metropolitan areas. Some migrate to other areas offering more abundant job opportunities (Ibrahim, 2017, p. 49). Most immigrants take the first job that becomes available to them.

Mishra (2020) investigates social capital on community college students and states that limited social capital can affect students' access to information and other resources about college. Limited social capital may be observed in students who have few college-educated role

models who could share their higher education experiences or those with limited social connections to aid in navigating into and within the higher education system. Different cultural expectations in the home and school environments could place immigrant students in the difficult position of not knowing which set of rules and expectations to follow. In particular, gendered notions from parents about what career path their daughters should pursue can affect female students' ambition and participation in certain coursework.

Certain practices within the education system can create biases against immigrant students. Meanwhile, assimilationist policies that seek to Americanize students do not acknowledge the rich linguistic and cultural knowledge that students from other cultures already possess. Responsibilities to the family like taking care of younger siblings, helping with housework, or acting as a cultural and language liaison can divert students' attention from their schoolwork. These obligations can also make it difficult for immigrant students to leave home for college or to participate fully in the collegiate life.

Remedial Courses

Academically, many immigrant students are not prepared for college coursework. Before they can enroll in college-level courses, these students often need remedial education, which has been found to be correlated with low rates of persistence and degree attainment (Teranishi et al., 2011).

Pannoni & Kerr (2020) explain that remedial education, sometimes called developmental education, aims to prepare students who are considered underprepared for college-level courses. More than two-thirds of community college students take at least one developmental course, according to a 2018 study by the Center for the Analysis of Postsecondary Readiness (Pannoni &

Kerr, 2020). These remedial courses are noncredit courses, aiming to improve student skills and success in college-level programs.

Across the U.S., millions of immigrant and native English speakers enroll in community colleges every year only to learn that they need to take classes that will not count toward their degrees because they cover material that they should have learned in high school. Gordon (2016) further explained that developmental courses are supposed to prepare students for college-level work and do not carry credits counting toward degrees or certificates. However, the more such courses that student are required to take, the more likely they are to drop out before they get to credit-bearing classes.

Theoretical Framework

Underpinning all research is the presence of a theoretical framework. Theoretical framework demonstrates an understanding of theories and concepts that are relevant to the research and relate to the broader areas of knowledge being considered.   The theoretical frameworks that will serve as the foundation of this study are Berry's Modes of Acculturation (Berry, 1980), Schlossberg' (1989) marginality theory and Tinto's model Student Integration.. In addition to having to deal with all of the challenges and changes their U.S. classmates do, immigrant learners in community colleges are also confronted with a wide variety of potential new challenges such as lack of familiarity with the academic system, immersion in a new culture, and the loss of closeness to family and friends (Sullivan, 2015, p. 1).

Berry's Model of Acculturation

Acculturation is the process by which migrants to a new culture develop relationships with the new culture and maintain their original culture (Berry & Sam, 1997). Acculturation

refers to dealing with psychological stress, acquiring new skills, and developing a sense of identity and belonging during cultural transition or when navigating between different cultural groups (Schachner et al., 2017). Acculturation orientations refer to the orientation toward ethnic culture and mainstream or host culture, including the respective identity components. They form the attitudinal component of the acculturation process and facilitate psychological and sociocultural adjustment. Integration, which is an orientation toward both ethnic and mainstream culture, has long been perceived as the most adaptive strategy (Berry, 1997). However, depending on the context and the particular outcome (psychological or sociocultural), a stronger orientation toward the ethnic or mainstream culture can be more adaptive (Schachner et al., 2017).

Much of the research done in recent years has investigated international student distress associated with culture shock (Sullivan, 2015, p. 2), psychological difficulties associated with their arrival in the U.S., and help seeking behaviors. Acculturative stress has been defined as one kind of stress, in which the stressors are identified as having their source in the process of acculturation; a particular set of stress behaviors that occur during acculturation, such as lowered mental health status (especially confusion, anxiety, depression), feelings of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptoms, and identity confusion. While these symptoms of distress are similar to other stress responses, acculturative stress has been identified as resulting from and arising out of the act of moving to and living in a new culture, including somatic manifestations, depression, anxiety and decreased self-esteem. In addition to the difficulties immigrant students experience with cultural change (Sullivan, 2015, p. 2).

Sullivan (2015) points out that acculturation mode is identified as an individual's level of desired contact with the host culture as well as the home culture. The four resulting categories

are related to the attitude or perspective-acculturating individuals take with regards to the host culture and people as well as toward the individual's home culture and people. In the case of a Somali immigrant in the U.S., if he values maintaining his Somali identity and connections to other Somali students, as well as building relationships with U.S. students, he would be considered to have an Integration acculturation mode. As another example, a Kenyan student who values maintaining his Kenyan identity, while not engaging with U.S. students or culture would be considered to be pursuing a Separation acculturation mode.

Marginality Theory

The theory of marginality refers to the way that an environment can affect how students view their place within that particular institutional culture. Schlossberg (1989) was the first scholar to apply ideas of marginality to the college student population, and most specifically adult learners. Schlossberg (1989) described marginality as feeling one's position as far from the center of the context, so in an educational setting, feeling as if one does not belong at the institution for varying reasons.

Schlossberg (1989) used the model of centrality to define marginality, where if one views the educational context as an environmental concept, those for whom the environment is intended are at the center of the model. However, if one does not belong to the primary group or is in some way different from the intended audience, feelings of being pushed to the margins are possible. Feeling marginalized can happen in physical and abstract spaces, such as the campus environment being both made of brick and mortar and of the culture of the institution as well. Marginality can occur in educational contexts as a result of being culturally different from the majority (Schlossberg, 1989).

The marginality theory suggested that students who build view that they do not belonged in college are likely to achieve negative outcomes. Schlossberg's theory emphasized that importance of postsecondary institutions to reach out to new students, especially the ones who are less likely to be prepared for college, to make them feel included (Dunn, 2002). This theory is relevant with the framework of a qualitative research that aims to explore about immigrant learners in community. Most of the Somali community college students are immigrants and low-income. These students are also identified as marginalized means individuals who may believe their own personal experiences or social norms are not welcomed in higher education. In addition, the marginalization interferes with these individual students' abilities to adapt successfully while in the community college settings (Council for Opportunity in Education, 2007).

Tinto Student Integration Model

Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model (SIM), determined factors that can increase student retention. Tinto declared that students who are not sufficiently integrated into the social and academic aspects of a college or university tend to "dropout" or remove themselves from their purported plans of study.

Tinto points out that student integration into an institution can occur along two dimensions, the academic and the social. Academic integration occurs when students become attached to the intellectual life of the college, while social integration occurs when students create relationships and connections outside of the classroom. These two concepts, though analytically distinct, interact with and enhance one another (Thomas, 2000). In addition, while students must be integrated into the institution along both dimensions to increase their likelihood of persistence, they need not be equally integrated along the two. Likewise, Tinto notes that there

are both formal and informal systems within institutions that can encourage integration and persistence.

Tinto's framework has been applied to myriad studies of student persistence in postsecondary education. Its usefulness for community college students, however, has been questioned, as it is assumed that community colleges provide students with fewer opportunities for social integration and that the social aspect of postsecondary education may be less appealing to students attending two-year commuter institutions.

Moreover, one typical institutional response to Tinto's work has been to implement structured student support services meant to encourage integration. Community colleges in particular have taken this approach. The underlying assumption is that if colleges provide enough structured opportunities for students to engage with the institution, students will become integrated into the college and persist at higher rates. However, as evidenced by the continuing low levels of persistence at these institutions, it is not clear that such efforts have been effective. Perhaps students do not know about these services, or do not make use of them.

Kantemneni et al. (2016) reported that immigrant students often had feelings of anxiety and depression. It is important to connect this vulnerable population of students with others they can trust in order for them to be successful academically. Institutional oppression may affect the psychological well-being of students from underrepresented backgrounds. Academic issues and institutional marginalization are major stressors immigrant students experience when pursuing higher education. Immigrant students continually feel similar distress when confronted with systemic barriers, which prevent them from accessing educational opportunities such as scholarships and internships.

Summary

Chapter II presented the review of literature, immigrant learning in community colleges and their experiences. Additionally, this chapter described the theoretical framework undergirding this qualitative phenomenological study. Chapter III will outline the methodology the researcher will to explore the experiences of immigrant learners in community colleges. Chapter IV will present study findings, followed by a discussion of those findings in Chapter V.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Chapter three introduces the research methodology for this qualitative phenomenological study. Exploring lived experiences of immigrant learners in a two-year community college in Minnesota is the purpose of this inquiry. This chapter presents the research questions, study design, and rationale for the methodology, including the role of the researcher. Additionally, Chapter III describes the research setting, study sample, and the protocol for participant selection. The chapter covers data collection and analysis procedures, followed by a discussion of trustworthiness, study limitations, delimitations, and triangulation. Finally, Chapter III explained the researcher's measures to ensure ethical practices and concluded with a chapter summary.

