

Cultural Identity Construction among Political Refugee Students: The Case of Eritrean College Students in the Midwest

By
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**Cultural Identity Construction among Political Refugee Students: The
Case of Eritrean College Students in the Midwest**

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Abstract

The global migration across the globe appears to justify the need for theorizing refugee education, as students are part of the migration. The United States is one of the largest refugee recipients in the world (UNHCR, 2018), and a great number of refugee students go to school, even though the enrollment rate of those in postsecondary institutions is not clear due to different methods of categorizing immigrant students who enter U.S. higher education institutions.

Asylees and refugees are all categorized under the term ‘immigrant,’ though they have different economical and immigration statuses (Yi & Kiyama, 2018). Even though various studies have been conducted to theorize refugee education with a focus on identity formation of refugee students, most of them have focused on school rather than college level. Studies focused on refugee students’ identity construction emphasize how refugees learn new skills to build up their self-esteem, join a new society, and use their native language and reflect their cultural identities in school (Uptin , 2013; Erden, 2017; Saleh, 2018).

There are a few studies that examined the schooling experiences of refugee students in postsecondary institutions (e.g., Felix, 2016), but little is known about how Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions in the Midwest and how schooling shapes their cultural identity. This dissertation study employed case study methodology to explore an in-depth case of how Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in the postsecondary institution landscape. Thus, the case, in this research, was defined as political refugees; more specifically, the case was defined as the ways the political refugee students negotiated and renegotiated their cultural identity. The case was bounded by the 2022-2023 academic year, by Eritrean political refugees participating in the experience, their college and curricula contexts, and the multicultural

education policy. Data were gathered through semi-structured interview and focus-group discussion.

Through the theories of cultural reproduction, acculturation/assimilation, biculturalism and transculturalism, six themes were identified. These themes included: 1) negotiating and renegotiating cultural identity, 2) maintaining cultural identity, 3) home culture versus college culture, 4) reflecting refugees' cultural identity in school, 5) impact of cultural identity on schooling, and 6) culturally related teaching methodology. In relation to the research question of how Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions in the Midwest, the participants identified themselves as culturally Eritrean students and thought they were different from the rest of the student populations due to their cultural identity. The participants did not feel a sense of bilingual identity and were not in a position to negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity, though they admitted that they were pulled to fit in the social, economic, and political structures of the host country. With respect to the research question of how postsecondary schooling experiences shape the cultural identity of Eritrean political refugee students in the Midwest, the college education was shown to have little to do with participants' cultural identity. The participants did not see their identities, histories, values, and cultural practices in the postsecondary institution in the Midwest. Finally, the study recommends not only the integration of culturally responsive pedagogy to the college education system to make the curriculum inclusive so that the refugee students feel a sense of belongingness, but also having a unique support system for college refugee students, as their learning experiences are different from the rest of the student populations.

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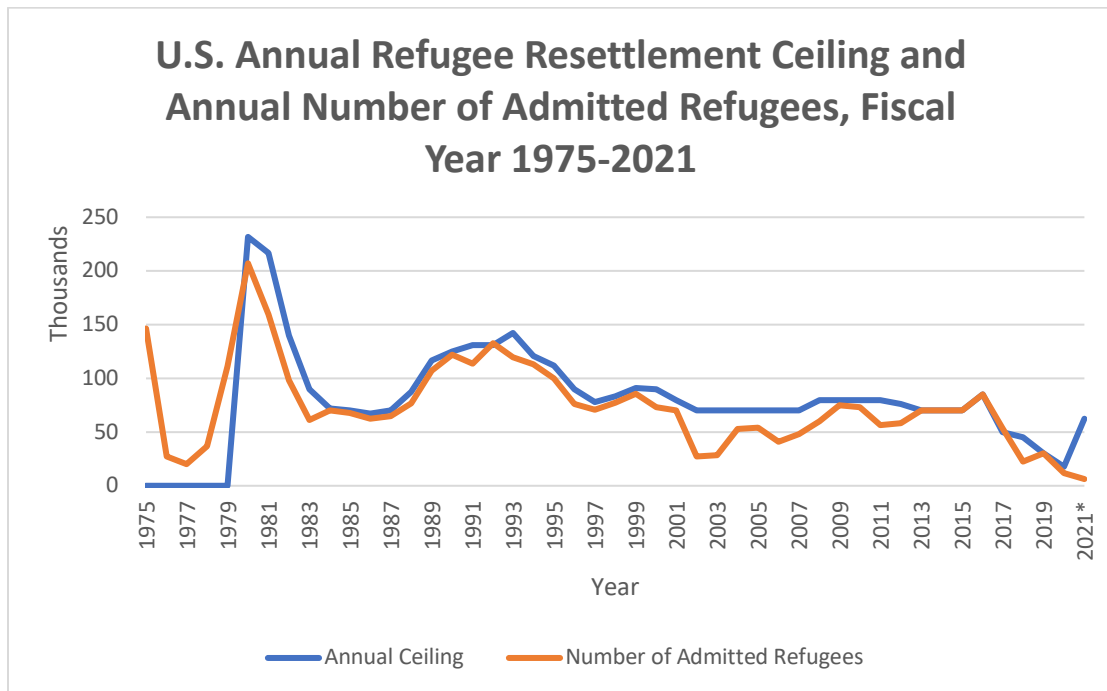
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Chapter One: Background of the study

Introduction

The United States welcomes refugees from different countries and continents; it has been described as one of the largest refugee recipients in the world (UNHCR, 2018). Since 1975, over 3 million refugees have had an opportunity to be resettled in the U.S. (Bernstein & DuBois, 2018). Nevertheless, the admission of refugees to the U.S. has dropped significantly since 2016 due to political reasons, in which in 2019, 30,000 and in 2020, 18,000 refugees were resettled in the U.S. 2020 fiscal year marked the lowest admission when compared to prior 2016, in which 110,000 was the annual refugee ceiling (Migration Policy Institute, n.d.).

Figure 1 Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceiling, 1975-2021



Source: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-annual-refugee-resettlement-ceilings-and-number-refugees-admitted-united>.

Despite this drop, a significant number of refugees are believed to go to school, and some to a university or college, though the enrollment rate of refugee students in postsecondary institutions in the U.S. does not seem to be clear, and Yi & Kiyama (2018) explain, “missing from literature on refugee populations is specific data on the numbers of refugee students attending postsecondary institutions in the U.S. Due to varying methods of classifying immigrant students and significant differences in when refugee students resettle in the U.S., and subsequently enter U.S. education systems, no clear data exists that accurately captures refugee students in higher education” (p. 10).

There are studies that have addressed the schooling experiences of refugee students. Dryden-Peterson (2016) investigated the schooling experiences of refugee children in the country of first asylum and reported that refugee education may be theorized better by taking these factors into account: the schools they went to, the frequency of attendance and the conditions they were in in the first host countries. She states, “contemporary conditions of conflict usefully inform conceptual understanding of refugee education globally, including the types of schools that refugees access in countries of first asylum and their rates of access” (p. 131). In addition, the author identifies the factors that significantly affect the refugee children’s schooling experiences in the first asylum countries, which are “language barriers, teacher-centered pedagogy, and discrimination in school settings” (p. 131). Similarly, Erden (2017) explored the schooling experiences of Syrian refugee children in the refugee camps in Turkey, and argued that language barrier, lack of education policy on refugee education and cultural gap were the major factors that impacted the refugee students’ schooling experiences in Turkey. Moreover, a few studies investigated identity formation among refugee students. While Bash and

Phillips (2006) studied identity construction among refugee school children, and the challenges they face in keeping their social identities, Uptin (2013) investigated refugee students' engagement in constructing and reconstructing their cultural identities in Australia to be part of a new society. However, little is known about how the Eritrean political refugees in the postsecondary institutions negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in the Midwest.

Context and Research Questions

Even though the schooling experience of refugees who come to the United States varies and is often dependent on the age the refugees were when settling in the United States, the majority of them went to school in the refugee camps in the countries of first asylum before they were resettled in the U.S. and often had unpleasant schooling experiences. Dryden-Peterson (2016) writes, "for refugee children, disruption of education by protracted conflict and exile is more the norm than the exception, and it is often a precursor of educational experiences outside of the national education system of a country of origin" (p.134). The interruption of education and the uncomfortable school environment surrounded by continuous and sporadic conflicts in the refugee camps of first host countries appear to affect the students' academic and health conditions. It may be due to these traumatic experiences that a large body of literature for example (Kira et al., 2014; Bryant et al., 2018) focuses on investigating the psychological issues, particularly the traumas these refugees have faced in the refugee camps and on the teaching approaches the schools should follow to prepare them for the future life in the U.S. (Dryden-Peterson, 2017).

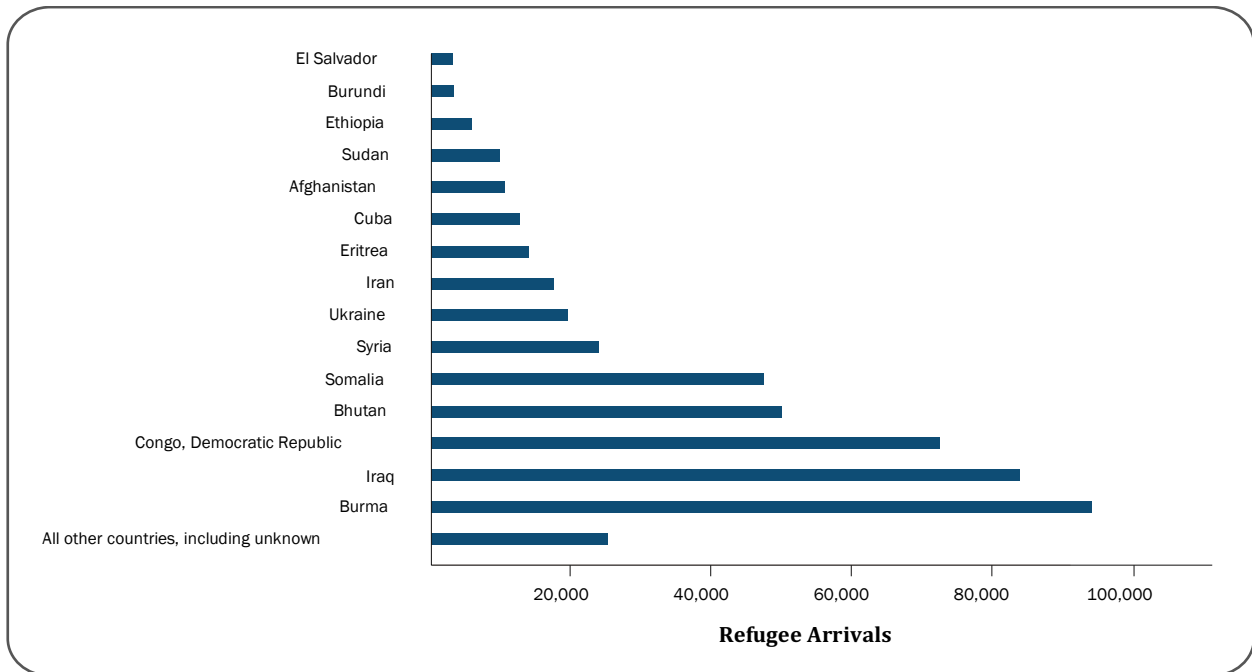
There are a few studies that addressed the refugee students' identity construction. Erden (2017) investigated the schooling experiences of Syrian refugee students in Turkey and found that in spite of the challenges they face such as linguistic deficiency, lack of refugee education

policy and cultural gap, the refugees try to build their sense of identity by learning skills to lead their day-to-day lives. Using such skills, they want to demonstrate their personal identities that they are diligent, hardworking, and independent. In a similar vein, Saleh (2018) discovered the challenges refugee students face in terms of literacy skills and learning a new language and culture and suggested that schools should consider the students' cultural background, personal identities, and native language to help them succeed in school. In addition, Dryden-Peterson (2016) explored the educational experiences of refugee students in their 'first asylum countries' and reported three issues that affect refugee students' academic performance; these are linguistic problem, teaching strategy and social segregation in the schools. According to the author, the refugee students feel isolated, and are often referred to as 'them'. Also, the language barrier and the learner-centered teaching approach appear to be strange to them, and hence affect their academic success.

Similarly, Uptin (2013) focused on how refugee students in Australia engage in formulating and reformulating their cultural identities to be part of a new society, and the way they build their learning and get connected to the society. The author suggested that refugees should not be taken as having a 'homogenized identity'. All the studies noted above focus on young refugee learners and how they construct their new identities in a new country. Felix (2016) explored the schooling experiences of refugee students in higher education institutions in the U.S., and reported the challenges they face during their studies. Some of the challenges include linguistic deficiency, more attachments to their communities and lack of academic support. According to the author, the refugee students' close attachments with their communities do not seem to give them an opportunity to improve their English language skills, as they use

their native language during communication. Also, they do not seem to have support and guidance at home about navigating higher education due to lack of social capital.

Figure 2 Refugee Arrivals by Top Country of Nationality: Sum of Fiscal Years 2012 to 2021



Source: Homeland Security: Office of Immigration Statistics, September 2022

Even though Eritrean refugees are on the top list arriving in the United States, as indicated in Figure 2, little is known about how Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions in the Midwest and how schooling shapes their cultural identity, which are addressed by the current study. The qualitative study on which this dissertation is constructed is significant, as it can inform educators, policy makers, teachers and other education stakeholders in the U.S., thereby fostering a profound understanding of the ways refugee students negotiate their cultural identity in the postsecondary institutions in the U.S. Thus, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions in the U.S. Midwest?
2. How does the postsecondary schooling experience shape the cultural identity of Eritrean political refugee students in the U.S. Midwest?

The first question investigates how Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in the higher education institutions in the U.S., believing that identity could be multiple, not static. In fact, identity is dynamic and an ongoing process (Yoon, 2012; Hall & Du Gay, 1996), and hence it may be significant to explore how they negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in a dominant culture in the U.S. Similarly, the second question probes into the impact of schooling in shaping their cultural identity in the school setting. It also examines how the inclusion and diversity policy as well as the curricula in higher education help them negotiate their cultural identity.

Eritrea: Multilingual and Multiethnic Country

Eritrea is a beautiful small country in the horn of Africa, situated on the strategic Red Sea. Its coastal area has been significant in history and culture and has become the basis for its name. According to Britannica.com, Eritrea came from an Italian name called Mare Erythraeum which means in Latin Red Sea. The Red Sea was not only an important route for missionaries to spread Islam and Christianity but also attracted many great powers like Egypt, Turkey and Italy to trade coffee, gold and slaves from Ethiopia. According to Britannica.com, Wichale treaty was signed on May 2, 1889, in which the Ethiopian leader, Menilek acknowledged that Eritrea and its Red Sea belonged to Italy; On January 1, 1890, Eritrea was officially declared to be the Italian colony. Since then, it has been colonized by the Italians, British and Ethiopians.

Figure 3 Map of Eritrea

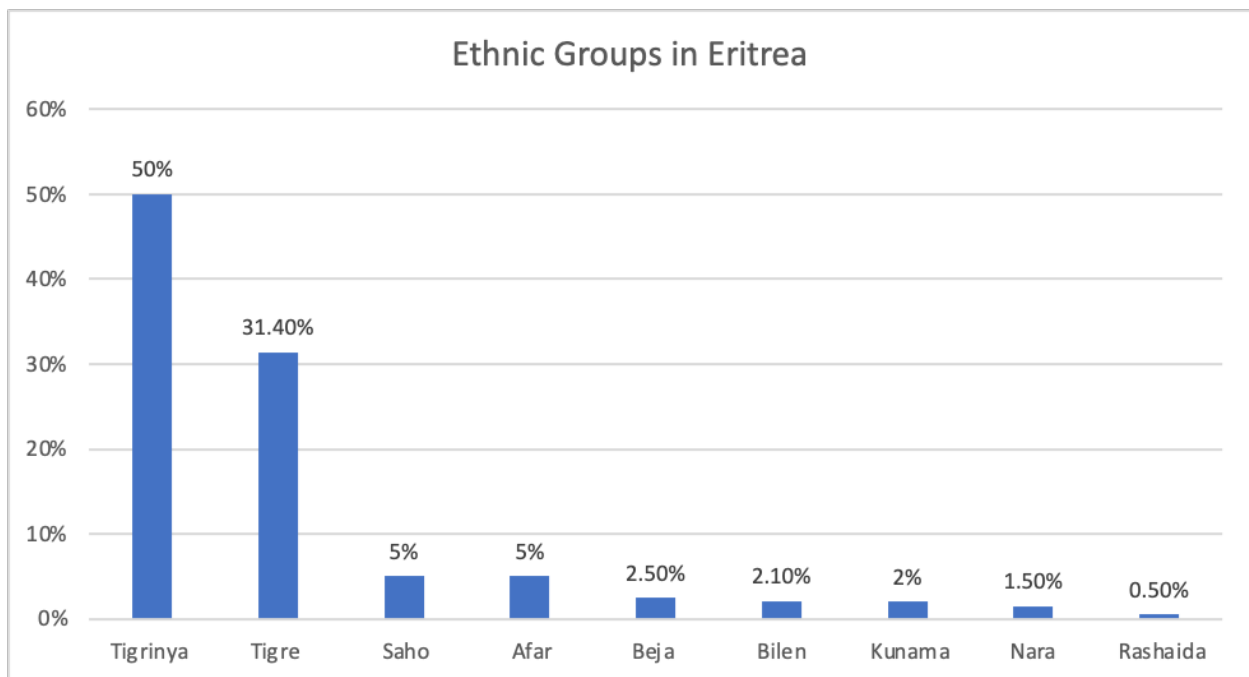


Source: <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/eritrea-political-map.htm>

After bitter armed struggle for 30 years, Eritrea became free from Ethiopia on May 24, 1993. Eritrea is bordered on east by the Red Sea, on the west by Sudan, on the south by Ethiopia, and on the southeast by Djibouti, and It is often mentioned as the safest and cleanest country in Africa, and its people are not divided along ethnic or religious differences, unlike other African countries where a huge number of people are believed to die due to these differences. However, since its independence, it has been led by one party, People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) with no elections held.