Research Questions

To accomplish the purpose of this study, the researcher will explore the following questions:

Research Question 1: How do immigrant students describe learning in a community college setting?

Research Question 2: What academic support structures are used by immigrant learners in community colleges?

Research Question 3: What are the challenges faced by immigrant learners in acculturating to academic and social norms in community college learning?

Study Design

Formulating an appropriate research methodology is one of the most critical tasks in preparing for a research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher chose a qualitative study design with a phenomenological approach. Lew et al. (2018) indicates that qualitative research seeks to get a deep insight into a single event or organization rather than a surface depiction of a broad sample of a population. Its objective is to offer a clear representation of the order, structure, and comprehensive patterns discovered among a group of people (Lew et al., 2018). Qualitative research collects information on human groups in social contexts, as is the case in this study. Wolcott (2009) points that qualitative research is exploratory by definition. Its employed when the researcher has no idea what to expect, defines the problem, or discover a solution. Researchers also use qualitative method to explore topics of interest and find more into the complexities of the situation at hand, as is the case when exploring learning experiences of immigrant students in community colleges.

Qualitative research does not use treatments, manipulate variables, or force participants to use the researcher's operational definitions of variables (Wolcott, 2009). Goal is to analyze how individuals draw meaning from the environments and how derived meaning drives actions.

Haldar (2019) stresses that one of the data collection methods for qualitative research is observation which incorporates selecting and recording the activities of people in the appropriate environment. Researchers use observation to find detailed descriptions of organizations or events, gather data and information that would otherwise be unavailable, and conduct research when other methods are insufficient (Haldar, 2019). A qualitative phenomenological research approach helps the researcher better understand immigrant learning in community colleges, focusing on Minnesota student experiences.

This study focuses on Somali immigrant learning experience in community colleges by generating subjective meanings of lived events, using a constructivist worldview. To understand numerous viewpoints, the researcher looks into diverse groups of immigrant learners about a shared world. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that humans construct meaning by engagement with phenomena of study, human condition interpretations by historical views, and the formation of meaning is essentially social, according to constructivism. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) explains that, truth is a consensus subject among constructors and phenomena that the researcher understands within the context of the study. The inquiry results have neither special status nor legitimacy but rather represent one of many constructions to be considered in reaching consensus.

Phenomenology

The researcher uses a qualitative study with a phenomenological design to describe how immigrant students perceive learning in community colleges. Phenomenology studies investigate the human philosophical perspective of an occurrence, analyze a specific experience, and describe how the event is universally experienced (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). For this

proposed study, the researcher will collect data by interviewing immigrant students to gain a

deeper understanding of their college experience (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Haldar (2019) points out that phenomenology's central assumption is that most fundamental

experience of the universe is already rich in meaning. Bluestein (2018) suggests that researchers

strive to characterize phenomena in accordance to occurrence in everyday life before

hypothesizing, interpreted, explained, or otherwise abstracted while understanding that any

attempt to do so is always speculative, contingent, and incomplete. The researcher applies

phenomenology as a methodology to almost every human experience, including online learning,

weight loss, and seeing ugliness (Bluestein, 2018; Haldar, 2019).

Phenomenology is a methodology that guides the researcher in an exploration of the lived

experiences of participants with a common phenomenon, understanding its essence (Patton,

2015). It also allows the researcher to deeply examine and understand an issue, centers the

participants' stories in the study, and leads to new theories that effectively guide policies and

practices. Additionally, phenomenology gives the researcher an opportunity to understand the

human experience though one's perception on the specific phenomenon that is researched.

Utilizing phenomenological research design for this qualitative study will help ensure that the

analysis and interpretation of the data are reflective of the experience of the participants.

Rationale for Methodology

Sabharwal and Malish (2018) explain that phenomenology is a qualitative research

method that focuses on the shared characteristics of a group's lived experiences. Researchers use

phenomenology technique to analyze events, experiences, and situation's universal meaning and

better understand study's phenomenon. Phenomenological approach seeks to illuminate specific

themes being researched by identifying occurrences as immigrant learners view them in community colleges. Other inherently qualitative methodologies, such as ethnography, hermeneutics, and symbolic interactionism, have overlapped with phenomenological research (Sabharwal & Malish, 2018). Through direct participant stories, qualitative phenomenology research focuses on gaining experience insight through constructing knowledge about the topic's essence under study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study aims to understand immigrant learning in community colleges, focusing on Minnesota student experiences.

Role of the Researcher

Throughout all stages of the investigation, qualitative inquiry relies on the researcher's interpretative perceptions. The researcher will collect data for this study through document examination, focus groups, and individual interviews. Given the importance of the researcher in qualitative research, the credibility of the inquirer is inextricably related to the credibility of the inquiry, as stressed by Creswell and Creswell (2018).

To understand how personal values, background, and experience may influence the study, the researcher functions as the primary data collection instrument and analysis, which necessitates admission of personal values, history, and experience (Auby, 2020). Skinner et al. (2020) underline the importance of maintaining a reflexive attitude throughout the research process to ensure a critical examination of the researcher's engagement. To raise awareness of inherent subjectivity and biases, reflexivity takes an actively reflecting perspective on researcher positionality, as Skinner et al. (2020) argues.

The researcher attended a two-year community college in the study area from early 2001 to 2003. The researcher in a voluntary capacity, advises future immigrant learners on enrolling in

college at the time of this study. Prior job experience and ongoing collaboration with community colleges and other educational institutions provide the researcher with relevant knowledge in community college enrollment. While the researcher has professional ties to the community colleges, there are no supervisory links between the researcher and the study participants. To decrease researcher bias, the researcher will use strict adherence to the study protocol, triangulation across several data sources, and reflexivity. Keeping a journal throughout the research process allows for careful self-reflection and critical analysis of significant concerns, which improves reflexivity and the reliability of study findings.

Study Setting

The study takes place Community College C in Minnesota's County A of Minnesota. Postsecondary National Policy Institute (2020) indicates that nearly 425,000 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in Minnesota's public and private post-secondary institutions each fall. Students of color make up around a quarter of the student body. The undergraduate age group with the most students is 20 to 24 years old. There are more female students than male pupils enrolled in higher education institutions in Minnesota. Since 1982, when women's enrollments were equal to men's, women's enrollments have climbed every year. More women across all race, ethnicity, and backgrounds than men enroll at the undergraduate level (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2020).

The researcher will collect data on student enrollment from the Office of Higher Education's student enrollment database. Additionally, the database includes immigrants' enrollments in Minnesota's post-secondary education institutions such as community colleges. In 2016, immigrants accounted for nearly 14% of the population in the United States, where over a third of these immigrants earn a college diploma. In reality, the United States now has the

world's most significant population of college-educated immigrants (college-educated is defined as anyone aged 25 and up who has earned a bachelor's degree or above) (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2020). Between 2000 and 2014, college admission rates for immigrants in the United States were up nearly 78 percent, whereas native-born residents' numbers increased by only 39 percent. In 2019, immigrants and immigrants' children born in the United States accounted for more than 20% of all college students in the United States (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2020).

Study Sample

Qualitative studies typically require a smaller sample size than quantitative analyses. Qualitative sample sizes should be large enough to obtain feedback for most or all perceptions. For phenomenological studies, Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended 5 to 25 for a sample size, and Patton (2015) suggested at least six participants. There are no specific rules when determining an appropriate sample size in qualitative research. The time allotted, resources available, and study objectives (Patton, 2015) may best determine qualitative sample size. The researcher will choose study sample from a smaller pool of four to six immigrant pupils in the Minneapolis metropolitan area. Immigrant students who had recently graduated from college, those who were currently enrolled, and those who were going to enter are all part of the target population. The recent graduation and work ensure chronological relevance of educational programs and detailed remembrance of school experiences. The goal of phenomenological sampling is to collect examples of descriptively rich experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Data collection activities in qualitative research are dependent on the course of the inquiry, according to Sabharwal and Malish (2018). Because of the study's phenomenological method, the researcher interviewed only a small sample of six individuals.

Selection of Participants

The participants in this phenomenological qualitative will be Somali immigrant learners in a two-year community college. The sampling technique for this study will purposeful sampling, which (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) describe as a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can't be gotten as well from other choices. Purposeful sampling focuses on choosing cases that will be rich enough in information in order to reveal, clarify, or provide insight into the research questions (Patton, 2015). Criterion and chain sampling are the specific types of purposeful sampling the reascher uses in this study.

Merriam (2015) points out; a criterion-based selection requires the researcher to choose the units of study based on the elements that are deemed essential to the research. The first criterion for this study is immigrant learning in community colleges. The second important criterion is exploring their overall experiences while in college.

Data Collection

Data collection procedures for the study will follow the standard phenomenological research measures. The researcher will obtain approval from the Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) of Community College C and Winona State University (WSU) before continuing with this study. The board's approval reinforces the law-enforced code of ethics that fosters trust and protects confidentiality. The study describes the shared meaning of lived experiences about the phenomenon of inquiry for various persons in qualitative phenomenological research. This study gathers data from multiple sources, including examining publicly available documents, focus group interviews, and semi-structured individual interviews, as stressed by Jelicic Kadic et al. (2020) as a type of phenomenology. Each data source contributes to understanding the

experiences and meaning of immigrant students' college enrolment. The researcher corroborates study findings by using many sources of data. The data for this phenomenological study comes from a semi-structured focus group interview, individual online interviews, and document analysis.

Focus Group Interview

As the initial mode of data gathering, the researcher will conduct a semi-structured virtual focus group interview with immigrant students who are participating this study. Jelicic Kadic et al. (2020) argue that to acquire a deep and extensive understanding of a human phenomenon, phenomenological interviews bring together the experienced narratives utilized in qualitative research. In qualitative research, semi-structured in-depth interviews are the most common qualitative data source. Using this method, the researcher has a conversation with the participants, guided by a customizable interview strategy and augmented with follow-up questions and comments. The technique lets the researcher collect open-ended data, delve deeply into personal and sensitive themes, and explore participant feelings, thoughts, and opinions on specific topics under study (Skinner et al., 2020).

Auby (2020) states that, semi-structured interviews follow a series of prepared questions to keep things consistent. Semi-structured interviews also give the researcher the freedom to go in unexpected but pertinent directions during the interview. The researcher will conduct the virtual face-to-face focus group interview with study participants using Microsoft Teams and Zoom videoconferencing software. The researcher also chooses these digital communication modes as the virtual interview platform because of the ease of use, accessibility, data management choices, and security features. To get immigrant learners' perspectives on

community college education, the researcher performs a virtual semi-structured focus group interview.

Individual Interviews

The researcher uses individual online interviews with immigrant students from a two-year community college in Minnesota, as the second data-gathering technique. As established in previous sections, phenomenology is a qualitative research method that focuses on respondents' lived experiences (Sabharwal & Malish, 2018). The technique's primary purpose is to deduce a description of the nature of the occurrence in question.

According to Macnish (2019), researchers commonly conduct interviews with people who have extensive firsthand knowledge of a topic, experience, or event. Researchers may use documents, observations, and art as data or information sources (Macnish, 2019). The data is then examined and reviewed in search of similar phrases and themes and subsequently aggregated to produce meaning clusters. In phenomenological investigations, the researcher develops an ordered and systematic study by planning and carrying out a series of processes, including a set of interview questions for the respondents. Even though online interviews reduce the limits of geography and time, the data produced are comparable to in-person interviews in terms of richness and depth (Macnish, 2019). During the interview sessions, the researcher allows the respondents to choose the most suitable environment for answering questions during online interviews, prioritizing participant comfort. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), online interview questions encourage iterative reflection, resulting in more considered and concise responses. The absence of nonverbal cues and delays in getting answers are two drawbacks of conducting interviews online. To encourage the timely completion of the study, the researcher will inform participants of the timelines and offer email reminders.

Document Review

Qualitative studies involve gathering a wide range of research in order for the researcher to build an in-depth picture of the case at hand (Patton, 2015). As a data-gathering process in research, document review is the systematic gathering, documenting, analysis and interpretation, and arrangement of data (Jelicic Kadic et al., 2020). The review of documents yields knowledge and insight into the study subject as well as student experiences. One of the primary benefits of a document study is that it allows the researcher to research issues with no simple physical access, especially during this COVID 19 pandemic period. For this study, researcher will ask for documents on immigrant leaners produced by community college C. researcher will also conduct academic online searchers on the topic under study. Before interviewing study participants, the researcher studies documents to gain insight into managing the conversation and limiting the number of interrupting clarifying questions.

Triangulation

Bluestein (2018) states that, triangulation uses various data sources or methods in qualitative research to build a thorough understanding of a phenomenon. Other researchers, such as Dougherty (2021), uses triangulation in several studies as a qualitative research method for determining validity by integrating data or information from multiple sources. The approach of triangulation boosts the validity and credibility of study findings (Dougherty, 2021). Validity determines the extent to which a study accurately evaluates or represents the notion or concepts explored, while credibility relates to trustworthiness or how convincing the study findings are (Dougherty, 2021).

The researcher used triangulation to determine various quantitative to explain different elements of immigrant learning experiences in a two-year community college C in Minnesota.

Skinner et al., (2020) explain that, triangulation helps the researcher refute instances where one dataset invalidates a hypothesis established by another. Qualitative studies gain credibility by triangulating many data sources to gain a deeper grasp of the phenomena of inquiry (Skinner et al., 2020). The researcher uses a focus group interview, individual online interviews, and an examination of post-secondary and community college learning documents to triangulate data for this study.

Skinner et al. (2020) stress that researchers frequently triangulate qualitative data across data sources to generate a more sophisticated picture of the researched phenomenon. The researcher can corroborate facts from many perspectives by triangulating data from diverse sources. For triangulating qualitative data, Haldar (2019) suggests comparing the responses of participants with various points of view and evaluating interviews against examined documents.

Data Analysis

Sabharwal and Malish (2018) stress that data analysis refers to the selection or development of tools for making observations regarding variables in a research investigation, as well as subsequent application. The data is gathered, recorded, and used as primary data. Researchers base instrumentation on the research design and problem description in a qualitative study, which are assumed to be adequately described (Sabharwal & Malish, 2018). The researcher concentrates on the rigor of data collection while assessing the quality of instruments and data collecting. Researchers are looking to evaluating four components of the execution: (1) choosing or building the instrument, (2) scoring data captured by the instrument, (3) appropriately using the instrument, and (4) a sense that the procedures are satisfying at least minimal quality requirements. Qualitative research is interpretive, with the researcher serving as the primary interpreter (Sabharwal & Malish, 2018). Unlike quantitative research, which relies

on statistical instruments to establish validity and reliability, qualitative research relies on the researcher as the critical tool of inquiry to develop trustworthiness (Bluestein, 2018). The researcher begins the process of interpretation and write-up while collecting the qualitative data and analyzing it simultaneously.

Bracketing, intuiting, analyzing, and describing are the four main phases in descriptive phenomenology (Lew et al., 2018). Bracketing is a method of research in which the researcher considers preconceived ideas and prior experiences about the study's fundamental phenomenon, discusses and documents these viewpoints, and then purposely excludes them from the analysis. Bracketing improves the scientific rigor and validity of qualitative research (Lew et al., 2018). Rather than deducing essences from empirical examples, phenomenological descriptions use intuition to disclose them. To interpret the meaning of phenomena, qualitative researchers intuit meaning by instinctively understanding the experiences shared by study participants (Lew et al., 2018). To produce meaningful interpretations of the data, the researcher follows several steps: organizing, categorizing, validating, and connecting emergent themes and quantitative. In qualitative research, the final step is to describe. The foundation of qualitative reporting is thick, detailed descriptions that illuminate background and experience while facilitating understanding of the meaning and significance of the significant phenomena (Lew et al., 2018).

Trustworthiness

Lederer (2019), trustworthiness is the level of confidence in interpretation, data, and procedures employed to guarantee the quality of a study. The researcher establishes the methods and protocols required for the research study to be considered worthy of every study's target audience's attention. Lederer (2019) stresses that although most experts agree that trustworthiness is necessary, the literature has debated what constitutes trustworthiness.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) argue that credibility plays an integral part in promoting the accuracy and belief of research findings. In quantitative research, internal validity is similar to the credibility concept. Was the study conducted using standard procedures generally employed in the specified qualitative method, or was there enough reason offered for variations? a reader could wonder.

Haldar (2019) states that, establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are crucial factors in qualitative researchers' trustworthiness. To create a reliable phenomenological study, key characteristics of inquiry that affect the credibility of qualitative studies include methodical and conscientious fieldwork and analysis (Auby, 2020). To preserve research rigor, eliminate bias, and validate both study techniques and outcomes. Skinner et al. (2020) recommend working systematically by following some organized set of research protocols. The researcher uses a purposeful qualitative design and follows a well-organized data collection and analysis process to establish credibility. The researcher boosts the study's credibility further through triangulation across numerous perspectives on the phenomenon of inquiry.

The potential of a qualitative study's findings to be transferred to similar contexts and conditions is known as transferability. Skinner et al. (2020) point out; the transferability of qualitative research is equivalent to the external validity of quantitative research. As a result, the inquirer is responsible for supplying enough context information to establish meaningful parallels between the event under investigation and similar instances. Thick, detailed descriptions of the study site and participants allow for the discovery of similar traits and, as a result, transferability judgments (Skinner et al., 2020).