There are nine ethnic groups in Eritrea; these are Tigrinya, Tigre, Saho, Afar, Beja, Bilen, Kunama, Nara, and Rashaida . Tigrinya make up 50% of the country's total population followed by Tigre. Moreover, these groups have the freedom to use their own languages, even though majority of the population use Tigrinya language to communicate with each other. The government of Eritrea often states that there is no official language, but Tigrinya and Arabic are the two working languages in the country, English being the medium of instruction from middle school to postsecondary education.

Figure 4 Ethnic Groups in Eritrea



Source: Britannica.com

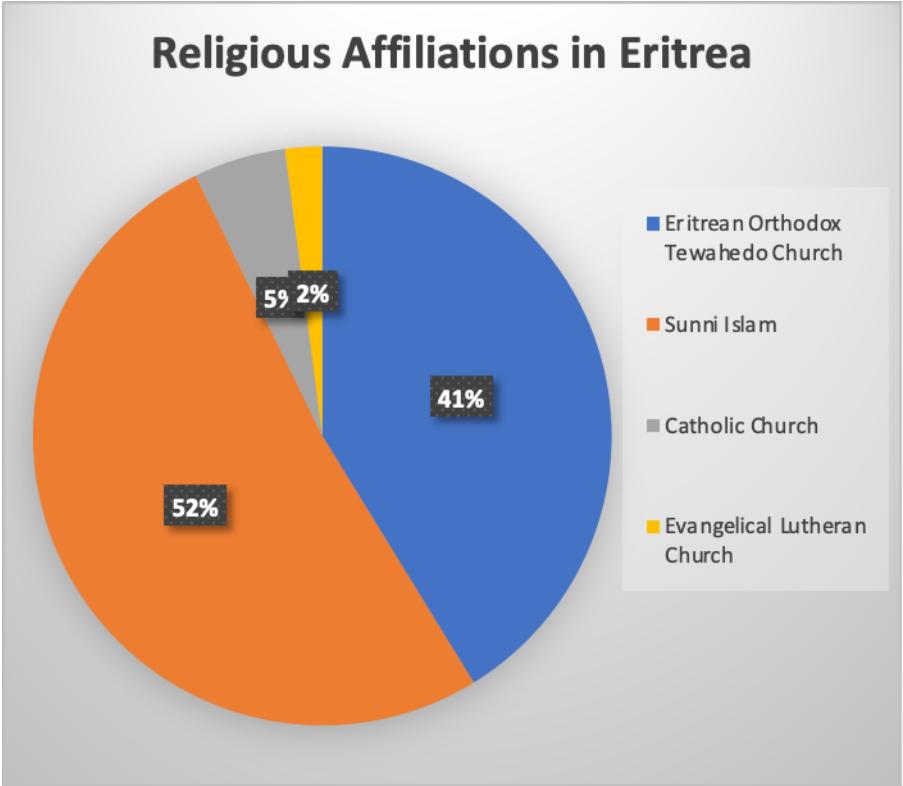
While the Tigrinya people live in the highlands of Eritrea, the Tigre who make up one-third of the total population of Eritrea inhabit in the lowlands of the country. The names of the ethnic groups and their languages are the same. The Tigrinya people use Tigrinya language and the Tigre speak Tigre, both of which are written in the Geez script and belong to the Semitic

language group, though they are mutually unintelligible. In addition, the Bilen people who speak Bilen, Cushitic language group, live in the northern highland, but the Rashaida people speak Arabic, and are nomads on the northern mountains of the country. Also, while the Afar people live on the southern part of the coast, the Saho reside on the eastern part of the country. On the other hand, the Beja people inhabit across the border in Sudan, and Nara and Kunama live on the western part, and are Nilotic languages.

Eritrea follows mother-tongue education system; Students are expected to learn in their mother tongue from KG to grade 5. However, English is the medium of instruction from grade 6 through university education. Students are expected to take national exams in grades 5 and 12. Passing the grade 5 standard examination means moving to the middle school where all subjects are taught in English, whereas passing the grade 12 examination or matriculation provides an opportunity to pursue university education.

Since religion is an identity in the country, students have religion classes, where the Christians study bible and the Muslim study the Kuran. There are four major religious affiliation in the country; these are Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Sunni Islam, Catholic Church, and Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Figure 5 Religious Affiliations in Eritrea



Source: Britannica.com

In addition, young people leave the country and immigrate to other countries due to the current political situation in the country. However, wherever they are, they often work hard to keep up their religious and cultural identity due to a couple of reasons. Firstly, their parents put much pressure on their children to keep maintaining their religious and cultural identity, as these factors define most Eritrean families' dignity. Secondly, they believe they will go back home one day and do not often want to lose their sense of belongingness and identity. Finally, Britannica.com state that Eritrea has 6.1 million people, even though no national censuses were conducted recently.

Definition of Key Concepts

The following concepts are key in this dissertation study. Even though there are different explanations for the terms, the following definitions are applied throughout the study.

Identities are “social, discursive, and narrative options offered by a particular society in a specific time and place to which individuals and groups of individuals appeal in an attempt to self-name, to self-characterize, and to claim social spaces and social prerogatives” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004: p.29). They are “constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation” (Hall & Du Gay, 1996, p. 2).

Identity Construction refers to “the interstices of multiple axes, such as age, race, class, ethnicity, gender, generation, sexual orientation, geopolitical locale, institutional affiliation, and social status, whereby each aspect of identity redefines and modifies all others” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004: p.16).

Refugee (Political refugee) is “someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so” (UNHCR, 2001). Thus, refugees and immigrants are not used interchangeable in the study.

Cultural identity is defined as “the relationship between individuals and members of a group who share a common history, a common language, and similar ways of understanding the world” (Norton, 1997, p. 420).

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter one discusses background of the study; it covers the significance and context of the study and the research gap, whereas chapter two presents review of related literature. The topics that were covered in detail include conceptual framework, transculturalism, cultural identity construction, and challenges of educating refugee students. Chapter three discusses methodological approach, data generation, data analysis, setting, recruiting participants, and ethical consideration. Eventually, chapter four and five covers findings and discussion respectively.

Chapter Two: Review of Related Literature

Introduction

When discussing refugee education, there appears to be a tendency to use refugees and immigrants interchangeably, though I do not intend to use them conversely throughout my study for the following reason. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2001), “Article 1 of the Convention [1951 Convention] defines a refugee as a person who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.” As the definition indicates, refugees are forced to flee their countries involuntarily and often stay in the refugee camps in the first host countries before they are given legal refuge by the second host countries. On the other hand, immigrants often move from one country to another voluntarily for economic reasons, specifically in search of a better and more prosperous lifestyle, and hence the UNHCR classifies them as ‘economic immigrants’ rather than refugees (Rong & Preissle, 1998). Thus, the features that define refugees and immigrants are different. A thorough discussion of the conceptual framework that frames the study, transculturalism, cultural identity construction, challenges of educating refugee students and postsecondary institutions and refugee students follows next.

Conceptual Framework

This study addresses the ways Eritrean political refugee students negotiate their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions in the U.S.; hence, the study draws on sociological perspectives to guide the conceptual framework. In order to understand how cultural identities are negotiated and renegotiated, Hall and Du Gay’s (1996) conceptualization of identity is

considered. Hall and Du Gay describe the concept of identity as fluid and in continuous process within a given context. Concerning identity negotiation, the authors state, “in common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation” (p. 2). In addition, the study draws on cultural reproduction, transculturalism, acculturation/assimilation and biculturalism theories to examine the political refugee students’ ways of negotiating their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions and the impact of their schooling experiences in shaping their cultural identity.

When discussing schooling and cultural identities, it is relevant to mention Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of cultural reproduction. Bourdieu argues that schools play a key role in reproducing the values of the cultural capital of the elite social class. Cultural capital is shaped by one’s experiences at home, where there are cultural resources that support someone’s position in a social order (Bourdieu, 1977). Moreover, Bourdieu argues that each social class has its own set of norms, customs, values, and thoughts called the habitus. The habitus have assumptions about what is considered good and bad, which impact and shape the cultural practices of the members of the class. For example, the middle-class habitus appears to emphasize on the values of reading classical literature rather than pop literature, making educational visits like art galleries and museums, and learning classical instruments (Bourdieu, 1977). Such values put middle class children in an advantageous position in schools, as such activities are educational in nature. Equipped with such cultural capital, the children appear to be successful at school as their values align with the curriculum the schools adopt. Also, this may bring some advantages to the dominant groups, as they have access to the cultural resources valued by the social order, which

could be character traits, cultural goods, and academic credentials. For example, Levinson and Holland (1996) support this point by reporting Bourdieu's work in France that schools take the lion's share in spreading the symbolic capital, which gives the higher social classes an opportunity to flourish socially and economically. Symbolic capital means the availability of resources to a person based on their social status, or recognition; it is considered as an asset or value that one possesses within a culture (Bourdieu, 1977). This takes place in different forms; the schools value some type of dressing or speaking style, and some education standards that align with the culture of the dominant group. Similarly, the school, an important influence of cultural capital, promotes a curriculum that mostly reflects the histories and identities of the middle-class children, and hence, Everette (2021) argues that such children are able to make meaningful connections between the school and outside world. Thus, while the middle-class children fit in the social values and skills the curriculum promotes, the working-class children have difficulties fitting in, and are later shaped to align with the cultures and identities they are not familiar with, oftentimes leading to identity confusion. Thus, the schools' roles become substantial in making refugee children aware of their constraints and weaknesses through the practice of the classroom. This may lead to social and structural inequalities in the society (Giroux, 1997), leading to the dominant groups' cultural reproduction, and oppressing the cultural identities of the minority groups, in this case, refugees.

On the other hand, schooling plays a role in the acculturation process, which appears to be inevitable for refugee students as their movement brings them in contact with a different culture in the host country. They may find themselves experiencing two distinct cultural worlds and may feel a sense of belongingness to the two cultures without losing their sense of cultural identity, which is also called acculturation (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). Even

though acculturation is viewed as bicultural competence, refugees tend to be impacted individually as well as a group. While individual refugees may feel that there is change in their values and identities, as a group, they may be pulled to fit in the social, economic, and political structures of the host country (Bernstein & DuBois, 2018). For example, African refugees in the U.S. often face the same challenges as African Americans as a result of political and social structures.

In addition, Portes and Zhou's (1993) theory explains better the acculturation (assimilation) process for refugees. Portes and Zhou mention three types of assimilation. While downward assimilation leads to the discrimination of refugees and immigrants socially, upward assimilation takes place when refugees and immigrants get assimilated successfully to the culture of the dominant group. Selective assimilation, however, refers to the accommodation of the refugees' cultures, languages, and other aspects selectively while getting immersed into the dominant culture. In the third assimilation type, refugees and immigrants get support from the community. For example, refugee students get academic support from an educator, hired by the school, who knows not only the native language of the refugees but also their cultural values. The Toolkit for newcomers prepared by the Department of Education (2017) implies that the third type of assimilation is pursued in U.S. schools. This may provide an opportunity for the refugee students to embrace their cultural identities without replacing their identity with the new one, making them bicultural, though they may feel the stress and conflict between the two cultures. Nevertheless, biculturalism should not only be viewed as a means of cultural identity construction. The political side of biculturalism and the way it is embedded within a certain hierarchy structure of the society should also be considered. Giroux (1995) writes,

The politics of biculturalism must address not merely how cultural identities are constructed differently, but also how they are produced, sustained, and transformed within the structures of power at work in a deeply hierarchical and exploitive society. Within this discourse, there is a call to move beyond the mere celebration of ethnicity in order to provide the conditions for students and others to understand and negotiate differences, especially in relation to unequal structures of power (p. x).

Giroux explains that the construction of cultural identities is political and should be understood within the context of power dynamics in the society.

Another theory that explains the acculturation process is Ogbu and Simons' (1998) cultural-ecological theory, which argues that minority groups' identity development and schooling correlate to their official status. Immigrants who were not forced out of their countries are more likely to embrace the local culture, which compromises their original identity. They build "compatible" cultural identities in which they gain access to the two cultural worlds (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). However, their priority seems to use the available opportunities to economically develop themselves and they do not see the challenges of being racially segregated as such as a major one, since the opportunities they get outweigh the problems they encounter. This sense of optimism and positive attitude follows them to school and tends to lead to their school success (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002).

Table 1 Refugee Arrivals by Country of Nationality: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021 (Ranked by 2021 country of nationality)

Country of nationality	2019		2020		2021	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	29,916	100.0	11,840	100.0	11,454	100.0
Congo, Democratic Republic	12,875	43.0	2,863	24.2	4,876	42.6
Syria	560	1.9	486	4.1	1,255	11.0
Afghanistan	1,197	4.0	603	5.1	874	7.6
Ukraine	4,432	14.8	1,935	16.3	802	7.0
Burma	4,928	16.5	2,112	17.8	769	6.7
Sudan	376	1.3	258	2.2	510	4.5
Iraq	462	1.5	541	4.6	500	4.4
El Salvador	311	1.0	362	3.1	200	1.7
Somalia	230	0.8	149	1.3	196	1.7
Eritrea	1,750	5.8	475	4.0	185	1.6
All other countries, including unknown	2,795	9.3	2,056	17.4	1,287	11.2

Source: Homeland Security: Office of Immigration Statistics, September 2022

On the other hand, the minority groups who arrived in the United States involuntarily, for example, as slaves, tend to develop ‘oppositional identity’ and reject assimilation. This kind of tendency follows them to school and becomes an obstacle to their success (Ogbu, 1991). But

Ogbu explains that refugees are categories in the middle who did not come willingly or unwillingly but appear to make efforts to use the opportunities by adopting to the local culture. Nevertheless, factors like racial segregation, linguistic deficiency and low-self-esteem seem to lead them to resist the acculturation process (Lee, 2005). The theories propounded by Ogbu (1991) are relevant to the study in understanding the acculturation process and how it impacts refugees' cultural identities. Ogbu (1991) describes refugees as neither involuntary nor volunteer immigrants, which does not seem to resonate with the definition of a refugee given by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which states:

A refugee as a person who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2001).

The study adopts the UNHCR's definition of a refugee who left their home countries involuntarily and due to compelling situations like persecution and discrimination.

Transculturalism

Transculturalism is relevant to the study, as it implies the movement from one culture to another (Guo & Maitra, 2017). When refugees are resettled to the host countries, there is the possibility of transculturalism through the process of acculturation, where the refugees experience two distinct cultural worlds, and may feel a sense of belongingness to the two cultures without losing their sense of cultural identity (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993).

According to Hoerder, Hebert, and Schmitt (2006), transculturalism refers to the "process of individuals and societies changing themselves by integrating diverse cultural life-ways into

dynamic new ones” (p.13). This way of transculturation views cultures as non-static and fluid, as cultures come in contact with other cultures. However, the process of transculturalism is political, as it is understood within a hierarchy structure of the society. Refugees, after joining new cultures, tend to be impacted individually as well as a group. While individual refugees may feel that there is change in their values and identities, as a group, they may be pulled to fit in the social, economic, and political structures of the host country (Bernstein & DuBois, 2018), which makes transculturalism political.

Furthermore, Berry and Epstein (1999) explain that transculturalism may pave a way for ‘reflexive identity’, where people may be engaged in criticizing their own cultural identity, and they write, “Transculture as I understand it is a totalizing approach indeed, but in such a way that it curbs the totalitarian pretensions of any part of culture, any theory and any discipline to advance itself as the whole truth. Transculture is the process of self-distancing, self-estrangement, and self-criticism of one’s own cultural identities and assumptions” (p. 307). Thus, transculturalism appears to provide a ground for refugees to get integrated into the host cultures and develop diverse cultures, as it views culture as fluid, and Guo and Maitra (2017) state that transculturalism “breaks down boundaries, opposes singular traditional cultures, recognizes cosmopolitan citizenship and develops the understanding that one’s culture is multiple and fluid.” This is relevant to the study as it helps us to understand how Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity as well as the construction of their cultural identity within the perspective of transculturalism that states there could be multiple cultures the refugees may develop after their arrival in the host countries.