The term "reliability" refers to the methods of investigation used to establish that results are consistent and reproducible (Robertson, 2021); however, qualitative researchers strive to prove dependability by clear and extensive documentation of a rational study design rather than reliability. The researcher runs an account of the research process by journaling to record special episodes and insights, recording and transcribing interviews, and maintaining structured and secure data storage to ensure the study's dependability.

Researchers must account for the impact of personal bias on data interpretations since qualitative analyses are interpretive. In this study, the researcher will use bracketing to set aside personal beliefs and experiences connected to the central phenomenon to ensure that the respondents form the study conclusions. Robertson (2021) advocated presenting adequate proof that study data substantiates interpretations and findings to measure confirmability. In qualitative research, language is a depiction of reality. In describing the results of this study, the researcher will include specific statements from participants to demonstrate confirmability (Robertson, 2021).

Limitations of the Study

A study's limits are its deficiencies, occasioned by inadequate research resources, a limited sample size, or a wrong methodology (Jelicic Kadic et al., 2020). No study can be said to cover all potential aspects. Consequently, addressing the study's limitations demonstrates honesty and integrity, and a thorough comprehension of the research area. Not only can qualitative interpretations of meaning summarize and explain findings, but also reveal study limits (Jelicic Kadic et al., 2020). Limitations are flaws in a study, usually related to methodology, which affects the interpretation of the results. Parker (2019) mentions that, every

study has inherent limits, and admitting them is a crucial way to exhibit critical thinking about the methodologies used. The management of group dynamics is at the heart of focus group limits. Participants will not feel comfortable expressing opinions, particularly if regarded as the minority (Parker, 2019). Furthermore, the time limits of hosting several participants in a single interview session emphasize the need for the researcher to act as a moderator to encourage those who are hesitant. This study assumes that immigrant leaners are willing to share and answer truthfully about their experiences while attending community college.

Delimitations of the Study

Delimitations are features that limit the scope and specify the study's boundaries, such as sample size, geographical location or setting, population attributes, and so on (Bluestein, 2018). The researcher uses several delimitations to frame this research. In most cases, qualitative phenomenology research focuses in-depth attention on a small group of people. Additionally, this study focuses on only one community college in the Midwestern United States, automatically curbing potential subjects to the current college population's demographics. The researcher decides on the population sample solely from the immigrant learners of the community college. The researcher chooses the interview questions, and is ultimately responsible for determining the data criteria to include and exclude. This study will use an exclusively qualitative approach.

Ethical Considerations, Informed Consent, and Confidentiality

Ethics considerations in research are becoming increasingly important (Danis, 2021). Consequently, the researcher must understand the fundamentals of ethical research. Focus groups, in-depth interviews, questionnaires, and even monitoring participants' behavior are examples of research study interactions. Despite the best intentions of all researchers, there is a

chance that interactions with subjects may unwittingly hurt them, for instance, psychologically (Danis, 2021; Macnish, 2019; Robertson, 2021).

It is essential for the researcher to carefully assess the risk of harm and ensure that the study follows ethical standards, considers the negative impact of the research study, and evaluates how the research exercise protects the institution and the supervisors from possible claims of inappropriate behavior by disgruntled respondents (Danis, 2021; Macnish, 2019; Robertson, 2021).

Because of the multiple discretionary decisions by researchers in qualitative studies, having a strong sense of ethics is vital (Macnish, 2019). The examination of research involving human subjects by the WSU's IRB, guarantees that federal laws are followed and confidentiality is maintained Human subjects training is completed, and IRB approval for this study is given after the research proposal is successfully defended. Throughout the investigation, the researcher takes steps to maintain a strict code of ethics. The validity, reliability, and overall trustworthiness of this study are all dependent on following the methodology stated in this chapter. Considerations to promote integrity in each stage of research are necessary, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018). The process includes obtaining local permission from the site and participants, clearly disclosing the study's purpose, explaining and obtaining informed consent, respecting participant time schedules and potential power imbalances, and maintaining participants' privacy and anonymity. Furthermore, the researcher keeps all study data safe and gives participants access to the completed dissertation.

Chapter Summary

Chapter III outlined the methodology of this phenomenological study on immigrant leaners in community colleges, unpacking student experiences in Minnesota. The chapter

presented research questions, research design, rationale for the methodology, and the role of the researcher in conducting this qualitative inquiry. Further, chapter III detailed the processes for selecting study participants, ensuring trustworthiness, and collecting data from publicly available documents as well as focus group and individual interviews with immigrant leaners. In addition, chapter 3 discussed triangulation and data analysis procedures, limitations and delimitations and the measures the researcher will take to address ethical considerations. Chapter IV will present study findings. Chapter V provides a conclusion, implications for action, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks from the research.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore lived experiences of Somali immigrant learners in a two-year community college in Minnesota. Chapter 4 discusses the problem statement, research design, research questions and participant demographics. Furthermore, chapter four addresses the results of data collected from six individual interviews, a focus group and review of related documents. Additionally, this chapter presents themes and subthemes that emerged from the interviews. Finally, Chapter 4 concludes with a description of the shared experiences of study participants, a closing summary and a bridge to the final chapter of the study.

Restatement of the Problem

Although there exists some research about immigrant learners in K-12 education (Johnson, 2017), there is a lack of detailed research on immigrant student experiences in postsecondary institutions. Specifically, very little research exists about the experiences of Somali immigrant learners attending two-year community colleges in Minnesota. Little

information exists about the types of challenges immigrant learners face and the level severity of those problems (Mutai, 2007). However, previous research on immigrant learners in the U.S. suggests that students facing overwhelming odds result from the norms associate with a new culture, environment, foreign education system, and social orientations (Owens & Lynch, 2012).

Review of Study Design

This research utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the personal experiences of Somali immigrant learners in a two-year community college in Minnesota. Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants (Creswell and Creswell 2018). Qualitative research deals with complex interpretations of the human experience and their relationship with social and cultural systems. It is highly interpretive in nature and is concerned with the understanding of a natural world. Lew et al. (2018) indicates that qualitative research seeks to get a deep insight into a single event or organization rather than a surface depiction of a broad sample of a population. Its objective is to offer a clear representation of the order, structure, and comprehensive patterns discovered among a group of people (Lew et al., 2018). Qualitative research collects information on human groups in social contexts, as is the case in this study. Wolcott (2009) points that qualitative research is exploratory by definition. It's employed when the researcher has no idea what to expect, defines the problem, or discover a solution.

As stated by (Denzin, 2010), qualitative research focuses on multi-method means that are interpretive and naturalistic. This research methodology enabled the researcher to conduct phenomenological research that sought to illuminate and understand the experiences of Somali immigrant learners in Minnesota community colleges. Data were collected from individual

online interviews, a focus group and public documents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Researcher bias was addressed utilizing strict adherence to the study protocol, triangulation across several data sources, and reflexivity. Keeping a journal throughout the research process allowed for careful self-reflection and critical analysis of significant concerns, which improved reflexivity and the reliability of study findings.

Research Questions

Information gathered though the focus group meeting, individual interview responses, and review of documents were analyzed to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How do immigrant students describe learning in a community college setting?

Research Question 2: What academic support structures are used by immigrant learners in community colleges?

Research Question 3: What are the challenges faced by immigrant learners in acculturating to academic and social norms in community college learning?

Participant Recruitment

. Purposeful sampling was used to select six participants to share their learning experience at the community college. To purposefully select participants means that qualitative researchers select individuals who will best help them understand the research problem and the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participant recruitment is a major challenge in many research studies involving human subjects. Recruitment involves a number of activities,

including identifying eligible participants, adequately explaining the study to the potential

participants, recruiting an adequate sample based on study goals and design, obtaining informed

consent and maintaining ethical standards, and retaining participants until study completion

("Participant recruitment for research," n.d.) Participants were recruited from community college

A in county C of Minnesota. Emails were sent to potential participants (Appendix A), explaining

the study and inviting participation. Further email communication with those responding in

agreeing directed participants to complete an online HelloSign and Calendly poll to schedule a

meeting date for the 1:1 virtual interviews and a focus group interview with all six participants

(Appendix B). To participate and be interviewed for the study, students had to be currently

enrolled at community college A in county C of Minnesota and 18 years or older.

Data Collection

The researcher identified as the primary instrument for the collection of data and was

fully immersed in the analysis phase. It is critical for the researcher to identify and present any

biases or interpretive errors during analysis. Bracketing allowed for minimal error and places the

focus on researcher findings with eliminating error (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative

researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or

interviewing participants. Prior to data collection, the researcher met all the conditions of the

research site and the Institutional Review Board (IRB). (Appendix C).

The following section presents findings from data triangulated from virtual focus group

interview, individual interviews, and document review. The interviews and the focus group were

conducted via Zoom with cloud recording enabled in Zoom, the audio of the virtual sessions

were recorded and transcribed for data analysis. The data were checked for accuracy numerous

times before sharing with each participant for member checking which further improved the

accuracy and validity of the data. Review of relevant documents, took place parallel with the focus group and individual interviews. Reviewing publicly available immigrant learners in community colleges documents afforded contextualization of interview responses.

Virtual Interviews

Interviews are often the cornerstone of qualitative research and, historically, conducting them in person has been considered the gold standard. COVID-19 has necessitated innovation in many parts of our lives and qualitative research is no exception. Conducting qualitative research virtually affords researchers the opportunity to study contexts of crisis while safeguarding participants and researchers (Roberts et al., 2021). A semi-structured focus group interview with all six participants was conducted via Zoom. Focus group meeting lasted about an hour. The researcher also used one-to-one virtual interviews that were guided by semi-structured questions with all six participants. In this study, interviews allowed the researcher to capture the authentic experiences of the participants, and inquiry deeper into their responses. The semi-structured approach enabled the researcher to compare interviews and discover recurring themes among the participants, as well as highlight those categories that were unique to a particular participant. All participant answers were recorded and stored within the Zoom. No technical difficulties were encountered. Audio of the focus group session was recorded and transcribed for data analysis.

Participant Descriptions

There were six immigrant learners from Somalia participating in the study. Participants have lived in one or more countries prior to living in the United States. They arrived at different points in time to the United States. One student arrived in the United States at the age of seventeen and has been here for six years and others as recently as ten months to five years ago. Some of them have arrived as young adults and another with a family of three children.

Participants have been assigned to as student 1 (P1) to student 6 (P6) for confidentiality reasons.

Table 1 summarizes the demographic data of the students, which includes gender, the number of

years they spent in the in-between country, their arrival year in the United States, their year of

entry to community college A in county C of Minnesota, and their academic goals.

Table 1: Participant Demographic Data

Participant	Gender	Migration History	Arrival Year to United States	Years in Community College A	Academic goal
P1	Female	6 years in Kenya	2015	2019	Nursing
P2	Female	5 years in Egypt, 2 in Ethiopia	2015	2019	Medical doctor
P3	Male	10 years in Kenya, a year in Sudan	2016	2020	Healthcare related field
P4	Male	12 years in Uganda	2016	2020	Information Technology
P5	Male	12 years in Ethiopia	2016	2020	A business degree
P6	Male	22 years in Ethiopia	2021	2021	Undecided

As Table 1 shows, P1 left Somalia for Kenya in 2009 at the age of 11. She immigrated to the United States as a refugee after having lived in Kenya for 6 years in 2015. Her father had a college degree. P1 attended part of her high school in Kenya and 1 year in the United States.

P2 was 22 years old when she arrived in the United States. She had lived in Egypt and Ethiopia, and her family moved around many different cities for 4 years while their paper work was being processed. None of her family members had attended college before.

P3 left Somalia at the age of 13. He lived in Kenya for 10 years and a year in Sudan before arriving in the United States, and his parents had not attended college before.

P4 was a 39-year-old male. He was married with two children, and he worked as a home health aide. Participant 6 came to the United States with his wife in 2016. After moving to the United States, P4 decided to pursue a college education. P4 had both friends and family living in the US who acted as a support system.

P5 arrived in the United States in 2016, at the age of 19. His parents were both college graduates. P5 expressed his views about life and his goals for education. His education took priority over everything else and he was determined to focus on education in order to succeed.

P6 arrived in the United States seven months ago. P6 was born in Somali region of Ethiopia. He was a 22 year old who had just begun his studies at community college A in county C of Minnesota. None of his family members had attended college before. His was undecided about his educational goals.

Table 2: Focus group and individual interview participant characteristics

Participant	Gender	Years of attendance at community college A
P1	Female	2
P2	Female	2
P3	Male	1
P4	Male	1
P5	Male	1
P6	Male	<1
Total		7+

Table 3: Individual interview participant characteristics

Gender	%	Count
Female	33	2
Male	67	4
Total	100	6
Race/Ethnicity	%	Count
Black African/Somali	100	6
Age Category	%	Count
20-29	83	5
30-40	17	1
Total	100	6
Academic Goal	%	Count
Healthcare related	50	3

Business/IT	33	2
Undecided	17	1
Total	100	6

Data Analysis and Findings

Through semi-structured qualitative interviews, a focus group and a selection of
community college documents and artifacts regarding Somali immigrant learners in Minnesota,
participants were asked questions intended to draw responses that would provide understandings
into the research questions. Participants in the study expressed their experiences in community
college A of MN. Themes that emerged in responses to the research question are presented in
four categories: language barriers, financial constraints, family, job obligations and difficulties
with online learning.

Table 4: Themes Derived from Focus Group and Individual Interview

Emergent Theme	Description
1	Language Barriers
2	Financial Constraints
3	Family/Job Obligations
4	Difficulties with Online Learning
5	Experiencing Culture Shock/Acculturation

Emergent Theme 1: Language Barriers

Participant 6 described his experience as uncomfortable in the beginning of his community college journey. His classmates could not understand him and kept asking what he said. As a result, it was uneasy to him. Participant 4 pointed out that because his instructor could not understand most words in his pronunciation; it made him uncomfortable. For example, in class, the instructor made him repeat words because the instructor could not understand what was being said and sometimes the instructor would not allow him to ask questions even if his hand was raised to contribute in class "In about two weeks into the class, this, young white female student just shouted out one day and saying that, I think, it was after one, Somali student, had a question and teacher she just looked at him and she didn't answer his question. This was like the second week of class and this young female, white student shouted out and said, what you're doing is wrong and we're not learning. The teacher turned and faced the whole classroom and she asked, is that true? And everybody in the class responded yes that's true. The students continued and said to to the teacher that they felt that she was not here to teach and they didn't learn in the past two weeks, whatever that she was teaching, none of them, none of us were benefiting from".

Participant 5 also experienced issues related to language. One aspect of his language problem involved writing skills, which is crucial for writing papers. He revealed that some of the sentences he wrote in essays were underlined as wrong grammatical reasons. "I started college in January of 2020 and I think couple months into my college experience everything was shut down due to Coronavirus disease restrictions. I struggled to write good essays because my English was not that good. I did not know that there was a place to find help. Then I learned about the online writing center offered by the college. Since then I go there when I need help with my writing".

Participant 3 disclosed having issues of English language struggle. He stated that because of his accent he was not comfortable being with a group that the instructor had assigned to do an assignment together and preferred to be in the group with other immigrant students since he knew the native English speakers were not going to understand him. Participant 3 did not want to be in any activity because classmates' attitude toward his accent discouraged him from participating.

Participant 1 and 2 pointed it out clearly that language was a problem they faced and struggled to overcome; specifically in the first year of college since it impacted on their studies especially in group assignments. They both felt that they were at a place they can say things are looking great, in terms of communicating and working with their American counterparts.

Emergent Theme 2: Financial Constraints

Participant 1 acknowledged that she came to Minnesota to live with her parents who told her that Minneapolis was a place for struggles. Her parents couldn't support her with college tuition and expenses; therefore, she had to work hard to meet financial needs.

Participant 2 also commented that it was a challenge for her as a Somali immigrant student to make sure that her tuition was paid. She mentioned that it was a burden as he had to work in order to pay her tuition, food, rent and support for extended family members who are living back home in Somalia.

Participant 3 mentioned the issue of financial limitations in his experience as a Somali immigrant student. He mentioned that he had to work two jobs in order to pay his own tuition and contribute to family financial obligations such as rent and food.

"It was really challenging my first year at this community college. I didn't have enough time to study and do my homework because I have two jobs and I am taking full time course load".

Participant 4 noted that he provides for his his wife and two kids. He added that his children look up to him because "they see me as a hard working guy, who is providing for them financially. Although they are not getting all they wanted to as kids. I mean stuff like brand new shoes, clothes and video games". Even though he was studying so hard, he was also working odd hours to make ends meet, pay his rent, tution and family support here in Minnesota and extended family members in Somalia.

Participant 5 stated that he struggled financially. He mentioned that there were times he had to work two jobs "in order to be able to pay tuition and other bills".

Participant 6 confirmed that he was also worked so hard but struggled with financial burdens. He mentioned that he had "to pay tuition because I had no one to help". He mentioned that he had to work two jobs in order to be able to pay tuition and other financial obligations.