Cultural Identity Construction

Hall and Du Gay (1996) argue that identity is constructed in a fluid and continuous process within a given context. The authors describe, “identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation,” (p. 2). In a similar vein, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) define identity as “social, discursive, and narrative options offered by a particular society in a specific time and place to which individuals and groups of individuals appeal in an attempt to self-name, to self-characterize, and to claim social spaces and social prerogatives” (p. 29). The two definitions emphasize the significance of having common ‘characteristics’ and ‘allegiances’ in a definite time and space among members of a certain group to have an identity representing the members, which I use them for my discussion.

In addition, various scholars assert that identity is dynamic and multiple, not a static entity. West (1995) rejects the idea of having one identity that shapes someone; rather people have various positions when it comes to forming their identities. He seems to imply that people develop multiple identities as they go through different stages of life, which appears to be a poststructuralist conception of identity. The identities include gender, sexual orientation, skin color, ethnicity, nationality, and maybe intellectual capacity. For example, a study conducted by Trueba (2004) supports the concept of identity as dynamic and multiple, and concludes that immigrants construct multiple identities that ‘coexist’ and operate at the same time in different situations without any conflict. According to the study, the participants did not exhibit any sort of cultural conflict in their daily interactions, instead managed to show multiple identities based on the context. This could be viewed as an advantage for newcomers who attempt to adapt a new

sociocultural environment and may be considered as a ‘cultural capital’, as they live in different cultural worlds (Zhou, 2002).

On the other hand, Gee (1996) argues that students may develop a sense of confusion and conflicting identities if they develop multiple identities. This could be exhibited in various ways that students developing school-related identity which contradicts the beliefs, values and norms of their original cultural identities may be engaged in conflict with their community and parents. For example, Habtemariam and Hallman (2020) note, in a study under review, that African college students in the Midwest found their home culture different from the school culture, and this put them in a dilemma to reconcile between the two identities. The authors also found that due to cultural gap, the African refugee students faced an academic challenge. A cultural gap means “theoretical, conceptual, and practical disconnects and spaces between the culture (values, traditions, customs, beliefs, etc.) of the learners and the communities from which they come and the educational institutions and the proponents thereof” (Berry and Candis, 2013, p. 45).

This cultural gap underscored that Eritrean and Democratic Republic of Congo refugees were raised to be good listeners, to keep their voice sdown, and not to speak up before their elders or teachers, as it is considered offensive. Also, there is part of the Eritrean and Democratic Republic of Congo culture that says that younger children should look humble by keeping their head down, should not question their elders’ ideas but accept them, and should respect authority. Such cultural values have impacted the academic engagement of the refugee students in U.S. classrooms, putting them in a sense of confusion, as they were not common in their previous school setting (Habtemariam and Hallman, under review). Thus, in this discussion, identity is perceived as a social construct and is in continuous process within a given context. In addition, identity is socially formed by taking part in the activities of communities, and discursive

relationships and social structure that appear to play a pivotal role in the construction of cultural identity (Hall & Du Gay, 1996).

According to Taylor (1999), culture refers to a set of mainly intangible aspects of social life, which encompasses beliefs, systems of language, values, practices, and communication that a group of people have in common and are defined collectively by them. Individual's cultural experiences seem to shape their identities leading them to have a cultural identity where they associate themselves with a certain culture. Berry and Candis (2013) define cultural experience, "as events (singularly or collectively engaged) specific to a group of individuals with shared beliefs, values, traditions, customs, practices, and language" (p. 44). Taylor (1999) explains that these recognizable domains of culture that all members share may change over time, which appears to imply that culture is not static. However, the features that shape the two concepts (identity and culture) form cultural identity, which is defined as "the relationship between individuals and members of a group who share a common history, a common language, and similar ways of understanding the world" (Norton, 1997, p. 420), as these factors shape their experiences and views of the world.

In conclusion, cultural identity construction could be viewed in light to the theories of cultural reproduction, acculturation/assimilation, transculturalism and biculturalism. Bourdieu's (1977) concept of cultural reproduction views schools as playing a role in reproducing the dominant identity and culture; this could lay a foundation to understand the schooling experiences that contribute to the cultural identity construction, and the ways the refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity construction. In a similar vein, Portes and Zhou's (1993) acculturation theory, which emphasizes refugee students experiencing two different cultural worlds and feeling a sense of belongingness to the two cultures, provides a

ground to understand the refugee students' biculturalism. Considering this, it appears significant to understand how Eritrean political refugee students' schooling experiences shape the construction of cultural identity, which is addressed by the study.

Challenges of Educating Refugee Students

There are a number of challenges facing educators when educating refugee students. Firstly, it may be difficult to integrate refugees into the dominant culture by keeping their own cultural identity. It seems that formal education has been used to assimilate refugees to the dominant culture without leaving a room to practice their own culture and language as they are minority groups (Oh, 2012), and hence integrating refugee students by keeping their culture was far from being achieved.

Moreover, Kirova (2012) argues that people may feel 'negative internalization' when they think their cultural capital has less value in the dominant group. 'Negative internalization' is Bourdieu's term which refers to 'misrecognition' in reference to symbolic violence. Kirova (2012) clarifies the 'negative internalization' by presenting a pilot program conducted in Canada in which immigrant parents demanded that their children learn English language to find a space in the Canadian society because they felt they had nothing to share with the dominant group and did not want to humiliate their children. Their feeling aligned with the dominant group's thought that immigrant children do not perform well at school due to lack of social and cultural capital. However, the parents felt 'negative internalization' for lack of social and cultural capital when that may not often be the case, as they have their own cultural values to share with. Kirova's point is supported by Habtemariam and Hallman's study (under review) in which the Eritrean and Democratic Republic of Congo refugee college students in the Midwest felt 'negative internalization' as their values were misrecognized in the colleges. Their African values of

depending on their parents for decision, though they are above age 18, addressing their teachers using titles like Dr., professor and taking tattoos and piercings as taboos did not appear to have been accepted by their American peers.

The other challenge of educating refugee students is that they come from a different education system and face linguistic deficiency in the host countries. For example, Joyce et al. (2010) discuss how university refugee students in Australia found that the refugee students are in greater tension and nervousness due to the different education system from what they are used to, and hence the researchers describe the university as a ‘culturally alienating place’ (p. 169), as the newcomers feel a greater sense of isolation and less belongingness within those institutions. Also, lack of proficiency in English is described as the other major challenge for refugee students at higher education level (Joyce et al., 2010; Ramsay and Baker, 2019). Some of these refugees went to school where the medium of instruction is English back home and in the country of first asylum. However, they have difficulty to interact because their English as a foreign language knowledge seems to be more of academic, which does not enable them to socialize and become part of the community, and Stevenson and Baker (2018) state:

Language proficiency is further complicated by settlement and education policies that also do not recognize the bespoke academic language and literacy needs of students who are non-native English speakers, and have had interrupted education. This is compounded by the fact that many refugees learn the forms of English which can help them navigate their new social milieu but the social milieu of HE is radically different, containing as it does its own linguistic culture. (p. 57)

Thus, putting refugee students in an ESL classroom for an extended time may be advantageous in terms of learning English, but they may feel a sense of exclusion socially and

psychologically as they are not part of the mainstream classes (Olsen, 1997). For example, Davila (2012) reported that high school Vietnamese refugee students, for being in an ESL class, missed the chance to engage with their peers who are native English speakers who would help them to improve their English skills and to navigate finding scholarship and job opportunities after they leave high school, and hence the refugee students were compelled to withdraw psychologically that they could not concentrate on the lesson, in addition to the social isolation, i.e., lack of engagement with the school community.

Postsecondary Institutions and Refugee Students

After arriving in the country of first asylum, refugee students are believed to go to school either in the refugee camps or outside. Usually, college students go to school in cities, as there aren't colleges in the refugee camps. They are exposed to another education system and cultural experiences in the country of first asylum, as they had gone to school in their native country. After resettlement, they struggle to fit in a third education system and foreign culture, leaving most of them in a cultural shock (Joyce et al., 2010). Moreover, these refugee students face several challenges in the postsecondary institutions, though 1% of them get access to higher education in the globe (Ramsay & Baker, 2019).

Firstly, college refugee students do not often have access to what may be considered ‘professional’ advice. After resettlement, agencies that help them to resettle organize different programs to help them get a job or go to school. However, according to Joyce et al. (2010), these programs are not led by experts but by social or case workers, and hence their assistance to the refugee students about university education or how to navigate to be successful in higher education appears to be limited. Thus, refugee students are often bewildered upon arrival at the higher education institutions as resources do not seem to be targeted toward their unique needs (Anselme and Hands, 2012). According to Joyce et al. (2010), college refugee students are often entering education systems that are very different from what they have experienced; hence, the researchers describe the university as a “culturally alienating place” (p. 169), as newcomers feel a greater sense of isolation and less belongingness within those institutions.

Table 2 Proposed and Actual Refugee Admissions by Regions: Fiscal Years 2019 to 2021

Region	2019		2020		2021	
	Ceiling	Admissions	Ceiling	Admissions	Ceiling	Admissions
Total	30,000	29,916	18,000	11,840	62,500	11,454
Africa	11,000	16,366	X	4,171	22,000	6,250
East Asia	4,000	4,946	X	2,131	6,000	776
Europe/Central Asia	3,000	4,994	X	2,578	4,000	983
Latin America/Caribbean	3,000	809	X	948	5,000	400
Near East/South Asia	9,000	2,801	X	2,012	13,000	3,045
Unallocated Reserve	-	-	X	-	12,500	-

Source: Homeland Security: Office of Immigration Statistics, September 2022

Secondly, refugee students' English proficiency is mentioned as the other challenge for some at postsecondary institutions (Joyce et al., 2010; Ramsay & Baker, 2019). Some of these refugees went to school in the country of first asylum and completed their education in English. Yet, they often have difficulty using the language at academic and social contexts, though they are believed to be better at the former. There appears to be lack of recognition of refugees' academic English due to their distinct accent and way of using the language at postsecondary institutions. Stevenson and Baker (2018) explain that postsecondary institutions don't seem to recognize the bespoke academic language and literacy needs of students who are non-native English speakers and have had interrupted education. This is compounded by the fact that many refugees learn the forms of English which can help them navigate their new social milieu but the social milieu of HE [higher education] is radically different, containing as it does its own linguistic culture. (p. 57)

Thus, some refugee students appear to struggle to improve their English proficiency as no special assistance that meets their needs is provided to them.

Moreover, postsecondary institutions are often not aware of the traumatic experiences refugee students have had in their lives (McBrien, 2005). The majority of refugees encounter extreme challenges while in refugee camps in the first host country. They may have witnessed the death of their beloved ones, family members, relatives, neighbors, and friends. Such traumatic experiences may distract refugee students from their studies, leading to stress and depression. For example, Joyce et al. (2010) found that refugee students in Australia suffered from cultural shock, depression, stress, and other underlying health conditions. These complex health issues usually appear to worsen as refugee students do not get enough medical attention in the refugee camps. Thus, health issues can become an obstacle to refugee students' academic

success, and postsecondary institutions don't appear to consider such post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) refugee students encounter (McBrien, 2005).

In addition, refugee students encounter the challenging of getting financial aid at postsecondary institutions. Even though most of them get help in applying for financial aid, they have difficulties to getting co-signers, which delays the process of securing financial aid. Also, most of the refugee students are reluctant to sign for loans, thinking that this would put them in a difficult financial situation later when they graduate. This is the result of lack of experience of having loans for education in their native and first host countries (Tuliao, Hatch, & Torracco, 2017). This becomes another obstacle for most refugee college students to continue their studies, and many instead opt for a career. As discussed throughout this literature review, refugee students face a number of challenges in the postsecondary institutions.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Purpose

The study draws upon qualitative methods for data collection and analysis with the intention of understanding and interpreting human experiences. Since the purpose of the study was to explore an in-depth understanding of how Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions in the Midwest and the role of schooling in shaping their cultural identity, qualitative research was used to explore their lived experiences and understand the meanings ascribed to them by collecting data systematically and analyzing them rigorously (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research was suitable to achieve the goal of this research because it enabled me to capture the individual experiences of the refugee students in the postsecondary education. Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe qualitative research as a method of understanding individuals and the meanings they attach to the central phenomenon of the research study. Also, Marshall and Rossman (2016) favor qualitative research to capture the participants' voices and the meaning they assign to their experiences. Thus, the openness of qualitative research assists researchers to understand the "inherent complexity of social interactions and...to respect in its own right" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 7). The stories told by participants reveal the complex social phenomenon and can be of huge value in understanding the participants' perspectives.

In this chapter, I explain the research methodology, design and data analysis that guided this study. The research questions that informed the study inquired: How do Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions in the U.S. Midwest? How does the postsecondary schooling experience shape the cultural identity of Eritrean political refugee students in the U.S. Midwest?

Case Study as a Methodological Approach

This research is aimed at exploring an in-depth case of how Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in the postsecondary institution landscape; the case is bounded by time, context and place. In order to investigate the deeply complex issue of negotiating and renegotiating cultural identity among refugee students in a naturalistic setting, case study methodology was used. Yin (2014) defines case study research as investigating the process or dynamics of issues and incorporating case(s) in a naturalistic ‘contemporary’ setting, in which the case could be a small group, an individual or an organization as a specific entity. It could be a ‘project’, ‘decision-making project’ or a relationship as a less specific entity within a ‘bounded system’ of time and place. Creswell and Poth (2018) build on the definition of case study that multiple data collection methods could be used to understand and investigate a contemporary phenomenon in a naturalistic setting and they state,

Case study research is defined as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes. The unit of analysis in the case study might be multiple cases (a multisite study) or a single case (a within-site study). (p. 153)

Researchers who pursue a case study methodology can use multiple approaches to do their research. According to Yin (2014), researchers can use qualitative and quantitative approaches to inform their case study research. However, a qualitative case study is favored in

due to the need to understand the participants' individual experiences in detail and the meanings they ascribe in a naturalistic educational setting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Yin (2014) explains that there are three types of qualitative case studies, which are the instrumental case study, multiple case study, and the intrinsic case study. The classification of the types of case studies is mainly based on how the bounded system is analyzed (i.e., whether multiple individuals, one individual, an activity or a group is involved in the study). The instrumental case study is used to explore a complex issue by selecting a case with a bounded system. Stake (1995) describes this type of case study as having research questions with a focus on general understanding of the unique case through the research questions.

The other type of case study is a multiple case study in which one issue is selected but a multiple case study involves several case studies to explain the case. For example, the researcher might inquire about multiple programs from different research sites or one site by involving multiple cases to demonstrate various perspectives on the issue. In addition, Stake (1995) emphasizes the importance of the use of replication, in which the researcher uses the same procedure for each case. Even though qualitative researchers, who use this type of case study, don't tend to make generalizations from one case to another due to the involvement of different contexts, a generalization may be possible by selecting representative cases from the different sites (Yin, 2014). Also, in order to make generalizations in a case study research, researchers should go far outside the boundaries and define all the cases involved to look for common features across the cases in a broader context (Rury, 2014). However, the issue of generalizability in case study research is complex and controversial. Rury (2014) strongly argues that making generalization from case study research is misleading and a major flaw, and continues to explain that the findings should be applicable only to the cases in questions, and

writes, “While single cases can certainly be used as points of comparison and contrast in other studies, it is hazardous to draw upon them for more general conclusions about entire classes of similar circumstances or events” (p. 247). The third type of case study design which concentrates on the case itself is called an intrinsic case study, which looks like narrative research. The case must be unique and surrounded by a unique context. The researchers who pursue this type of research design provide detailed descriptions of the case with its particular context. All in all, an intrinsic case study design is used to undertake an in-depth investigation of a unique phenomenon in a unique context.

This study employed an intrinsic case design, in which there was a unique case bounded by time, context, and place as a way to understand the lives and experiences of the refugee students in the postsecondary institution landscape (Yin, 2014; Stake, 2005). The rationale for using an intrinsic case study design was because it was suitable for addressing a unique case of the deeply complex issue of negotiating and renegotiating cultural identity among refugee students in a naturalistic setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, it enabled me to undertake an in-depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon in a real-life situation. Negotiating and renegotiating cultural identity was considered as a contemporary phenomenon worthy of an in-depth case study in a community college, which was considered as a naturalistic, ‘contemporary’ setting. Thus, the case, in this research, was political refugees, more specifically the ways the political refugee students negotiated and renegotiated their cultural identity. The case was bounded by the 2022-2023 academic year, by Eritrean political refugees participating in the experience, their community college and curricula contexts and the multicultural education policy.

Data Generation

The purpose of the case study research is to investigate an issue using the case as a particular illustration or to have a deeper understanding of the case itself (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Yin (2014) suggests that case study researchers use multiple sources of data such as interviews, focus group discussion, and observations to develop an in-depth understanding of the unique case. Based on the conventions of the case study research, I used two sources of data, interview and focus group discussion, to gather data.