Emergent Theme 3: Family and Work Obligations

Many immigrant students work to support their families. Nearly all participants in this study pointed to that, they helped their families financially. For example, participant 6 works at a grocery five days a week from afternoon until midnight. Balancing full-time college courses with a full-time work was not easy for him.

"The money I get from the store I use to pay all my bills like phone, rent, to send money to my family in Ethiopia".

Somali immigrant students struggle with the simultaneous duty of going to school and working. Four participants discussed their experiences about struggling with work and school, a situation encountered as they attended college, and which posed a great challenge.

Participant 1 stated that working at the same time and attending college is a big challenge for her. She stated that "it is fatiguing and tiresome to do both". Adding that she would be an outstanding student should she have "enough time for school".

Participant 4 discussed that he had no choice but to work. He noted that it was the only way to pay tuition and take care of his wife and children. He added that working drained him. He stated that he had the obligation to help family here in Minnesota and back home in Somalia, and as a result had to work and go to school. He concluded with saying that he was "always tired, but he had no choice, because I have to do it for me and my family".

Participant 5 stated that he had no help from anyone, so "I have to work 50 hours a week and attend full time college". He continued with "if I was not working like crazy, you know what I could have been one of the best students but it is what it is".

Emergent Theme 4: Struggle with Online Learning and Use of Technology

The pandemic has illuminated the extent of the digital divide and its wide-ranging impacts, on immigrant students (Cherewka, 2020). All six participants expressed their lack of experience with online learning which requires use of technology. Participant 1 expressed her frustration at how the need to use technology is a challenge especially at the beginning of the global pandemic when everything was switched to online. She acknowledged that her biggest challenge was how to use technology as a Somali immigrant student because all college leaders and instructors assumed all students could use the computer and learn remotely.

Participant 2 acknowledged that online learning is a great difficulty in her educational experience. She expressed that it was tough for her since online education was something new for her.

"There were some days where I can sit down and complete my assignments and other days where nothing seems to click in my brain, which made me less motivated".

Participant 3 talked about difficulties he encountered with online learning because of his limited knowledge with use of computers. He mentioned missing a number of virtual meetings due to technical Internet connectivity issues.

Participant 4 disclosed that one of the biggest challenges he has had in college is the struggle with online learning. He stated that he felt nervous, as he has no practical understanding with the use of technology. He could not navigate the Community College's D2L Brightspace to view his courses. He mentioned that he "had to depend on friends for help since [he] had never taken any online courses before the global pandemic shutdown forced many to study online".

Participant 5 stated that online learning was "difficult for him because [he] had very little knowledge of the use of computers, and had to work very hard to be able to finish assignments on time".

Participant 6 also expressed the challenges faced with online learning as he struggled with the use of technology. He pointed out that "it was very difficult dealing with the issue of technology because I knew very little about computers and never had any online classes".

Emergent Theme 5: Experiencing Culture Shock/Acculturation

Acculturation was a problem participants mentioned. According to Berry (2005) acculturation is the process of cultural and psychological change that takes place because of

contact between cultural groups and their individual members. Another problem participants faced was experiencing culture shock. Yale (2017) explained that some international students might become overwhelmed with adjusting to even seemingly mild cultural differences, while others may hide their discomfort and attempt to blend in, leading to continued confusion. All international students will feel culture shock at some point and to varying degrees. All participants indicated that they experienced culture shock to some extent.

Participant 1 characterized his experience with culture shock as a "huge challenge." Participant 2 noted that she "had to learn to wear proper clothing in the winter months, people don't dress the same" Participant 2 also had to learn to drive in the US unlike in Ethiopia where he had been able to walk places or rely on public transportation. Participant 3 indicated that it was very difficult "adjusting to both the community college setting life in Minnesota with its frigid cold." Participant 4 talked about the adjust process as "very rough". Participant 5 noted "learning new culture and language was not easy." Participant 6 noted that he had to "learn how to keep time, keep strict deadlines, and to operate on a tight budget." Participant 6 summarized the feelings of many of the participants when he noted that "life in America is different from Somalia or Africa in general." These types of experiences presented challenges to the participants.

In general, the results were in line with the findings from document review on minority students and those from refugee background, which document challenges minority students face in community colleges. The focus group and the individual interview discussions provided an open space for participants to share their experience and learn from each other. The participants

said they enjoyed the discussion and it helped them to understand better about their community college experience.

Chapter Summary

Chapter IV reviewed the research design and questions, participant selection, data collection and analysis methods, and findings of this study. Findings presented in Chapter IV emerged from data collected through six virtual individual interviews, one focus group interview, and document review. Five themes emerged from coding analysis of the data: language barriers, financial constraints, family, job obligations and difficulties with online learning. Chapter V covers a discussion of the findings, conclusions, implications and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study explored lived experiences of Somali immigrant students in a two-year community college in Minnesota using a qualitative phenomenological approach. The researcher employed individual and focus group interviews to deepen the understanding of the lived experiences of participants. Chapter I established the foundation of this study, Chapter II presented a review of the literature, Chapter III explained the methodology, research design, and procedures for the study. Chapter IV provided a summary of data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter V discusses major findings, themes and theoretical connections. Additionally, the chapter offers conclusion with respect to the guiding research questions, discusses the implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Overview Discussion

Qualitative phenomenology was used in this study to explore the personal experiences of Somali students enrolled in community colleges in Minnesota. The research considered challenges faced by Somali students such as academic, social norms, overall learning in community college setting and support structures used by these students. Three research questions guided the study.

Research Question 1: How do immigrant students describe learning in a community college setting?

Research Question 2: What academic support structures are used by immigrant learners in community colleges?

Research Question 3: What are the challenges faced by immigrant learners in acculturating to academic and social norms in community college learning?

Theoretical Connections

Three theories grounded this research: Berry's model of Acculturation, Schlossberg's Marginality theory and Tinto's model Student Integration. Each theory provided a more holistic understanding of the immigrant student experience in Minnesota community colleges.

In this research, acculturation theory provided an approach that helped resolve useful factors surrounding immigrant learners as they experience new environment in the community college. Berry (1997) describes the concept of acculturation as a process of first-hand contact between the immigrant minority ethnic group and the dominant mainstream culture, and the associated bidirectional changes in values, attitudes and behaviors that lead to a psychological and sociocultural adaptation of the ethnic minority to the dominant host culture. In addition,

acculturation is explained as a process of mutual change that involves members of one cultural group adopting the beliefs and behaviors of another group (Berry, 1997). All participants in this study reported that once they arrived in the United States and enrolled into the community college they experienced acculturation by learning how to adjust and live in a new environment; learn a new language; and adopt American customs and values.

Secondly, students in this study reported feelings of marginality such as loneliness and sense of not fitting in. Schlossberg (1989) describes the feelings of marginality as being either permanent or temporary. The temporary feelings can occur when students arrive to an educational setting and face the reality of entering unfamiliar territory. The feeling of marginality also varies based on the students' needs. These needs are ased on factors such as being an immigrant versus native student, cultural, age and gender differences. Students mentioned feeling overwhelmed with coursework, job and family responsibilities. Oftentimes the feeling of being overwhelmed occurs when students are tasked with the responsibility of independence in academic settings. A sense of loneliness and isolation occur because it becomes difficult for individuals to find their place (Mateo et al., 2014).

Furthermore, Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model found that if positive social and academic integration is present, a student's commitment and motivation to accomplish a degree is boosted. Tinto theorizes that students are more likely to remain enrolled in an institution if connected to the social and academic life of that institution. Four students or 67 percent of the sample reported nothing that indicated an attachment to the community college. Two students reported feeling a sense of belonging on campus. Community college students rarely experience social integration as a result of participating in activities such as clubs. Given Tinto's integration

framework, those students reporting a sense of belonging would be more likely to persist to second year of enrollment.

Discussion and Conclusions

After interviewing participants and conducting a review of documents, the researcher draws the following conclusions from this study:

1. Somali immigrant students face several challenges when studying in US community colleges. Participants experienced culture shock, faced language barriers due to heavy accents or lack of not speaking enough English. Participants expressed difficulties balancing the demands of family, school, and work life. Many participants were negatively impacted by the high cost of living and difficulties finding better paying jobs. Participants also indicated a lack of family and social support systems as they attempted to transition from life in Africa to life in the United States.

2. Somali immigrant students employed a number of strategies and mechanisms to overcome the challenges faced while attending community college. Participants indicated that to address acculturation, they often intentionally worked to alter their social behaviors in order to fit better with American culture while in school. Most of participants worked to mediate their English accents and expand their terms and expressions to include American dialect. Language barriers seemed to be a barrier that took time to overcome. However, it was clear that several participants believed that proactively addressing communication difficulties strongly benefitted them in studies and enhanced ability to integrate socially into American culture.

3. The majority of participants indicated they often end up spending less time family in order to meet college and work demands. Participants also worked while attending

college in order to meet the costs associated with tuition and living expenses. Participants reported searching for additional resources or worked to establish new support systems within their communities. These support systems were important to participants' college experience and helped them assimilate more successfully into community college atmosphere. The need to balance school, work, and family life is a challenge faced by many of today's college students. This challenge is often compounded by limited availability of resources such as time and money. The costs of living combined with tuition mean that most students must work while attending school. This was true of all the participants in this study. Bakken (2019) points out that access to higher education is further complicated for those with families or obligations outside of work and school, which often tighten financial and time constraints.

4. While both immigrant and non-immigrant students often have to work while attending school, for immigrant students the challenge is often compounded by a lack of well-paying jobs and inadequate social and family support structures. Paying for school, especially on a continuous basis, may prove cost-prohibitive for many (Terriquez, 2014). This can mean that immigrant students must at times take multiple part-time or lower paying jobs and rely on daycare or run alternating day and night schedules with their spouses in order to meet their financial and family commitments. These actions in turn make academic achievement harder. In order to balance the demands on their time, immigrant students need to develop effective financial and time management skills. Often, the result is that immigrant students spend less quality time with their families until they complete their degrees. According to Teranishi et al. (2011), immigrant students often had obligations and responsibilities to their family, including running

errands, caring for siblings, translating for their parents, and contributing to the

household income; similar obligations may not be as likely among native-born students.

5. High-quality advising and support services are of particular importance for immigrants in

   community colleges because the unique needs and the risks they face often translate into

   delayed matriculation and lower rates of progress during college (Teranishi et al., 2011).

   Many participants felt that there were insufficient support systems available to immigrant

   students at community college. Support systems are important to immigrant students as

   they often feel a wide range of negative emotions as a result of their immigration

   experience. Participants noted that they felt nervous, worried, and lonely. These types of

   emotions can all be provoked by a lack of appropriate support. Support systems can take

   many forms. For example, support systems can be institutional, like college programs or

   administrators that are specifically tasked to help students adjust. Support systems can

   also be social, with examples like friendships or church groups. For immigrant students

   that may have limited family support structures in the US, finding additional resources or

   developing new support structures can be an important success strategy.

Implications for Practice

The most significant implication of the research on a practical basis was that support

systems available to immigrant students are inadequate. Community colleges should make

efforts on several levels to address the needs of immigrant students. Accommodations for

language barriers should be made available for students in classrooms, and colleges should

provide students with guidance when dealing with enrollment and other administrative issues

related to the education process.

Furthermore, community colleges should create formal programs that support immigrant students in navigating the academic and social environment in order to help them more successfully fit in into student life. Several participants specified that such programs would have enriched their experiences as immigrant students. Based on the understandings of the participants, their college has few, if any programs to help immigrant students settle through college life, and the programs that do exist offer little effective outreach. One concrete suggestion for helping schools to improve the experience of immigrant students would be to acquire suggestions from current Somali immigrant students when developing programs aimed at this population. Regardless of whether such programs are educational or not, it is clear that they would be valuable in helping immigrant student's college experience.

A final practical implication is that Somali immigrant students will perhaps need to continue to work while attending community colleges. This does place pressures on some students to balance work commitments in addition to school and family commitments. Nonetheless, it is unlikely for students to expect that the price of college tuition in addition to living expenses will be affordable without employment. For Somali immigrant students, the primary concern is their inability to secure higher paying jobs while in college. To address this issue, it may be possible for community colleges accepting immigrant students to implement a program that helps place immigrant students in jobs that allow them to acquire training in their field of study. It would be more likely that such jobs would offer better wages, and the students would benefit from gaining work experience in their field.

Future Research Recommendations

This study was limited to immigrant students studying a single community college in Minnesota. The scope of the research could be extended to examine Somali students across all over the state and other states in the United States. The current study examined only the experiences of immigrant learners from Somalia. It is recommended that additional studies comparing the experiences of Somali immigrant students to the experiences of immigrant students from other African countries such as Ethiopia, Eritrea, Nigeria, and Mali studying in the US. This comparison would provide insights into the impacts of the educational systems within these African countries when preparing students to study abroad. A study of this kind has the potential to identify areas of concern within those educational systems that contribute to barriers when studying in a foreign country. A longitudinal study following Somali immigrant students from the beginning of their community college enrollment through graduation and employment would help determine if some barriers to education and employment become less significant over time. An example of such a barrier would be the language barrier mentioned by a number of participants in this study.

A study that examines the performance of Somali immigrant students in comparison to the performance of their non-traditional adult learner peers would provide insight into which factors are universal barriers to all non-traditional adult learners and which barriers are unique to immigrant students. Such a study could also examine strategies employed by various groups of adult learners to determine if more universal strategies can be encouraged across cultural groups to aid all adult learners make the necessary adjustments when pursuing a college degree.

Summary

This phenomenological study explored Somali students' experiences in a community college in Minnesota. Due to the increase in the presence of Somali students in Minnesota community colleges and the lack of practical studies available regarding their situations in the community college setting, the study sought to explore their overall experiences while in college. Largely, this study focused on understanding and illuminating the personal experiences of Somali students in a Minnesota community college. In doing so, it contributes to the field by extending existing literature, which will create more opportunities for further insights and understanding into the barriers that impede the progress and success of Somali immigrant learners in Minnesota and beyond.

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Appendix A: RESEARCH LETTER OF INVITATION

Dear Community College Student:

My name is Abdulrazzaq Mursal, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Education Program at Winona State University. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study I am conducting for my dissertation.

The purpose of this study is to explore the personal experiences of immigrant learners in a two-year community college in Minnesota. I invite you to participate because you are an immigrant learner who is attending community college in Minnesota. **<u>You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study.</u>**

Your participation will involve a 10-15 minute online questionnaire, an individual interview via Zoom, and a focus group session with all participants via Zoom. For full disclosure, the focus group and the individual interview sessions will be recorded so I can accurately transcribe and analyze what is discussed. Participants will be asked to have their cameras off to further protect identity. The computer utilized for data collection has password protected and has anti-virus software. **<u>Any identifiable information about you or any other persons will not be transcribed or published (for example, if you revealed your name it will be removed).</u>**

Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. You may answer as little or as many questions as you desire. Clicking on the survey link serves as your consent to participate. Your original consent form will be placed under lock and key, separate from your reported responses to protect anonymity. Feedback and responses will remain confidential to the fullest extent permitted by law.

For the purpose of this study, and to maintain anonymity, a code will be created and assigned to each participant. The transcripts of the interviews will be kept separately from the codes stored in a secured file cabinet located in a locked safe. Once the study has been completed, all data will be kept for five years, after which time all information will be destroyed.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at amursal11@winona.edu or call me at 952-688-6705. The faculty sponsor of this study is Dr. Barbara D. Holmes. Email bholmes@winona.edu.

Respectfully yours,

Abdulrazzaq Mursal

Doctoral Candidate

Winona State University

Appendix B: Individual and Focus Group Interview Protocol

Individual Interview Protocol

Welcome, and thank you for your participation in this research study. My name is Abdulrazzaq Mursal, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Education program at Winona State University, Winona, Minnesota. I am conducting research for my dissertation study. The purpose of this study is to explore the personal experiences of immigrant learners in a two-year community college in Minnesota.

This individual interview will take approximately 45 minutes and include questions about your experiences as an immigrant student studying in Minnesota community colleges. For the purpose of this study, and to maintain your anonymity, a code will be assigned to protect your identity. No IP addresses will be collected. If at any time during the 1:1 interview you wish to discontinue, you may do so. Your responses are and will remain confidential. Your contribution to the study may provide information on how immigrant students experience education in Minnesota community colleges.

Participation in this 1:1 interview is voluntary, and you are free to answer as many or as little questions that you desire. The session will be audio-recorded to ensure that no data is missed in the report. Your camera will remain off, and your name will be a code. Please note that Zoom has a disclaimer they own rights to the recording.

The session will be structured so individuals can respond to each question in order of assignment based upon your identification code. Each question will be addressed in the same order. Upon completion of all participants answering, additional time will be provided for all individuals to provide additional information, if desired.

Your participation in this individual interview is voluntary, and you may withdraw your participation at any time without consequences. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? With your permission, we will begin the interview.

Focus Group Protocol

This research focus group will take approximately 60 minutes and include questions about your experiences as an immigrant student studying in Minnesota community colleges. For the purpose of this study, and to maintain your anonymity, a code will be assigned to protect your identity. No IP addresses will be collected. If at any time during the focus group you wish to discontinue, you may do so. Your responses are and will remain confidential. Your contribution to the study may provide information on how immigrant students experience education in Minnesota community colleges.

Participation in this focus group is voluntary, and you are free to answer as many or as little questions that you desire. The session will be audio-recorded to ensure that no data is missed in the report. Your camera will remain off, and your name will be a code. Please note that Zoom has a disclaimer they own rights to the recording.