In case study research, collecting data through interviews is advantageous in many ways. Firstly, it allows the researcher to collect data directly from the participants with an opportunity of asking for follow-up questions and allowing for further explanation. This paves the way for the researcher to deeply understand the meanings that events have for the participants. Marshall and Rossman (2016) write, “Interviews have particular benefits. An interview yields data in quantity quickly. Immediate follow-up and clarification are possible. Combined with observation (looking, hearing, smelling, or touching), interviews allow the researcher to understand the meanings that everyday activities hold for people” (p. 288).

In addition, the researcher can have an opportunity to maintain a robust relationship with the participants so that they feel more comfortable to discuss sensitive issues which can be more insightful to the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, focus-groups, as data generation, are advantageous in case study research. They provide an opportunity to explore shared meaning and experiences of a group of individuals in order to develop an in-depth understanding of the case in focus. Yin (2016) explains, “The groups are “focused” because you have gathered individuals who previously have had some common experience or presumably share some common views (pp. 148-149)”. Besides, focus-group discussion provides a ground

for the participants to forward a different point of view or support the meanings and experiences shared by the group members (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

I employed a semi-structured interview protocol to elicit the participants' stories and experiences. The interview was conducted in three rounds, in which the first interview asked the participants about their background information and previous learning experiences. The second and third rounds of the interview requested schooling experiences of the participants in postsecondary education in the United States and cultural identity related questions respectively. Marshall and Rossman (2016) explain how semi-structured interviews help to collect data due to their flexibility nature in terms of organizing the questions. They write, "semi structured interviewing allows a systematic and iterative gathering of data where questions are arranged in a protocol that evokes rich data" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 288). The 'iterative' nature of the semi-structured interview gave me an opportunity to explore the lived experiences of the participants in detail through the follow-up questions.

The interview questions that guided the interviews included the following:

- How do you describe your schooling experiences in Eritrea?
- Which refugee camp did you live in in Ethiopia before resettling in the United States?
- For how long did you study in the refugee camp in Ethiopia?
- How do you describe your schooling experiences in the refugee camp in Ethiopia?
- How do you describe your schooling experiences at your college here in the United States?
- How do such schooling experiences shape your cultural identity?
- Do you feel like your cultural identity fits in your college education? Why?

- As an Eritrean political refugee, do you feel like you belong to the college culturally? Why?
- How do the other students in your school react to your cultural beliefs and practices?
- How do you balance your cultural identity with the college culture?
- How do you negotiate and renegotiate your cultural identity at school?

The interview protocol addressed not only the participants' schooling experiences in the Ethiopian refugee camp but also the role of their current postsecondary schooling experiences in shaping their cultural identity in the U.S. Midwest and how they negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity. All the interview sessions were conducted via Zoom and lasted between 50 minutes and an hour and half. I facilitated the one-on-one interviews online, and this enabled me to gather data flexibly and systematically; this also helped me to ensure the inclusion of all participants who were a bit far geographically (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim the semi-structured, one-on-one interview sessions. Since most of the interviews were conducted in Tigrinya, the first language of the participants, and some in Amharic, I translated and transcribed all the interviews and then analyzed the transcripts to identify the emerging themes.

Moreover, focus group discussion was used as another tool to generate data from the participants. The discussion which brought all the participants together was done after all the one-on-one interviews were conducted. The questions that guided the focus group discussion included:

- What is it like to be an Eritrean refugee student in a college?

- How do you compare your experiences as a refugee student with non-refugee students at your college?
- Can you share with me your most and least pleasant experiences at your college?
- How do you describe your college education experiences in relation to maintaining your cultural identity?
- How do you think your college education shapes your cultural identity?
- In what ways does your college education impact your cultural identity?
- In what ways do you think the curricula affect your cultural identity?
- How close are you with your home culture? How do you keep your home culture outside home?
- In what way does your cultural background affect your academic engagements at school?

The focus group discussion was conducted via Zoom, an online format due to a couple of reasons. Firstly, at the time, I tested positive for COVID-19 and was quarantining at home. Secondly, all the participants emailed me that they wanted to have the discussion online via Zoom, and I respected their decision. The focus group discussion enabled me to explore the shared meaning and experiences of the Eritrean political refugee students in a postsecondary setting and provided the participants with an opportunity to express a different point of view and approve the perspectives and experiences shared by the discussion participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

In addition, the focus group discussion, as the second data collection tool, provided a ground for me to examine in detail the refugee students' schooling experiences in the

postsecondary setting and how they negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in the Midwest. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that involving multiple data collection tools helps to develop an in-depth understanding the unique case in focus, and they write,

A hallmark of a good qualitative case study is that it presents an in-depth understanding of the case. In order to accomplish this, the researcher collects and integrates many forms of qualitative data, ranging from interviews, to observations, to documents, to audiovisual materials. Relying on one source of data is typically not enough to develop this in-depth understanding. (p. 155)

My role, as a researcher, was to moderate the discussion about how the participants negotiate their cultural identity and let them speak freely and unreservedly. I also tried to provide an opportunity to everyone to speak, as some participants were dominating the floor. I intentionally brought up ideas they raised during the personal interviews to get more of their perspectives and insights, as Yin (2018) explained, “The focus group procedure calls for you to recruit and convene a small group of persons. You would then moderate a discussion about some aspect of your case study, deliberately trying to surface the views of each person in the group” (p. 163).

The focus group discussion, which was conducted mostly in Tigrinya and English, lasted for one hour and half; I digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim, and translated and analyzed the transcripts, along the interview transcripts, to explore in detail the ways the Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions in the Midwest and how their postsecondary schooling experiences shape their cultural identity.

Data Analysis

As a refugee Ph.D. candidate in the U.S. and scholar of the refugee education with prior publications and faculty position in a university setting, I had prior knowledge about the college

refugee students' challenges and their experiences in postsecondary institutions. However, I tried to bracket my prior knowledge during the data collection and data analysis procedure. Marshall and Rossman (2016) state that bracketing means "recognizing where the personal insight is separated from the researcher's collection of data" (p. 235). Through bracketing, I tried to mitigate the impacts of my own perceptions and experiences to the stories told by the participants, even though it is not possible "to fully bracket one's experiences as a qualitative researcher" (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 235). To the best of my ability, I put aside my knowledge and personal experiences to approach this research with utmost objectivity, and then I transcribed all the interviews and focus group discussions verbatim. After the transcripts were ready, I read and reread them as a body of work, and underlined the words, phrases and sentences that were repeating and outstanding, which captured the participants' perspectives towards negotiating and renegotiating their cultural identity as Eritrean political refugee students in the Midwest and how their postsecondary schooling experiences shaped their cultural identity.

In addition, after reading the transcripts again and again, I put the repeating and outstanding words, phrases and sentences into smaller units, as Yin (2014) suggests. These data, which reflected how the participants negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity and their schooling experiences that shape their cultural identity across the transcripts were marked as significant ones. Then I searched for patterns, common and different ideas across the transcripts that were grouped accordingly, and coded the emerging themes from the data, as coding is a method of doing data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The themes significantly reflected how the schooling experiences of the refugee students in the postsecondary setting shaped their cultural identity and how they negotiated and renegotiated their cultural identity.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), researchers must look for evidence to be coded from the collected data, as coding provides a ground to fully comprehend the gathered data. After coding the emanant themes two times, as per variety for classifications, and by number as a sign of the recurrence of specific words and thoughts, I rewrote the themes that reflected the participants' schooling experiences, and these themes were reported as the findings of the study, as they directly addressed these research questions, how do Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions in the U.S. Midwest? How does the postsecondary schooling experience shape the cultural identity of Eritrean political refugee students in the U.S. Midwest?

In addition, I consolidated the description of the themes to explore the case bounded by time, place and context. The descriptions of each participant in relation to their previous and current schooling experiences and how they impacted them culturally were provided. Finally, I maintained trustworthiness in the following manner. Firstly, I ensured the transferability of data by using 'thick description' and purposive sampling (Anney, 2014). Having thick descriptive data and thick descriptions of the context creates a ground for analogy to other contexts in which transferability becomes possible (Guba, 1981). Thick description refers to making decision if the current research context matches another context due to the extensiveness and richness of the data (Li, 2004; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Also, the participants who were selected to be part of the research have an understanding and knowledge of the research topic which ensured the transferability of the data as well (Anney, 2014). Secondly, two people who have good knowledge of the topic provided me feedback with the interpretation of the data. Lastly, the participants were invited not only to go through the interview and focus group discussion transcripts to ensure that their perspectives had been captured accurately but also through the

first draft findings of the study. This way of consolidating the credibility of the research is called member checking, which is highly suggested by qualitative research scholars to maintain trustworthiness (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Setting

The study is set in the United States, and specifically in the Midwestern state. It is one of the states in the U.S. that receives a great number of refugees in the country for two particular reasons (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2019). Firstly, there are refugee resettlement agencies, based in the state, that assist refugees in starting a new life. These are the International Rescue Committee, St. Francis Migration Ministries, and Catholic Charities of North East Kansas. Part of the agencies' help appears to include not only enabling refugees to attain a national ID, a driver's license and food stamps, but also provide them with an opportunity to go to school, learn the English language, and lease an apartment. Secondly, the organizations enlisted in the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program receive funding from the Federal Government to assist refugees in resettling in the state (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2019). In 2016 alone, the state received over 1000 refugees that came from different countries, including Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Syria, Central African Republic, Iraq, Burma, South Sudan and Uganda (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2019). The Midwest featured in this dissertation is selected based on purposive sampling, which allows me to select participants based on the particular purpose related to addressing the research questions (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Purposive sampling provides a ground for an in-depth and relevant data to be collected to meet the objectives of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Data were collected from a community college, a two-year school, which is different from a four-year college in many ways. Dougherty (2001) explains that community colleges

were created to meet the needs of different actors in the society. For example, the advocates of the functionalist describe how community colleges have met the interests of students, business, and four-year universities. Students, who did not have an opportunity to join the four-year colleges, accessed higher education to meet their interests, which enabled them to have skills. Also, the corporate organizations benefited from the community colleges tremendously, as they were able to find trained and skilled work force, who would make contributions to the development of their organizations. The author further states that these corporate organizations worked hard to keep the stratified education system so that their needs are met. Similarly, the four-year colleges profited from the creation of the community colleges to keep the integrity and rigorousness of their institutions. Brint & Karabel (1989) support this argument by stating that leaders of the elite institutions pushed the community colleges to be restricted to offering vocational training, which minimizes the possibility of transferring to a four-year university but enables the elite institutions to focus on research and scholarship.

Brint & Karabel (1989) further state that in the 1917-18, community colleges considered themselves as a path to a four-year college until the community college movement leaders changed their mind to restructure the community colleges to focus on vocationalization; this happened due to their desires of finding a niche of their institutions in the hierarchy of higher education. However, their desires did not seem to align with the wishes of most of the community college students who wanted to have transferring courses to help them to pursue their higher education in in the four-year college, and Brint & Karabel (1989) state, "...our evidence regarding Massachusetts, based on extensive interviews as well as archival evidence, tends, we believe, to confirm our main thesis: that community colleges advocated vocationalization in the

face of both business apathy and student resistance because of organizational interests rooted in their location in the complex ecological structure of American higher education” (p. 139).

Nevertheless, in the 1960s and 70s, community colleges were restructured to offer vocational programs and limited their connections to the four-year colleges due to the pressure from the leaders of the elite universities who did not want to accept a significant number of transferring students who were feared they would affect the elite institutions’ quality of education, and Brint & Karabel (1989) write,

The junior college has thus been founded on a paradox: the immense popular support that it has enjoyed has been based on its link to four-year colleges and universities, but one of its primary tasks from the outset has been to restrict the numbers of its students who transfer to such institutions. Indeed, the administrators of elite universities who developed the idea of the junior college (and who later gave the fledgling organizational form crucial sponsorship) did so..... with the hope that it would enable them to divert from their own doors the growing number of students clamoring for access to higher education. These university administrators recognized that the democratic character of American culture and politics demanded that access to higher education be broad; in the absence of alternative institutions, masses of ill-prepared students would, they feared, be clamoring at their gates (p.10).

Thus, community colleges are characterized as institutions that do not focus on research and scholarship but mostly on vocational education. Their students are mainly trained to be skilled employees and have little chance to transfer to the four-year college due to insufficient financial aid and transferring courses. Also, limited selection of academic courses, less reputation, absence of residence halls, and limited educational infrastructure and resources

describe the features of the community colleges in the United States; such characteristics differentiate the two-year colleges from the four-year ones (Dougherty, 2001). It is often argued that these differences may contribute to the reproduction of structural social inequality, as majority of the community college students are believed to be from the marginalized groups, who are trained for the working-class jobs, and Weis (1985) argues that these minority students may not successfully complete their college education unless they show willingness to accept and work within the dominant college culture. Furthermore, the author recommends that increasing the number of the minority and underrepresented faculty in the community colleges may help the students to view that knowledge is being transferred not only from the White people but also people of color.

On the contrary, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) argue that there is no evidence of better learning or how much students learn due to structural and resources disparities among the postsecondary institutions, and they write, “weight of the evidence from the 1990s casts considerable doubt on the premise that the substantial structural, resource, and qualitative differences among postsecondary institutions produce correspondingly large differences in the net educational effects on students” (p. 590).

However, the authors succinctly state that there are variables that make some postsecondary institutions more successful than the others, and they write, “we also know what factors *do* differentiate among educationally effective institutions.... student involvement in the academic and nonacademic systems of an institution, interdisciplinary or integrated core curricula that emphasize making explicit connections across courses and among ideas and disciplines, pedagogies that encourage active student engagement in learning and encourage application of what is being learned in real and meaningful settings, campus environments that

emphasize scholarship and provide opportunities for students to encounter different kinds of people and ideas, and environments that encourage and support exploration, whether intellectual or personal” (p. 642).

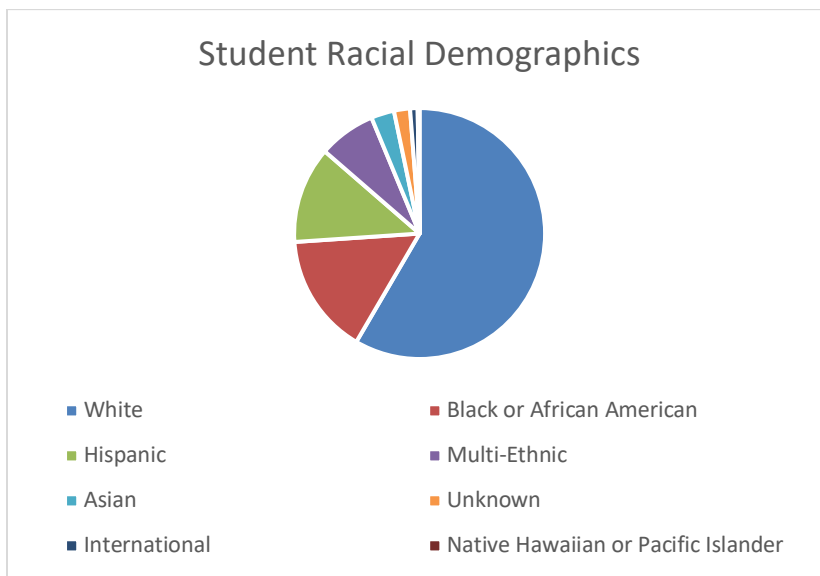
Interestingly, college education, whether it is a two-year or four-year college, brings a significant number of benefits to students, some of which include better career, developing intellectual and cognitive skills, critical thinking, general behavioral and attitudinal change, and knowledge of facts; these advantages are expected to contribute to the individual students’ quality of life in a positive manner (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005).

Considering the background given above, the participants of the study went to a college in the Midwest named Asmara Community College (all names of people and places are pseudonyms). Asmara was established as a junior college in 1919 with the purpose of offering a two-year college education for associate degree and was described as the national exemplary model for two-year higher education. Later, the college grew and was approved as a community college in 1960s by the school board, serving different areas with five branches in the Midwest. The five campuses worked hard as a single unit to meet the needs of students in the area.

Currently, Asmara Community College is a big public education provider with in-person and online programs. Accredited by the higher learning commission, it serves around 20,000 students yearly not only through noncredit courses, but also through credit-bearing courses to meet the learning needs of the community. Thus, the programs in the community college are designed to help students know who they are, the society and the globe they live in. Also, the programs target not only the students’ employment skills so that they are ready for job market, but also their academic skills so that they are able to join a four-year college. According to college factual.com, the majority of the student population of the college is White, followed by

African Americans, with 39% of racial ethnic minorities. Moreover, according to the Director for Student Services, the school offers the same support services to the refugee and immigrant populations that they provide to all other students; there is a robust campus life and leadership office that offers student clubs and organizations, employment services and a food pantry. In addition, English as a Second Language curriculum for all non-native speakers and counseling services for employment as well as mental health are offered in the school.

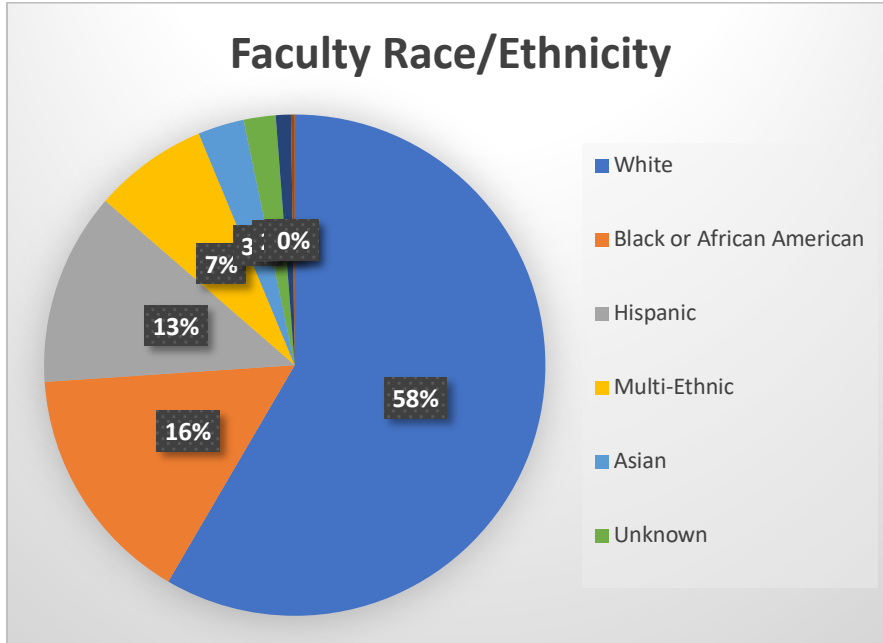
Figure 6 Student Racial-Ethnic Demographics



Source: College factual.com

And majority of the faculty are white followed by African Americans as the figure below shows.

Figure 7 Faculty Race/Ethnicity



Source: College factual.com

The college offers 120 plus degrees and certificates classified into 8 Academic and Career Pathways. Each program is aimed at introducing students to general areas of study, leading the majors and careers the students choose. According to the U.S. News education, students can get degrees and certificates in 18 distinct fields; the programs that are very popular in the college consist of Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities, Health Professions and Related Programs, and Engineering Technologies and Engineering-Related Fields. In the 2022-2023 academic year, Asmara served 13,085 students, and about 45% of them are full time. The school has a rank of 831 out of 2241 schools across the nation.

The number of employees in the school is around 2265, out of which 225 are full time faculty with annual budget of 167 million. Under the Student Life and Services Office, there are different departments that offer services to the students. These are Student Services, Student Clubs and Organizations, Campus Life and Leadership, Academic Services, For the Community,

Athletics, and Calendars. These departments offer academic advising, organize events and clubs for the students to express their talents and share their cultural experiences through multicultural club.

The participants of the study are classified as minority students in the school and interact with students from Africa, South America, and Asia; The refugee students are not on campus full-time. The participants said that they felt comfortable to communicate with people from the continents stated above, as most of them are immigrants and have accents when they speak English. They explained their discomfort of communicating with Americans, including Africans but born and raised in the U.S. due to linguistic and cultural discrepancies. All the participants were majoring in nursing, a popular field which falls under the umbrella of Health Professionals.

Recruiting Participants

I recruited participants from the Midwest through purposeful sampling, as the sampling technique enabled me to select five Eritrean refugee college students based on the particular purpose related to addressing the research questions of the study (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Also, purposive sampling provided a ground for an in-depth and relevant data, which were gathered to meet the goals of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The sample size has been determined based on the assumption that it would help describe the phenomenon of cultural identity construction among refugee students, address the research questions and data would not be repetitive and saturated (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The participants were contacted via telephone and email in March 2022. During the communication, I clearly explained the goals of the study and provided my contact information. Initially, six participants were contacted, but one of them was reluctant to take part in the study.

During the scheduled interview with each participant, I explained the consent forms in Tigrinya and made sure that the participants understood everything about the consent forms. In addition to the written consent, I gathered verbal consent. All the interview sessions were audio and video recorded and were kept in a secure place. As per the request of the participants, all their interviews were kept confidential, and pseudonym was used to cover their identity.

Each participant was interviewed for 90 to 120 minutes during the spring semester of 2022/2023 academic year. The interviews were conducted on Zoom three times during the semester (beginning of semester, middle of semester, end of semester). The goal of conducting interviews in three phases over time was, in part, to build relationship with participants as well as to understand their experience at their postsecondary institution over the course of the semester. During the first phase, the participants were asked to describe their background and previous learning experiences. In the second phase, the participants explained the schooling experiences in the U.S. and how they shaped their cultural identity. During the third phase, participants were invited to discuss how they negotiated and renegotiated their cultural identity. After the participants completed the three phases of interviews, they were invited to take part in the focus group discussion, in which four of them appeared in August 2022. The participants engaged in the data gathering process between March 2022 and August 2022.

The participants that were recruited for the study were Eritrean political refugee college students who were enrolled at a community college. The participants were chosen based on key characteristics. These characteristics included that they were Eritrean political refugees; they had been in the U.S. for a minimum of six months to increase their credibility; they had lived experiences in postsecondary education settings, and they were enrolled in the same school for the time they attended a postsecondary institution in the U.S. In addition to this, all the

participants must have stayed in the same refugee camp in their first host countries. In addition, all the participants were familiar with college norms, culture and expectations.

Ethical Consideration

To comply with the IRB ethical protocol, the study was submitted for approval. The consent form is attached in Appendix B, and the consent form was prepared both in Tigrinya and English. After securing approval, St. Francis Migration Ministries, International Rescue Committee, and Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas were contacted through email. The goals of the research were explained. Unfortunately, all the refugee resettlement agencies replied that they could not find Eritrean political refugee college students who met the criteria I outlined. However, I met a refugee student who helped me explain the eligibility criteria to other students; therefore, additional students were recruited.

After meeting with the participants for one-on-one interviews via Zoom, I explained the objectives of my research. I used Tigrinya, one of the official languages in Eritrea, to brief the participants about the consent forms, and informed them that participating in the study was a volunteer activity; at any time they could withdraw and were free to do so. Also, I assured them that their real names and identities would not be identified during the transcription and analysis of the data, and that all data they provided were confidential. Once they agreed verbally, they were informed to sign the written consent forms, which were prepared in English and Tigrinya.

Conclusion

This chapter described the research design; specifically, it covered the deliberations of case study as a methodological approach. The chapter also described the recruitment of participants, the data gathering methods, and the data analysis procedures. Discussion about the findings of the study follows in the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter presents the findings from this research study. This qualitative case study was guided by these research questions:

1. How do Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions in the U.S. Midwest?
2. How does the postsecondary schooling experience shape the cultural identity of Eritrean political refugee students in the U.S. Midwest?

Five participants agreed to take part in this dissertation study, and all of them were female refugee college students who lived in the U.S. Midwest; the participants were selected through the purposive sampling. All the participants preferred to use pseudonyms to share their personal and schooling experiences, and their pseudonyms are Abrahatsion, Letetsion, Aberash, Rahwa, and Rozina.

The participants went to the school in the refugee camp in Ethiopia and attended a community college in the United States. Throughout the three phases of interviews and focus group discussion, the participants revealed their personal experiences of being political refugees, described the ways they experienced the resettlement process, described the schooling experiences in Eritrea and Ethiopia, and outlined the ways their postsecondary schooling experiences shaped their cultural identity. The participants also explained the strategies they used to maintain their cultural identity in the postsecondary institution in the Midwest. Most importantly, Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity, the religious affiliation of the participants, appeared to have influenced them greatly in keeping up their cultural identity.

In this chapter, I share the findings from the participants' interviews and focus group discussion through description and excerpts from narratives from the data. After introducing the five participants, the themes identified from interviews and focus group discussion are presented.

Abrahatsion

Abrahatsion identifies herself as a female and is 23 years old. She left Eritrea because her father was living in the U.S., and she wanted to join him. This is called family reunion, according to the UNHCR. Abrahatsion escaped because she did not want to go the military training center in Eritrea as a student. She thought joining the military forcibly as a student was not fair and could not see her future in the country, though her mom had a small business and was able to have a reasonable life in Eritrea. She completed 11th grade in Eritrea and described her schooling experiences this way, “ ኣብ ኤርትራ ዝወሰድናዮ ትምህርቲ ኩሉ ዝርዝር ንመሃሮ ዝነበርና ይመስለኒ። ኣብኡ ብዙሕ ኮርስ ንወሰድ ስለ ዝነበርና ብሉጽ እዩ ምበልኩ። እንተኾነ ኣብዚ ኣብ ኣሜሪካ ኣብ ኮለጅ ዘድልዩካ ኮርሳት ጥራይ ኢኻ ትወስድ። ኣብ ኤርትራ ግን ኣስታት 9 ትምህርቲ ኢና ንወሰድ ነይርና። ስለዚ፡ እዚ ማለት ለይትን መዓልትን ኣበርቲዕካ ክትሰርሕ ኣለካ ማለት እዩ።” [I think we were learning every detail of the subjects we took In Eritrea. I would say it was great, as we used to take a lot of courses there. However, here, in the U.S., you take only the courses you need in college. But in Eritrea, we used to take about nine subjects. So, this means you must work hard day and night].

Even though Abrahatsion did not go to college in Eritrea, she was just describing her experiences that she had to take nine subjects in school, but only the courses she needed in college in the U.S. In addition, Abrahatsion explains the disciplining method the teachers used in Eritrea and Ethiopia and her perception of the method as well as her social activities in school. She says, “ኣብ ኤርትራ ኣብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ዝነበርኒ ማሕበራዊ ህይወት ዝያዳ ባህ ዘብል እዩ ነይሩ ይመስለኒ። ክምኡ ውን ኣብ ኢትዮጵያ ውን ባህ ዘብል እዩ ነይሩ ምኽንያቱ ዳርጋ ጎረባብቲ ስለ ዝነበርናን ንሓድሕድና ንፋለጥን ሓደ ዓይነት ቋንቋውን ባህላውን ባህርያት ስለዘለና እዩ። ብጣዕሚ ደስ ዘብል እዩ ነይሩ። ክምኡ ውን ብሃይማኖት ለባም ኦርቶዶክሳውያን ክርስትያን

ሰዓብቲ ኢና ኔርና። ስለዚ፡ ብዙሕ ዝመሳሰል ነገራት ነይሩና። ኣብ ኤርትራን ኢትዮጵያን ንዘለዉ ተማሃሮ ንምግባጽ ክመጽእ ከሎ፡ መምህራንና ኣዝዮም ዕቱባት ስለ ዝነበሩ፡ ጽቡቕ ጠባይ ክንሕዝን ከምኡ ክንግቢን ይደልዩና ነበሩ። ንኣብነት ንሕና (ደቂ ኣንስትዮ) ማኒ ስረ ወይ ሓጺር ስረ ክንክደን ኣይፍቀደልናን፤ ከምኡ ውን ንቕሳት፣ ዋላ ሓንቲ ምውጋእ ኣይፍቀደልናን ምስ መምህራንይ ዝሰማማዕ ይመስለኒ ምኽንያቱ ምስ ሃይማኖታዊ ክብርታተይን ስድራቤታዊ ክብርታተይን ስለ ዝሰማማዕ። ብተወሳኺ መምህራንና ከምቲ ኣብ ኣሜሪካ ዘይከም ሕገ ቤት ትምህርቲ እንተጥሒሰና ዝሃርሙና ዝነበሩ ይቐጽዑና ነይሮም። ኣብዚ ኣመሪካ፡ መምህራን ከምኡ ዓይነት መቐጻዕቲ ኣይህቡናን’ዮም፡ ከም ብበትሪ ምቕጥቃጥና፡ ርኣይኒ፡ ኣነ ኣንጻር እቲ መምህራን ኣብ ዓድና ዝገብርዎ ዘለዉ ኣገባብ ኣይኮንኩን። ካብ ሰናይ ድሌት ተበጊሱ ጽቡቕ ባህሪ ዘለና ንፉዓት ተማሃሮ ክንከውን እዩ ዝደሊ ነይሩ።” [Well, I think my social life in school in Eritrea was more enjoyable.

Also, it was enjoyable in Ethiopia as well because we were almost neighbors and knew each other and shared the same linguistic and cultural traits. Oh, wow, it was very pleasant. Also, religion wise, we were Orthodox Christian followers. So, we had a lot in common. When it comes to disciplining the students in Eritrea and Ethiopia, our teachers were very serious and wanted us to behave well and grow that way. For example, we (Females) were not allowed to wear mini skirts or shorts. We were not allowed to have tattoos or piercings and I think I agree with my teachers because it aligns with my religious values and my family values. In addition, our teachers used to punish us, like used to beat us if we violated the school rules, unlike in the U.S. Here in the U.S., the teachers don’t give us that kind of punishment, like hitting us with a stick. Look, I am not against the teachers’ way of disciplining us back home. It was out of good faith and wanted us to be good students with good behavior].

Abrahatsion was in the refugee camp in Ethiopia and went to school there before arriving in the U.S. in 2020. She explained that the school system in Ethiopia was not very different from Eritrea’s. Her interest was in modeling and designing, and up on arrival at the U.S. through the process of the UNHCR, there were no agencies that assisted her to get resettled in the U.S., obtain her social security number and driver’s license, and go to school. Instead, her father, who

came to the U.S. through the channeling of the UNHCR, played a pivotal role in helping her get resettled in the U.S. Currently, she goes to a community college in the U.S. and is majoring in nursing.

Letetsion

Letestion, who is 20 years old, was born and raised in Eritrea. She had a stable life in Eritrea, as her mother had a job and was able to feed the family before she left Eritrea. Her father had left them all in Eritrea. Letetsion left Eritrea because she wanted to join her family, who had left Eritrea due to political reasons; they were all living in Ethiopia and some of them were living in the United States. So, she wanted to join them. But her main reason was because she didn't like the situation in Eritrea. There were a lot of reasons that forced her to leave the country; for example, going to the military training center before joining a college. So, she was unable to see her future.

Letetsion completed 10th grade in Eritrea and describes her schooling experiences in the following manner: “ንዓይ ዓቢ እዩ ነይሩ ይመስለኒ፤ መምህራነይ ነገራት ከረድኡና ናብ ትግርኛ ይቕይሩ ስለ ዝነበሩ ኣዝዩ ቀለል እዩ ነይሩ። ብዙሕ ከቢድ ዝነበረ ኣይመስለንን። ሕቶታት እንተዝህልወኒ ምስ መምህራንን ምስ ኩሎም መማህርቲይን ብቐሊሉ ክረዳዳእ ይኸእል ነይረ። ዋላ እቶም ኮርሳት ብዙሕ ከበድቲ ኣይነበሩን። ንምርዳእ ቀለልቲ እዮም ምበልኩ። ስለዚ እወ ጽቡቕ ነይሩ። ጽቡቕ፡ እቲ ኣብ ኤርትራ ዝነበረኒ ናይ ትምህርቲ ተመኩሮ ዘይፈተኹዎ ነገር እንተሃልዩ፡ ንሳቶም (መምህራን) ቁሩብ ኣበርቲዕና ክንመሃርን ናብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ክንከይድን የገድዱና ነይርም፡ ብልጫታት ምኻድ ድማ ኣረዲኦምና ኣይፈልጡን። ናብ ቤት ትምህርትን ኣበርቲዕካ ምጽናዕን ብትምህርቲ ብሉጻት ምእንቲ ኸንከውን ጸቕጢ ይገብሩልና። ከምኡ እውን ቁፅሪ ክፍሊ ኣዝዩ ዓብዩ እዩ ነይሩ፤ ኣብ ሓደ ክፍሊ ኣስታት 57 ተማሃሮ ኢና ነይርና። እዚ ኸኣ ዜጨንቕን ውጥረት ዝፈጥርን እዩ መሲሉኒ” [I think it was great for me; it was very simple because my teachers used to switch to Tigrinya to explain things to us. I don't think it was very difficult. I could easily communicate with the teachers and with all my classmates if I had questions. Even the courses were not very difficult. I would say they were simple to understand them. So, yes, it

was fine. The only thing I didn't like about my schooling experience in Eritrea was, they (teachers) used to force us a little bit to study hard and to go to school, and they never explained to us the advantages of going to school and studying hard. They just put pressure on us to excel academically. Also, the class size was very big; we were about 57 students in one class. I thought that was depressing and stressful].