The session will be structured so individuals can respond to each question in order of assignment based upon your identification code. Each question will be addressed in the same order. Upon completion of all participants answering, additional time will be provided for all individuals to provide additional information, if desired.

Your participation in the focus group is voluntary, and you may withdraw your participation at any time without consequences. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin? With your permission, we will begin the interview.

Three research questions will guide this qualitative study:

Research Question 1: How do students identifying as immigrant perceive learning at a community college as a contributing factor to personal success?

Research Question 2: What is the experience of immigrant learners in two-year community colleges in Minnesota?

Research Question 3: How do immigrant learners at a Minnesota Community College describe their acclimation to cultural and social norms?

Demographic Questions:

Please circle your age range:

18-24 years old

25 years or older

1. Can you tell me about your childhood background, your family and where you grew up?

2. What educational experiences have you had before you started attending college?

3. Have any of your family members attended college before?

Interview Questions:

4. What is your education goal in college?

5. How would you describe your first day at this community college? Were there any significant experiences that you remember from that time?

6. What is your career goal?

7. How would you describe your experiences with your professors here?

8. Do you think your identity influences how instructors interact with you?

9. How about your experiences with your classmates?

10. What out of class activities have you participated in while in school so far? Please explain what you have learned from them?

11. Which course has been the most interesting and enjoyable for you and why?

12. Which course has been your least favorite and why?

13. How do you balance your college, personal and family life?

14. Do you have support at home and who provides the support and in what ways?

15. What support services are you using at college and which ones do you find are most useful?

16. Is there any other information you want to share regarding your experiences in college?

Thank you so much for participating in this interview. If you think of anything later that you think I should know, please reach out to me. And, can I follow up with you if something we discussed needs clarification – is that ok?

Appendix C: IRB Approval

Winona State University Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Human Protections Administrator
Maxwell 161
Winona, MN 55987
507.457.5519 or bayers@winona.edu

DATE: August 23, 2021

TO: Abdulrazzaq Mursal, EdD
FROM: Winona State University IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1793476-2] Immigrant Learning in Community Colleges: Unpacking
                   Student Experiences in Minnesota
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
REVIEW TYPE: Administrative Review

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this research study. The IRB has
determined this project is exempt according to 45 CFR 46.101(b). You may begin your research.

While your project is exempt from further review, you must report to the IRB any significant
modifications in your protocol, consent form, and/or data collection tool(s). All serious and
unexpected events, noncompliance, or complaints must also be reported to this office.

For all reports, please use the report form in IRBNet Forms and Templates Document Library
and refer to the "How to Do Everything" document for instructions.

We will retain a copy of all your submitted materials and a copy of this correspondence within
our records.

If you have any questions, please contact the Human Protections Administrator at 507.457.5519
or bayers@winona.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all
correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within the Winona State University IRB records.

Appendix D: Consent Form

Consent Form:
Immigrant Learning in Community Colleges: Unpacking Student Experiences in
Minnesota

<u>What is this research study about?</u>
You are invited to participate in a research study designed explore the personal experiences of immigrant learners in two-year community colleges in Minnesota. **<u>You must be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study.</u>**

<u>What activities will this study involve?</u>
If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview, focus group, and complete an online questionnaire. The individual online interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes and the online focus group will be scheduled for 60 minutes. Prior to interviews participants will be asked to complete a Qualtrics online questionnaire which will take approximately 10 minutes.

<u>How much time will this take?</u>
The study will begin on September 7th and end on September 30th. Individual interviews will be scheduled via Zoom or in person based upon participant's availability and preference. The focus group will be scheduled during the mid-week of September. I estimate participating in the study will require 2 hours of your time.

<u>What will be done with the data collected during this study?</u>
The only individuals that will have access to the data are the researcher, dissertation chair, and advisory committee. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requires the confidentiality of your information with this study and will be adhered to. Your identity will remain protected and confidential, and ethical standards will be adhered to. The signed consent will become part of the research documents. You may request a copy of this consent at any time. Each participant will be assigned a code to protect anonymity. When participants log on Zoom, they will have the code listed as their identity and not their name. Participants will be asked to have their cameras off to further protect identity. The computer utilized for data collection has password protected and has anti-virus software. **<u>Any identifiable information about you or any other persons will not be transcribed or published (for example, if you revealed your name it will be removed).</u>**

All information collected will be stored in a locked cabinet in a safe in the researcher's home. When the study is completed, data will remain in a locked cabinet for five years and then professionally shredded.

Are there any risks for participating?
There are no significant risks from participating in this study to health and safety. The only risk posed is Zoom having access and rights to the video recordings, however the identities of participants will remain confidential over Zoom through using codes and keeping cameras off.

Are there any benefits to participating?
The benefit of the study is to add to the body of literature since little literature exists in understanding of immigrant learning experiences in Minnesota community colleges. This study paves the way for educational leadership and higher educational institutions to put measures of intervention in place to help navigate towards achieving the college experiences of immigrant students in Minnesota community colleges.

What are my rights as a participant?
Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may stop at any time. You may decide not to participate or to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

Who can I contact if I have questions or concerns about this study?
The main researcher conducting this study is Abdulrazzaq Mursal, a student at Winona State University. Dr. Holmes is the faculty advisor for this study. Dr. Holmes may be reached at bholmes@winona.edu. You may ask any questions you have about the study and your participation now or later during the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions about my rights as a participant?
If you have questions or concerns about your participation in the study, contact the Human Protections Administrator Brett Ayers at 507-457-5519 or bayers@winona.edu. This project has been reviewed by the Winona State University Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects.

Vitae

Abdulrazzaq S. Mursal
Microbiology Manager || Central Lab || Allina Health Laboratory
amursal11@winona.edu

EDUCATION

Doctor of Education, Winona State University, 2021
Master of Healthcare Administration, Minnesota State University Moorhead, 2016
Bachelor of Science, Clinical Laboratory Science, Winona State University, 2013

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Laboratory Operations Manager   2018-Present
Abbott Northwestern Hospital, part of Allina Health, Minneapolis, MN

- Accountable for the operations of approx. 50 laboratory staff
- Monitors and oversees implementation of process improvements to meet or enhance quality and service targets
- Take accountability and resolve next level escalation on customer service issues.
- Oversee hiring, performance management, and staffing plan development for department
- Help develop and implement operations budget and actively monitors financial, volume, and productivity data to meet targets
- Identify and implement cost reduction strategies
- Ensure employees receive appropriate training and oversees ongoing competency compliance
- Ensure employees adhere to laboratory policies and procedures
- Collaborate with Quality and Accreditation Director to ensure regulatory compliance
- Maintain required safety, education and competency requirements

Laboratory Operations Supervisor   2016-2018
ABBOTT NORTHWESTERN HOSPITAL, part of Allina Health, Minneapolis, MN

- Organize and direct the daily activities of the laboratory
- Responsible for supervising laboratory personnel, conducting and overseeing quality assurance and quality control, and collecting, analyzing, and interpreting lab results
- Administering human resource functions (hire/fire/coach/mentor/discipline), developing and implementing policies and procedures, establishing strong intra and interdisciplinary team relationships, proposing/developing budget within established guidelines and assuming fiscal responsibility for specific cost centers, transmitting values and communicating ideas

- Effectively directed and responsible for all hematology department activities for a period of two years to ensure staff competency and regulatory compliance
- Performed all clinical procedures in areas of hematology, coagulation, urinalysis, and flow cytometry
- Assist in bone marrow biopsy procedures and perform bone marrow processing
- Perform and evaluate quality control analysis.

Clinical Laboratory Scientist   2012-2016

Children's Hospital of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN

- Laboratory Systems Technologist-responsibilities involved analysis, design and implementation, including data gathering and analysis of methods and procedures; design
- Executed and analyzed tests in areas including chemistry, hematology, urinalysis, Blood bank, serology, coagulation and microbiology to aid physicians in diagnosing and treating disease
- Consistently commented for the timely, high-quality completion of both routine and special and special laboratory assays of patient specimens (including blood and other body fluids, skin scrapings and surgical specimens)
- Ensured test-result validity before recording/reporting results, earning a reputation for meticulous attention to detail
- Demonstrated the ability to communicate test results effectively with physicians, pathologists and nursing staff as a member of interdisciplinary team focused on providing exemplary quality of care
- Evaluated quality control within laboratory using standard laboratory test and measurement controls, and maintained compliance with CLIA, OSHA, safety and risk-management guidelines
- Instrumentation used: ABL-800 Flex, Dimension Vista 500, Dimension RxL Max, Clinitek
- Advantus, Sapphire Cell-Dyn, Cell-Dyn 3200, Siemens BCS XP