Letetsion explained both the positive and negative schooling experiences in Eritrea. During her stay in the refugee camp in Ethiopia, she went to school and described her schooling experiences in the refugee camp this way, “ጽቡቕ፡ ካብ መምህራን ክጅምር፡፡ እቶም ዝወሰድኩዎም ትምህርቲ እኳ እንተፈተኹዎም፡ እቶም መምህራን ኣዝዮም ጽኑዓት ዝነበሩ ኣይመስለንን፡፡ ከምኡ ውን ኣብ ክፍሊ ኣምሓርኛ ንፋዕ ስለ ዘይነበርኩ መምህራን እንታይ ይብሉ ከም ዝነበሩ ንምርዳእ ጸገም ነይሩኒ፡ ኣብ ክፍሊ ኩሉ ነገር ንምርዳእ ቁሩብ ይኹብደኒ ነይሩ፡፡ እንተኾነ ትግርኛ ዝዛረቡ ውሑዳት መምህራን ስለ ዝነበሩ፡ ኣብ ክፍሊ ክከታተሎም ጸገም ኣይነበረንን፡፡ ብተወሳኺ ካብ ኩሉ ትምህርቲ ኣምሓርኛ እቲ ዝኸበደኒ ትምህርቲ እዩ ነይሩ፡፡ ከምኡ ውን ልክዕ ከም ኤርትራ ቁፅሪ ክፍሊ ኣዝዩ ዓቢ እዩ ነይሩ፡፡ [Well, let me start with the teachers. I don't think the teachers were very strict, though I liked the subjects I took. Also, I had problems to understand what the teachers were saying in class because I was not good at Amharic, and it was a little bit difficult to understand everything in class. However, there were a few teachers who spoke Tigrinya, and I didn't have problems to follow them in class. In addition, out of all subjects, Amharic was the most difficult subject for me. Also, there was a big class size, just like Eritrea].

In addition, Letetsion shares her positive schooling experiences in the refugee camp and described it the following way: “እቲ ዝገርም ኣብ መዓስከር ስደተኛታት ኮምፒዩተራት እረክብ ነይረ ፡፡ እቲ ቤት ትምህርቲ ጽቡቕ ቁጽሪ ዘለዎ ኮምፒዩተራት ዝውንን ኮይኑ፡ ብማሕበራት ግብረ ሰናይ ዝተወፈደ እዩ፡፡ ኣብቲ ቤት ትምህርቲ ብኮምፒዩተራት ክለተይ ምምዕባል ባህ ይብለኒ ነይሩ፡፡” [Surprisingly, I had access to computers in the refugee camp. The school owned a good number of computers, donated by charity organizations. I enjoyed developing my skills with the computers in the school]. Letetsion compared her

schooling experiences in Eritrea and Ethiopia and said: “ኣብ ኤርትራ ኣብ ሰሙን ክልተ ጊዜ ጥራይ ኮምፒዩተር ኣብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ክረክብ ነይሩኒ። እኹል ኮምፒዩተር እውን ኣይነበረን። ሓንቲ ኮምፒዩተር ንክልተ ተማሃሮ እያ ነይራ። ኣብ ኢትዮጵያ ግን ከምዚ ኣይነበረን። ብዘይካዚ ንግሆን ድሕሪ ቀትርን ኣብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ነይረ ማለት ኣብ ኢትዮጵያ ክልተ ፈረቓ ነይሩ። ኣብ ኤርትራ ግን ሓንቲ ፈረቓ ጥራይ እያ ነይራ። እቲ ካልእ ፍልልይ ኣብ ኤርትራ ዝነበሩ መምህራን ዝያዳ ሓገዙቲን ኒሕ ዝነበሮም ይመስለኒ። ንዓና ንምሕጋዝ ብዙሕ ጊዜ ወፍዮም፣ ንዓና ንምሕጋዝ ድማ ንናይ እንግሊዝኛን ሒሳብን ትምህርቲ ዝኸውን ናይ ሜክ ኣፕ ክላሰ የዳልዉልና ነይሮም። ኣዝዮም ተወፋይነት ነይሮምም ምበልኩ። ኣብ ኢትዮጵያ ግን እቶም መምህራን ኣበርቲዕና ንሰራሕ ኣይንሰራሕ፣ ዕዮ ገዛና ንወድእ ኣይንወድእ ፈጺሞም ከምዘይግደሱ እዩ ነይሩትዕዝብተይ። ውሑድ ኣቐልቦ ዝሃቡና ይመስለኒ።” [In Eritrea, I had access to computers in the school only twice a week, and there were not enough computers. One computer was for two students, but this was not the case in Ethiopia. In addition, I was at school during morning and afternoon hours, meaning two shifts in Ethiopia, but in Eritrea, it was only one shift. The other difference is that I think the teachers in Eritrea were more helpful and passionate about their job. They devoted much time to help us and organized make up classes for English and mathematics subjects to help us better. I would say they were very committed. However, in Ethiopia, it was like the teachers never cared if we worked hard or not, if we did our assignments or not, and if we completed our homework or not. I think they gave us little attention].

Letetsion came to the U.S. in 2020 to join her family and was resettled as a refugee through the process of the UNHCR. Her resettlement process was smooth, as her father was supportive and played a significant role in her resettlement process, but the refugee agencies did not do much to help her get resettled in the second host country. Her father assisted her to get her social security number and driver’s license. Presently, she is studying nursing at a community college.

Aberash

Aberash is 20 years old and was born in Eritrea. She grew up with her grandmother and had a good life there in Asmara. She left Eritrea in 2019 due to the current situation; the political situation did not allow her to stay and study there. Additionally, her father did not have a job due to the situation, and he was obliged to join the military service for unlimited time. She completed 10th grade there, and describes her schooling experiences in the following manner: “ደሐን ቦቲ ኣወንታዊ ተመኩሮታት ክጅምር። ኩላትና ዩኒፎርም፣ ናይ ቤት ትምህርቲ ዩኒፎርም ክንክደን ምግዳድና ኣዝዩ መሳጢ እዩ ነይሩ፣ እዚ ድማ ንዝኾነ ካባና ብገለ መልክዑ ዝፈላልዩና ኣይነበረን። ዝኾነ ዓይነት ኣድልዎ ኣይነበረን ምበልኩ። ካብዚ ብተወሳኺ እቶም መምህራን ኣዝዮም ዕቲባት ነይሮም፤ ብሓቂ ንኸምህሩና ጥራይ ዘይኮነስ ንኸግስጹና እውን ኣበርቲዖም ሰሪሖም እዮም። እቲ ናይ ስነ-ስርዓት ክፋል ኣዝዩ መሳጢ እዩ ነይሩ ምኽንያቱ ሰባት ኣዝዮም ዕቲባት ስለዝነበሩን ሰባት ብሰንኪ እቲ ናይ ስነ-ስርዓት ስጉምቲ ሰባት ኣብ ክፍሎም ብስሩዕ ክሳተፉ ስለዝተደፍኡን። ጽቡቕ፣ እቶም ኣዝዮም ዘይጥዑማት ተመኩሮታት ሕጽረት ትምህርታዊ ጸጋታት እዮም ነይሮም፤ ብዙሕ ኢንተርኔት ኣይረኽብናን። ካብዚ ብተወሳኺ ኣብ ቤተ-መጻሕፍቲ ዘለና መጻሕፍቲ ኣዝዩ ኣረጊት ስለዝነበረ ብጭቡጥ ክትውከሶም ቁሩብ ኣጸጋሚ እዩ ነይሩ። ንሕቶታትና ድማ መሊሶምልና ኣይፈልጡን። ስለዚ ኣነ ኣብኡ ክለኹ ነቐፌታዊ ኣተሓሳስባ ከነማዕብልን ናጻ መጽናዕቲ ክንገብርን ናይ ብሓቂ ኣጸጋሚ እዩ ነይሩ። እዚ ጥራይ እዩ እቲ ኣሉታዊ ተመክሮ ኢል ዝገልጸ።” [Well, let me start with the positive experiences. It was very interesting that we all had to wear a uniform, school uniform, and that did not differentiate any one of us in a sense. There was no any kind of discrimination, I would say. In addition to that, the teachers were very serious; they actually worked hard not only to teach us, but also to discipline us. The disciplining part was very interesting because people were very serious, and people were pushed to attend their classes regularly because of the disciplining measure. Well, the most unpleasant experiences were lack of educational resources; we didn’t have access to the internet much. In addition to that, it was a bit difficult to actually consult the books that we are available in the library because they were too old, and they never answered our questions. So, it was really difficult for us to develop critical thinking and to do independent

research when I was there. This is the only thing that I would describe as the negative experience].

Aberash was enrolled in different courses such as Eritrean history and Eritrean geography, and this helped her to keep in touch with her country. In addition, the courses helped her to learn a lot of things, as they were well-organized, interesting, and exciting for her because they were related to her personal life and experiences. When comparing her current courses with the courses she took in high school in Eritrea, she stated, “እዚአም ምስ ኣሜሪካ ንኣብነት ምስቶም ኣብዚ ዝወስዶም ዘለኹ ኮርሳት ከነጻጽሮም እንተደኣ ኣለኒ ግን ኩሎም ኮርሳት ኣብ ዝተፈላለዩ ክፍልታት ከም ዝወሃቡ። ንኣብነት ጂኦሜትሪ ከም ኮርስ ይወሃቡ፣ ድሕሪኡ ኣልጀብራ ከም ካልእ ኮርስ ይወሃቡ፣ ሰለዚ፣ ኣብኡ ዘሎ ፍልልይት ክትሪኦ ትክእል። ሓደ ሓደ ግዜ ድማ ኣተሓሒዘዮም እቲ ምትእስሳር ወይ እቲ ቀጻልነት ኣበይ ከምዘሎ ክርኢ ይኸብደኒ። ኣብ ኤርትራ ግን ከምኡ ኣይነበረን። ብሓቂ ክልቲኡ ኣልጀብራን ጂኦሜትሪን ኣብ ሓደ ኮርስ ዝተዋህበ ኮይኑ ኣብ ምንጎ ዝተፈላለዩ ክፋላት ናይቲ ኮርስ ዘሎ ቀጻልነት ስለ ዝረኣኹ ድማ መሳጢ ኮይኑ ተሰሚዑኒ። ሓደ ነገር ክጠቕሶ ዝደለ ብዛዕባ ኣብ ኤርትራ ዘሎ ኮርሳት፡ ሓንሳብ ከም ምዕራፍ ወይ ዝኾነ ክፋል ምስዝሓልፈካ፡ እቶም መማህራን ነቲ ዝመሃሩዎ ክደግሙ ስለዘይምለሱ፡ ወይ ንድሕሪት ተመሊሱ ዳግማይ ከምህረካ ፍቓደኛ ምበልኩ። ብዘይካ’ዚ ኣብኡ ኣብ ኤርትራ ዋሕዲ ጸጋ ስለዝነበረ ዳግሙ ምዝራብ ኣጸጋሚ እዩ ነይሩ። እዚ ድማ ንሙብዛሕትአም ተማሃሮ ኣዝዩ ከቢድ እዩ ነይሩ።” [But, if I have to compare these with the United States, for example, with the courses that I’m taking here, that all the courses are given in different segments. For example, geometry is given as a course, then algebra is given as another course, so, you can see the differences over there. And sometimes it’s difficult for me to connect them and see where the connection is or the continuity is. But in Eritrea, it wasn’t like that. Actually, it was like both algebra and geometry were given in one course and I thought it was interesting because I could see the continuity between the different portions of the course. One thing I want to mention about the courses in Eritrea, is that once you miss a portion like a chapter or whatever, it would be difficult for you to recap because the teachers didn’t go back to repeat what they had taught, or I would say reluctant to go back and

teach you again. In addition to that it was difficult to recap because there was lack of resource there in Eritrea, and this this was very difficult for most students].

After Aberash left Eritrea, she went to a refugee camp in Ethiopia, and went to school there. She described her schooling experiences in the refugee camp in the following way: “ኣብኡ ትምህርቲ እናኸድኩ ከለኹ፡ እቲ ቤት ትምህርቲ ዓቢ ህንጻ ስለዘይነበሮን ከም ናይ ትምህርቲ ጸጋታት ዝኣመሰሉ ጸጋታት ከንገረኩ ስለዘይከኣልና፡ ኣብ ትሕቲ ኣዝዩ ከቢድ ኩነታት እዩ ነይሩ ምበልኩ። ካብዚ ብተወሳኺ ድማ ኢንተርኔት ኣይረኽብናን። ኣዝዩ ከቢድ እዩ ነይሩ። ኣብቲ መዓስከር ብዝነበረ ናይ ጸጥታ ጉዳይ ኣብ ትምህርቲ እኳ ከድህብ ኣይከኣልኩን። ገለ ዕጡቓት ናብቲ ቤት ትምህርቲ መጺኦም ክቐትሉና ኢሎም የፈራርሑና ብዙሕ ጊዜ ድማ ዘሚቶምና እዮም። ኣብ መዓስከር ስደተኛታት ናይ ብሓቂ ውሑስ ኣይነበረን እዚ ድማ እዩ እቲ ምኽንያት I didn't concentrate much on my schooling. ግን እወ ኩሎም ኣዕሩኽተይ ኣብኡ ነይሮም ምበልኩ፣ ገለ መምህራንና ድማ ትግርኛ ይዘረቡ ነበሩ። ብተወሳኺ እቶም ኮርሳት መሳጢ እዮም ነይሮም፣ ብፍላይ ሒሳብ ዝፈትዖ ትምህርቲ ስለዝነበረ ኣብኡ ሒሳብ ምምሃር ደስ ይብልኒ ነይሩ።” [While I went to school there, I would say it was under a very difficult situation because the school did not have a great building and we couldn't find resources like educational resources. And in addition to that, we didn't have access to the internet. It was very difficult for us. I could not even concentrate on my education due to security issues in the camp. Some armed people use to come to the school and threaten to kill us and they robbed us many times. It was not really safe in the refugee camp, and this is that reason I didn't concentrate much on my schooling. But yes, I would say all my friends were there, and some of our teachers spoke Tigrinya. In addition, the courses were interesting, particularly math was my favorite subject and I enjoyed learning math there].

Aberash came to the United States in 2020 and it was not her choice to come to the U.S. Rather, it was the UNHCR that decided for her where she should go, and based on their process, Aberash was resettled in the United States. Aberash explains that if it were up to her wish, she would stay in Eritrea and realize her dreams. But, it was beyond her capability to do this. So, she

had to leave the country, as the situation was unbearable. However, just like the other participants, she did not receive much support from the agencies that support refugee, but her father who had been resettled in the U.S. helped her to start life here. Currently, she is majoring in nursing at a college in the U.S.

Rahwa

Rahwa, 21, was born in Eritrea. Her father was a farmer, and she remembers the good times she had in her village back home when she used to play with her peers and had a reasonable life there. She went to school in Eritrea and describes her experiences in the following manner, “ኣነ ምበልኩ፡ ብሉጽ ነይሩ ይመስለኒ። ክልተ ፈረቓ ነይሩና። መምህራንና ድማ ኣዝዮም ጽኑዓት እዮም ነይሮም። ኣብ ክፍሊ ንኸግስጹና ኣዝዮም ጽዒሮም እዮም። ከምኡ’ውን፡ እቶም ኣርእስታት’ውን ኣዝዮም መሳጢ’ዮም ነይሮም። ቀደም ታሪኽ፡ ጂኦግራፊ፡ ኤርትራዊ ጂኦግራፊ ንማሃር ኔርና ማለተይ እዮ። ኩሉ መሳጢ እዩ ነይሩ።” [I would say, I think it was great. We had two shifts. And our teachers were very strict. They worked very hard to discipline us in class. And the subjects were very interesting as well. We used to learn history, geography, Eritrean geography I mean. Everything was interesting.]

After Rahwa left Eritrea, she went to a refugee camp in Ethiopia. She liked her teachers in the camp who spoke both Tigrinya and Amharic and thought the courses were interesting. However, the situation in the refugee camp, like lack of security and educational infrastructure, did not permit her to study comfortably.

When explaining why she left Eritrea, the political situation in the country was not stable and her father could not stay in his job because he was forced to join the military. But later, they managed to escape to Ethiopia, and through the UNHCR process, they were resettled in the United States. She describes the role of the refugee resettlement agencies, especially Catholic Charities, as pivotal because they were helpful in getting them resettled in the second host

country and helped them to enroll in school and get social security number and a driver's license. Currently she is studying nursing at a college in the United States.

Rozina

Rozina, 22 years old, was born and raised in Eritrea. Since her father was in the military service, there was no income for the family, but they had to depend on their grandparents to lead their lives. Rozina mostly grew up with her mother and faced a lot of economic challenges. In fact, the reason she left Eritrea is because her father was not allowed to go out and support his family, which stems from political reasons. Rozina went to school in Eritrea and describes her schooling experiences this way, “ ጽቡቕ ነይሩ ይመስለኒ። ካብቲ ኣብ መዓስከር ስደተኛታት ኢትዮጵያ ዝረኽብከዎ ትምህርቲ ቁሩብ ዝተፈልየ እዩ ነይሩ። ኣብ ኤርትራ ብዙሓት ኣዕሩኽ ነይሮምን። እቶም መምህራን ጸዕራማት እዮም ነይሮም። ኣዝዮም ተሓባብርትን ሓሳባውያንን እዮም ነይሮም። ኣብ ምግሳጽና ተራ ተጻዊቶም እዮም። ስልማት ከንሉብስ ኣይፍቀደልናን ነይሩ። ናይ እዝኒ የለን።”[I think it was good. It was a little bit different from the schooling I got in the refugee camp in Ethiopia. I had a lot of friends in Eritrea. The teachers were hard-working. They were very cooperative and thoughtful. They played a role in disciplining us. We were not allowed to wear jewelry. No earrings].

After leaving Eritrea, Rozina went to a refugee camp in Ethiopia and went to school there, and describes her schooling experiences in the following way: “ጽቡቕ ነይሩ። ናብቲ ቤት ትምህርቲ ንምእታው ግን ነዊሕ ርሕቀት ብእግረይ ክኸይድ ነይሩኒ። ኣብ ከባቢኡ ድማ ማይ ኣይነበረን። ከምኡ'ውን ሕጽረት መሰረተ ልምዓት ትምህርቲ ነይሩ? ገለ ካብቶም መምህራን ኣምሓርኛ ገሊኦም ድማ ትግርኛ ዝዛረቡ እኳ እንተነበሩ፣ ምስቶም ኣምሓርኛ ዝዛረቡ ክረዳዳእ ግን ቁሩብ ኣሸጊሩኒ እዩ። ሕጽረት ማይ ነይሩ እዚ ድማ ንኣካዳሚያዊ ምዕባላይ ጽልዎ ኣሕዲሩላይ ምበልኩ። እቲ ዝያዳ ዝዝከር ንሱ እዩ። ከምኡ'ውን ማሕበራዊ ትምህርቲ ዝፈትዎ ትምህርቲ'ኳ እንተነበረ፣ ታሪኽ ኤርትራ ይኹን ጂኦግራፊ ኤርትራ ኣይነበረን። ሓደ ኤርትራዊ መምህር ነይሩ ትግርኛ ዝምህረና ዝነበረ። ዳሓ ግን ኣቋሪጹዎ። ስለዚ እቲ ኮርስ ተቐሪጹ። እቲ ካልእ ጸገም ድማ ኩነታት ጸጥታ እዩ ነይሩ። ዕጡቓት ሰባት ናብቲ መዓስከር ስደተኛታት መጺኦም የፈራርሑና ነይሮም። ከምኡ'ውን ንቆልዑ ካብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ይሰርቁ ነበሩ፣ ምእንቲ ንኻልኦት ሰባት ኣብ ሱዳን ክሸጡ።

ብሓፈሻ እቲ ሃዋህው ንትምህርቲ ምቹእ ኣይነበረን።”[It was fine. But I had to walk a long distance to get into the school. And there was no water available. And lack of educational infrastructure was there. Some of the teachers spoke Amharic and others spoke Tigrinya, but it was a bit difficult for me to communicate with those who spoke Amharic. There was water scarcity which impacted my academic progress, I would say. That’s what I remember most. And Social Studies was my favorite subject, but there was no Eritrean history or Eritrean geography. There was one Eritrean teacher who used to teach us Tigrinya. But later he left. So, the course was dropped. And the other problem was the security situation. Armed people used to come to the refugee camp and threaten us. Also, they used to steal children from school, so that they would sell them to other people in Sudan. All in all, the environment was not conducive to education].

Rozina was resettled in the United States through the process of the UNHCR. She had the support of the refugee resettlement agency called GVS to get resettled in the United States. The organization helped her to get her social security number, driver’s license, and the like, but she had some difficulties communicating with them because she did not speak good English. Presently, she is majoring in nursing in a college in the United States.

All the participants have been introduced above. There are themes which are common across the participants. All of them are political refugee students. They explained that they left Eritrea due to political reasons, though they had a better standard of living in Eritrea. Secondly, they all went to school in Eritrea and Ethiopia, and are now majoring in nursing in a college in the U.S. Midwest. Finally, they were all resettled through the process of the UNHCR, which means they participated in the resettlement program of the UNHCR, an opportunity given only to political refugees. Moreover, the participants identified themselves as culturally Eritrean students. The aspects that identify them as having Eritrean cultural identity include language, i.e.,

Tigiryna is their mother tongue, style of communication, where they keep their head down and speak less before elders, their names, which are typical Eritrean names, and religion that they are all Orthodox Tewahedo Christian followers. A theme that is different across participants that should be noted is that some of them were resettled in the U.S. with the help of the family, rather than through a refugee resettlement organizations. For example, Abrahatsion, Letetsion and Aberash had family assistance when they arrived in the U.S. because they had a family member living in the U.S.; Rahwa and Rozina did not have any family members in the U.S., and hence were supported by the refugee resettlement agencies.

Based on the data gathered through interviews and the focus group discussion, six themes were identified; these include negotiating and renegotiating cultural identity, maintaining cultural identity, home culture versus college culture, reflecting refugees' cultural identity in school, impact of cultural identity on schooling, and culturally related teaching methodology. Next, these themes will be discussed.

Negotiating and renegotiating cultural identity

One of the research questions that this study asks is how Eritrean political refugee college students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity. The participants identified themselves as culturally Eritrean students and thought they were different from the rest of the student population due to their cultural identity. Abrahatsion reflected it this way:

እወ ኣነ ኤርትራዊት ተማሃሪት እየ፡ ምስ ዘይኤርትራውያን ተማሃሮ ብዙሕ ፍልልያት ስለዘለኒ ድማ ብባህሊ ዝተፈለግኹ ኹይኑ እዩ ዚሰምዓኒ። ንኣብነት ኣነ ዝዛረበሉ ኣገባብ፡ ኣነ ዝዋሰኣሉ ኣገባብ፡ ትፈልጡ ኢኹም፡ ብዙሕ ፍልልያት ኣለና። ንሕና ኤርትራውያን ዝያዳ ኣብ ባህልና ወይ ባህላዊ መንነትና ኢና ነተኩር። ንኸንዘራረብ ክፉታት ዝኾንና ኣይንመስልን። ብቋንቋና ወይ ባህልና ድማ ንሕብን። ከምኡ'ውን ኣብ ኣስማት ፍልልይ ኣሎ። ኤርትራዊ ኣስማት ኤርትራዊ ትርጉም ኣለዎ፤ ምስ ኤርትራዊ ባህሊ ድማ ይዛመድ። ካብኣም ዝፍለየና ድማ ንሱ እውን ይመስለኒ። [Yes, I am an Eritrean student, and I see myself culturally different because I

have a lot of differences with non-Eritrean students. For example, the way I speak, the way I act, you know, we have a lot of differences. We, Eritreans, focus more on our culture or cultural identity. We don't seem to be open to negotiate. And we are proud of our language or culture. Also, there are differences in names. Eritrean names have Eritrean meaning and related to Eritrean culture. And I think that's also what makes us different from them].

Letetsion agrees with Abrahatsion and believes that she is a culturally Eritrean student, and said, “እው፡ ኣነ ኣነ እየ። ኣነ ብባህሊ ዝተፈለገኹ ተመሃሪት ምዃነይ ይኣምን። ካብ ኤርትራ ስለ ዝኾንኩ ብውሽጢይን ብደገን ከምኡ እዩ ዝስምዓኒ። ስለዚ እው ኣነ ብባህሊ ዝተፈለገኹ ተመሃሪት እየ። ንኩባይ ከምኡ እየ ዝርድኡ።” [Yes, I do. I believe I'm a different student culturally because I'm from Eritrea and that's how I feel inside of me and outside. So yes, I am a culturally different student. That's how I perceive myself.]. Also, Aberash explains how she is culturally different student in the following manner:

ፈጸሙ ኣይኮነን። ብባህሊ ዝተፈለገኹ ኮይኑ ይስምዓኒ ምኽንያቱ ከምቲ ኣቐዲመ ዝበልኩኻ ኣብ ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርቲ መንነተይ ስለ ዘይርእየኒ እዩ ። ካብዚ ብተወሳኺ ባህላዊ መንነተይ ንምሕላው ኣዝየ ተወፋይነት ኣለኒ። መንነተይ ክቐይር ዝኸእል ነገር ንኸዘራረብ ድሉው ኣይኮንኩን። ሃገሪይ የኸብር፡ ባህላይ ድማ የኸብር እየ። ዝልወጥ ኣይመስለንን ባህላዊ መንነተይ ንምሕላው ዝከኣለኒ ኩሉ እገብር። ብባህሊ ድማ ናይቲ ኮለጅ ከምዘይኮንኩ እኣምን። ኣብ ከንድኡ እቲ ከገብር ዝፍትን ብሓቂ ንገለ ኣሜሪካውያን ኣዕሩኽተይ ካልእ ተመሃራይ ምዃነይ ከነግሮም ምፍታን እዩ። ቋንቋ ኣደይ ዝኾነ ትግርኛ ይዛረብ፡ ናይ ዝእርእይ ባህላዊ መንነት ሓዘ ድማ ይመጽእ እብሎም። ሓደ ሓደ ግዜ ዕድል ምስ ረኽብኩ ቋንቋኹም ከዛረብ ከም ዝፍትን ንስኻትኩም ግን ቋንቋይ ከም ዘይትዛረቡ እነግሮም። ኤርትራ ኣበይ ከም ዘላ ኣይፈልጡን እዮም። ኣነ ካብ ኤርትራ እየ እንተበልኩ ኣበይ ኣላ ኢሎም ይሓቱኒ። እዚ ኩሉ ብባህሊ ዝተፈለገኹ ምዃነይ ዝነግሩኒ ይመስለኒ። ከምኡ'ውን መን ምዃነይን መንነተይ እንታይ ምዃኑን ከነግሮም ኣለኒ። ኣነ ንባህላዊ መንነተይ ኣዝየ ተኸላኻሊት እየ። ብባህሊ ዝተፈለገኹ ተመሃሪት ስለ ዝኾንኩ መን ምዃነይ፡ ካበይ ከም ዝመጸእኹ፡ ባህላዊ መንነተይ ከመይ ከም ዝመስል ጥራይ እየ ከነግሮም ዝደለ።

[Not at all. I feel like I'm culturally different because as I told you before, I don't see my

identity in the college education. In addition to that, I am very much committed to keeping up my cultural identity. I'm not ready to negotiate anything that could change my identity. I respect my country and I respect my culture and I don't think I will be changed, and I do everything I can to keep my cultural identity and I believe that I don't belong to the college culturally. Instead, what I try to do is that I try to actually tell some of my American friends that I'm a different student. I tell them that I speak Tigrinya, which is my mother tongue, and I come have my own cultural identity. I sometimes tell them when I get the opportunity that I try to speak your language, but you don't speak my language; you don't even know where Eritrea is; if I say I am from Eritrea, they ask me where it is. I think all these tell me that I am culturally different. Also, I need to tell them who I am and what my identity is. I'm very defensive of my cultural identity and I just want to tell them who I am, where I am from, what my cultural identity is like because I am a different student culturally].

All the participants explained that culturally they are Eritrean students due to some aspects of Eritrean cultural identity. Firstly, the language aspect makes them different because they all speak Tigrinya, one of the national Eritrean languages. One of the participants, Aberash, also speaks Saho in addition to Tigrinya. Part of the language the participants explained was the way they speak Tigrinya that it is glottal and uses much stress when pronouncing the words. This appears to impact the participants' use of English that they put similar stresses on the English words when pronouncing them, and hence makes them have an accent. This way of speaking made the participants different from non-Eritrean students and related it to their cultural identity. The other aspect is their way of acting in college. The participants explained that they keep their head down when communicating and move around only with the permission of the authority in

school. They think it is their costumery to enter the classroom without the teacher's permission, especially when they are late to the class, though their teachers repeatedly told them not to knock at the classroom door when they are late but are free to enter the classroom.

The participants found this way of acting difficult to practice due to their previous schooling experiences in Eritrea and Ethiopia and their distinct cultural identity. Also, the names assigned to the participants who have Eritrean meanings related to their religion, culture and language are the other aspects that identified the participants as culturally different students. The participants felt that they were culturally different students and remained protective of their cultural identity, with little room for negotiation and renegotiation. Instead, they expressed themselves as Eritrean students in the colleges in spite of being political refugee students. This is consistent with Portes and Zhou's (1993) acculturation theory of selective assimilation, as the participants are accommodated to use their native languages and practice their aspects of cultural identity while getting immersed into the dominant culture.

Moreover, the participants explained that there were aspects of their cultural identity they do not negotiate. For example, pork is the food they don't eat at all, and therefore did not negotiate this, as it is a taboo in their religious perspective, Orthodox Christianity. Also, dressing style matters to them. As females, being obedient and loyal to their religion, Orthodox Christianity means that wearing a short mini skirt is something they do not negotiate, and their means of communication is to avoid eye contact and keep their head down out of respect. These aspects of cultural identity appear to be non-negotiable to the participants. However, they reiterated that they don't impose their cultural identity or practice on the non-Eritrean students, and they don't want to negotiate their own.

Maintaining cultural identity

Another theme that emerged from the data was maintaining cultural identity. All the participants reflected that keeping their cultural identity was very important for them, though their school did not appear to have helped them to maintain their cultural identity, according to the participants. For example, Abrahatsion noted that, “ባህላዊ መንነተይ ዝጸሉ ወይ ባህላዊ መንነተይ ንክቐጽል ዝሕግዘኒ ኣይመስለንን። ኣነ ግን ናይ ገዛእ ርእሰይ ባህላዊ ልምዲ፡ እንኮላይ ቅዲ ጸጉርን ኣኮዳድናይን እኸተል። መብዛሕትኡ ግዜ በባህላይ ስለ ዝሕበን እየ ዝኸተሉ።” [I don't think it impacts my cultural identity or keep up my cultural identity. But I follow my own cultural practice, including the hairstyle, and the way I get dressed. So, I usually follow my culture because I'm proud of it].

This could be because of what Bourdieu (1977) points to regarding schools as sites of cultural reproduction; schools often function in reproducing the values of the cultural capital of the elite social class. Cultural capital is shaped by one's experiences at home, where there are cultural resources that support someone's position in a social order (Bourdieu, 1977). This may bring some advantage to the dominant groups, as they have access to the cultural resources valued by the social order, which could be character traits, cultural goods, and academic credentials. Yet, Eritrean refugee students, who are a minority, and whose values and languages are not reflected in the school, do not experience this. Cultural capital is specific based on the particular context, and what counts as cultural capital in the United States, and at universities, appears to be different from the experiences of immigrant students. Despite this, the participants explained that they follow some strategies to maintain their own cultural identity, and Abrahatsion put it this way:

ናብ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ምኻድን ምስ ኣዕሩኸተይ ምርኻብን ግን ባህላዊ መንነተይ ንክቐጽል ይሕግዘኒ። ስለዚ፡ እቲ ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርቲ ብዝኾነ ይኹን መንገዲ መንነተይ ንክቐጽል ኣይሕግዘንን እዩ። ከምኡ'ውን እቲ ስርዓተ ትምህርቲ ወይ ኮርሳት ብዛዕባ መንነተይ ኣይዛረብን ወይ'ውን ንዓይ መንነተይ ንክቐጽል ኣይሕግዘንንዮ። ናይ ጉጅለ ስራሕ

ምስ ዝህልዎና ግን መብዛሕትኡ ግዜ መን ምዃኒይን ካቢይ ከም ዝመጸእኹን ባህላይ ብኸመይ መንገዲ ከም ዝተፈልየን እገልጸሎም። ስለዚ፡ መብዛሕትኡ ግዜ ነቲ ኣብዚ ኣብ ኣመሪካ ብቐጻሊ in church ዝምሃሮ ዘሎኹ Eritrean cultural Trend እየ ዝኸተል። ግደ ሓቂ፡ ዝተፈለየ ኣኮዳዲና ክኸደን ከለኹ፡ ስለምንታይ ይብሉኒ? ካቢይ ተመጽእዮ? ንኣብነት ሓደ ሓደ ግዜ ፊደላት ግዕዝ ዘለዎ ቲሽርት እኸደን ከለኹ፡ ፊደላት እንታይ ማለት ምዃኒይን ኤርትራ ኣቢይ ከም እትርከብን ስለምንታይ ቦቲ ዝኸደኖ ኣኮዳዲና ከም ዝኸደን ይሓተኒ። እዚ መን ምዃኒይን ካቢይ ከም ዝመጸእኩን ንኸገልጸሎም ጽቡቕ ዕድል ይኸውን እሞ ባህላዊ መንነተይ እውን ከላልየሎም እፍትን። [But going to the church and meeting with my friends help me to keep up my cultural identity. So, the college education doesn't help me to keep up my identity in any way. Also, the curriculum or the courses don't discuss my identity or doesn't help me too. But when we have a group work, I usually explain to them who I am, where I come from, and in what way my culture is different. So, I usually follow the Eritrean cultural Trend, which is being continuously taught In church here in the U.S. In fact, when I get dressed differently, they ask me why? Where it comes from? For example, sometimes I wear a tshirt that has Geeze alphabets, and they ask me what the alphabets mean and where Eritrea is located and why I get dressed the way I get dressed. This becomes a good opportunity to explain to them who I am and where I come from and I try to Introduce my cultural identity as well].

In addition, Rahwa reiterated that college education does not help her to keep her cultural identity and she does not see her identity and cultural values in the curriculum. She described this in the following way, “መንነተይ ምስቲ ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርቲ ዝተኣሳሰር ኮይኑ ዘይትርእዮ ይመስለኒ። ኣብ ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርቲ ኤርትራዊ መንነት ክትረከብ ከቢድ እዩ። ብዝኸነ ይኹን መንገዲ መንነተይ ንምሕላው ዝሕግዘኒ ኣይመስለንን። እቲ ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርቲ ምስ ባህላዊ መንነተይ ዘራኽብ የብሉን ይመስለኒ።” [I think you don't see my identity being related to the college education. It's hard to find Eritrean identity in the college education. I don't think it helps me to keep up my identity in any way. I think the college

education has nothing to do with my cultural identity]. Also, just like the other participants, Rozina stated, “እቲ ናይ ኮሌጅ ትምህርቲ ምስ ባህላይ ዝተኣሳሰር ኣይመስለንን። ይኹን እምበር፡ ገለ ከም ሶስዮሎጂ ዝኣመሰሉ ኮርሳት ኣለዉ፡ ኣብኡ ዝተመሃርክዎ ምስ ባህላይ ኣተሓሓዘ፡ ኣብ ክፍሊ ብዛዕባ ባህላዊ መንነተይ መግለጺ ክቕርብ ዕድል ይረክብ። ንኣብነት፡ ኣገባብ ርክብ ወይ ሰባት ኣብ ዝተፈላለዩ ባህልታት ዝረዳድኡኡ ኣገባብ፡ እዚ ከም ዕድል ባህላይ እውን ክንጸባርቕ እየ ዝሪኡ።” [I don't think the college education is related to my culture.

However, there are some courses like sociology, where I relate what I learn to my culture and get an opportunity to make a presentation about my cultural identity in class. For example, means of communication or the way people communicate across different cultures, I see that as an opportunity to reflect my culture as well].

The participants noted that their college education does not have much to do with their cultural identity and their cultural values, but they use some strategies to maintain their cultural identity, which include:

- Going to Eritrean church and meeting with Eritrean friends and discussing ways of keeping their cultural identity in the church. The participants reaffirmed that the Eritrean church keeps teaching them to be ethical and disciplined and Eritrean values, which helps them to keep their cultural identity.
- Describing their identity to other non-Eritrean students during group work. They describe that they have a different culture, and this includes practices like keeping their head down, avoiding eye contact when communicating, and shaking with two hands when greeting people out of respect. The participants also tell their classmates that Tigiryna, a semitic language, is their mother tongue and follows distinct linguistic patterns and that they are Orthodox Tewahdo followers, where they go fasting for 40 days during fasting season and celebrate Geeze Christmas and new year.

- Wearing a t-shirt that has Geeze alphabet to express their cultural identity, and their classmates are eager to know what they mean, what their language is like and where they are from; and having an Eritrean female hairstyle called *Kuno*. Since it is time consuming to do the *Kuno* hairstyle, the participants do it only during Eritrean religious holidays and go to school with the *Kuno* hairstyle to reflect their cultural identity.
- Using all the available opportunities to reflect their cultural identity in school. For example, in a sociology class, when there is a presentation, the participants relate it to their cultural and linguistic values and reflect on all aspects of their cultural identity. This way, they try to keep their cultural identity.

Home culture versus college culture

The participants reflected that their home culture was different from the college culture and thought it was the greatest contribution to maintaining their cultural identity. They explained that the difference between the two cultures was significant and noted the aspects that build on their cultural identity in the following manner. Abrahatsion remarked,

ጽብቕ፡ ኣብ መንጎ ባህሊ ኮለጅን ባህሊ ገዛን ብዙሕ ፍልልይ ኣሎ። ንኣብነት ኣብ ገዛ ናብ ክፍሊ ማማ ንምእታው ማዕጾ እኹሕኩሕ። ኣብ ኮለጅ ድማ ከምኡ ይገብር ነይረ፡ ናብ ክፍሊ ንምእታው ማዕጾ ይኹሕኩሕ ነይረ። መምህራነይ ግን ከምኡ ከይገብር ነገሮምን። ስለዚ ድማ እዚ ሓደ ፍልልይ ኣብ መንጎ ባህሊ ገዛን ባህሊ ኮለጅን እዩ። ከምኡ'ውን ኣብ ገዛይ ከለኹ ማማ ብዘይ ዝኾነ ይኹን ፍቓድ ናብ ክፍሊይ ክትመጽእ ከም እትኸእልን፡ ናብ ክፍሊይ ክትመጽእ ፍቓደይ ኣየድልዎን'ዩ ክብል እኸእል'የ። ኣብዛ ሃገር ግን ከምኡ ከም ዘይኮኑ ተማሂረ'የ። ብዘይ ፍቓድ ናብ ክፍሊ ደቆም ኣይኣትዉን። ናብኡ ንምእታው ፍቓድ የድልዎም። ስለዚ ድማ እዚ ፍልልይ ኣሎ። ወለደይ ናብቲ ኣካል ባህላዊ መንነተይ ዝኾነ ክፍሊይ ከይኣትዉ ክግግዮም መሰል የብለይን። ከምኡ'ውን ምስ ወለደይ ከዛረብ ወይ ምስ ወለደይ ገለ ዓይነት ዘይምስምማዕ ክህልወኒ ከሎ ንነብሲይ ኣይከላኸልን ወይ ምስኡም ኣይከራኸርን እዩ። ዋላ ሓደ ሓደ ግዜ እንታይ ከም ዘጋጠመ ክትገልጸሎም ኣጸጋሚ እዩ። ምኽንያቱ ኣብ ቤተ ክርስቲያን ወለድና ዝበልዎ

ቅኑዕ ምዃኑ ስለ ዝተማሃርና ስለዚ ንሱ ብዕቲብ ንወስዶ። ብተወሳኺ ኣብ ገዛና ብዙሕ ርክብ ንገብር ኢና። ከምቲ ብሓባር ንበልዕ፡ ኣብ ሳሎን ድማ ንነዊሕ እዋን ኮፍ ንብል። ስለዚ ድማ ኣብ ነንሕድሕድናን ምስ ወለድናን ንረዳዳእ፡ ንሳቶም ድማ እንታይ ክንገብርን ዘይክንገብርን ከምዘለና ይነግሩና። ምኽሪ ክህቡና ዕድል ይረኽቡ። ኣመጋግባና ድማ ፍጹም ዝተፈልየ እዩ። ንኣብነት ሓያሎ ምግቢ ኣይቀርብን እዩ። ንኹሎም ሰባት ካብታ ድስቲ ኣእዳዎም ተጠቂሞም ክበልዑ ዘለዎም ሓንቲ ምግቢ ጥራይ። እዚ ድማ ገለ ዓይነት ምሕዝነትን ፍቕርን ንምፍግር ይሕግዝ። እዚ ዝኾነሉ ምኽንያት ዋሕዲ ምግቢ ስለዘሎ ዘይኮነስ፡ ብሓባር ክንበልዕን ፍቕሪ ከነርኢን ክንፋቕርን ስለዝደለና እዩ እዚ። እዚ ኣገባብ ኣመጋግባ ማኣዲ ይበሃል።

[Well, there's a lot of difference between the college culture and home culture. For example, at home, I knock at the door to enter into my mom's room and in the college, I used to do the same, knocking at the door to enter the classroom. But my teachers told me not to do that. And so, this is one difference between the home culture and college culture. Also, I can say that when I'm at home, my mom can come to my room without any hesitation, and doesn't need my permission to come to my room, whereas in this country, I have learned that they don't enter into their children's room without permission. They need permission to enter there. And so there is this difference. I have no right to stop my parents from entering into my room, which is part of my cultural identity. Also, when I talk to my parents or have some kind of disagreement with my parents, I do not defend myself or argue with them. Even sometimes it's difficult to explain to them what happened because in church we learned that whatever our parents say is correct and so we take that seriously. In addition, we do a lot of communication at home, like we eat together, and sit in the living room for a long time. And so we communicate to each other and with our parents, and they tell us what to do and what not to do. They get an opportunity to give us pieces of advice. And the way we eat is completely different. For example, several dishes are not served. Only one dish for all the people where they have

to eat from that dish using their hands. And that helps to create some kind of friendship and love. That's not because there is food scarcity, but it is because we want to eat together and show love and have affectionate each other; this way of eating is called *Maadi*].

As Abrahatsion explained, there are some home cultural practices that mismatch with the college culture. For example, at home, Eritrean parents have more authority than their children, and are not expected to seek permission from their children when entering their rooms at home. But the children need their parents' authorization to go to their rooms and must knock at the door until they get response to go in the room. The participants appeared to have practiced the same at school that when they are late to the class, they knock at the door of the classroom and wait outside until they get the teacher's permission to join the class. Letetsion explained why she knocks at the classroom door in the following way.

ምልክት ምክብባር'ዩ። ምልክት ትሕትና'ዩ። ግን ከም ምልክት ምክብባርን ትሕትናን ብኻልኡት ዘይርእ ክኸውን ይኸእል'ዩ። እዚ ክፋላይ ኣብቲ ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርቲ ኣይሰማማዕን እዩ። ከምኡ'ውን ሕቶታት ኣይሓትትን'ዩ። ኣብ ቅድሚ እቶም ካልኡት ተምሃሮ ብብሕቲ እምበር ብግልፂ ሕቶ ምሕታት ቅኑዕ ኮይኑ ኣይሰማማንን። ሰለዚ እወ ብዙሕ ፍልልይት ኣለዎ። ባህላዊ መንነተይ'ውን ኣብ ትምህርቲ ኮለጅ ዝሰማማዕ ኮይኑ ኣይሰማማንን'ዩ።

[It's a sign of respect, a sign of humbleness but it may not be seen as a sign of respect and humbleness by the others. That part of me doesn't fit in the college education. Also, I don't ask questions. I don't feel like it's right to ask questions unless it is in private but not publicly before the other students. So yes, there are a lot of differences, and I don't feel my cultural identity fits in the college education.]

In addition, the participants do not argue with their parents whenever they have disagreements, but take their parents' thoughts as correct due to their religious influence which states that children should respect their parents. They take this aspect of their cultural identity to

school and do not feel comfortable to argue with their teachers as well, though they see non-Eritrean students doing it in their class. This implies that there is a cultural gap between the participants' home culture and college culture, and the participants appear to be more influenced by the former. A cultural gap means "theoretical, conceptual, and practical disconnects and spaces between the culture (values, traditions, customs, beliefs, etc.) of the learners and the communities from which they come and the educational institutions and the proponents thereof" (Berry and Candis, 2013, p. 45). This is available in the literature that Ogbu's (1982) reported the cultural mismatch between the immigrants' home and school cultures.

Moreover, the participated noted how the home culture impacts them more than the school culture, which paves the way for them to build on their cultural identity. The participants have an effective means of maintaining communication with their parents called *ማኣዲ (Maadi)*. It is a cultural way of eating where the family members are supposed to have food from the same plate by using their hands. The eating process begins with the prayer of the father and all family members must be present for the eating to start. During this meal period, the participants get an opportunity to express love and affectionate and communicate with their parents. They exchange information of how their day was and invite the family members to propose solutions if there are problems. During this period, according to the participants, the parents teach their children about preserving their cultural identity, which appears to follow them to school leading to the dominance of home culture rather than school culture.

In addition, the participants confirmed that they often eat typical Eritrean foods at home like Zigni, Shiro and Engera, communicate with their family members only in Tigiryna, listen to Eritrean songs, attend masses in Tigiryna and Amharic in their church, and observe Eritrean religious and national holidays, such as *Fasika* (religious holiday, which is celebrated after the

40 day fasting is broken), Geeze new year and Christmas and Eritrean independence day here in the U.S. Thus, the influence of the home culture appears to put the participants in a position of maintaining their cultural identity in spite of the dominant culture in the U.S.

This does not mean the participants are not influenced by the dominant culture in school, but they explained that their cultural identity was their top priority and most significant thing in their lives; they believed that the influence has less impact on their cultural identity. Yet, they try to strike a balance between the home culture and school culture. Rahwa explains it this way.

When I talk to my mom and dad, I use Tigrinya and I use Tigrinya to talk to my siblings as well at home. Whereas in college, it's difficult to use Tigrinya. I only use English there. And also food wise, I eat injera and spicy foods at home. Whereas in college, you know people usually eat burgers, like mostly fast foods And behavior wise. And behavior was I want to respect my parents. I did not act in a weird way before my parents, I do not feel even comfortable too much to talk to them about everything. Whereas in college, I'm relatively better, like I t try to talk to my friends, but still the cultural pressure is part of me.

Rahwa noted that when she is home, she uses Tigiryna to speak with her family members, but she does not due so in school due to the fact that many people don't understand Tigiryna. Also, she eats Eritrean foods like Injera, Zigni and all spicy foods at home, but in college, she eats burgers. In addition, she does not talk to her parents about everything, and is very careful not to not need them to discipline her. In college, she feels relatively free to talk to her friends in spite of her cultural pressure that one has to listen and not speak too much. Thus, Rahwa balances the home culture and school culture by being Eritrean when she is home and being American when she is in school.

Abrahatsion remarked that she tries to balance the home culture and school culture but believes that her home culture dominates her even when she is outside. She does not mention a specific strategy of maintaining the balance between the two cultures but feels welcomed when practicing her own cultural identity in school, as she explains it below.

ዝገልጸኒ እየ ዝገብር። ባህላዊ መንነተይ ከንጸባርቕ እጽዕር። ክርስቶስ ዘይደሊ ነገር ድማ እየ ትፈልጥ ዲኻ? ስለዚ ድማ መንነተይ ኣዝዩ ኣገዳሲ እየ፣ ንሱ እየ ዝቕድም። ስለዚ ብሓቂ ነቲ ናይ ኮለጅ ባህሊ ከይተረፈ ይዕብላል ክብሎ ይኸእል። ዓይኒ ምጥማት ዘይምሕላው፣ ምክልኻል ዘይምግባር ብዘሕርቕ መንገዲ ምስ መምህራነይ ኣካል ባህላዊ መንነተይ እየም። ከምኡ ድማ እየ ነቲ ባህላዊ መንነት ምስ ባህሊ ኮለጅ ሚዛን ክህቦ ይፍትን። ከምኡ ውን እቶም ኤርትራውያን ዘይኮኑ መምህራንን ተማሃሮን ቡቲ ዘለኹዎ መንገዲ ይቕበሉኒ፣ ኣኸብሮት ውን ይህቡኒ። ከምኡ ውን ኣብ ደገ ኣብ ዝህልወሉ እዋን ብዝተኸእለ መጠን ቦታይ ክሕሉ እጽዕር።

[I do what expresses me. I try to reflect my cultural identity. And it is something I don't want to forget, you know? And so my identity is very important, it comes first. So it really dominates even the college culture I can say, not maintaining eye contact, not to be defensive, in an annoying way, with my teachers are part of my cultural identity. That's how I try to balance the cultural identity with the college culture. Also, the non-Eritrean teachers and students accept me the way I am, and don't disrespect me. Also, I try to keep my space as much as possible when I am outside].

Aspects of Eritrean cultural identity like using Tigrinya, eating Eritrean foods, respecting parents, not being argumentative with teachers, and avoiding eye contact during communication seem to be practiced more at home but also outside, but some of the participants are flexible in being Eritrean and reflecting Eritrean cultural identity at home and acting to be American in school. Even though the participants attempt to balance between home culture and school culture, the home culture appears to outweigh the school culture for the refugee students. This

could be a challenge for the refugee students to adjust to and excel academically in school (McBrien, 2005).

Reflecting refugees' cultural identity in school

In the United States, schooling has been identified as a means of conveying non-academic and cultural values and the learners' interaction with teachers, curricula and peers may impact their growth and changing sense of self as the school knowledge appears to reflect the identities and values of the dominant group, as it is constructed based on the dominant groups' interests (Apple, 2004). Thus, schooling may play a pivotal role in affecting the cultural identity construction of the learners. In fact, it has been considered as a way of acculturating and shaping American cultural identity for immigrants (Rong & Preissle, 1998).

The participants explained that they do not see their cultural identity and values in the courses they take; they are all majoring in nursing, and the nature of the discipline may not leave a room for cultural discussion, but they claim that in all the common courses they have taken, the content was completely new to them and did not see their cultural values and identity in the curriculum. However, the participants use every possible opportunity to reflect their cultural identity. For example, whenever there is a presentation in class, the participants attempt to relate it to their cultural values and discuss it in class. They use the platform as an opportunity to reflect on the aspects of Eritrean cultural identity and their sense of self. Abrahatsion reflected on this point this way.

ደሐን አይፋልን ምበልኩ፡ አይመስለንን ምኽንያቱ ባህላይ ዘንጻባርቆሉ ምኽንያት ስለዘይብሎምን ዝፈልጥዎ እውን አይመስለንን። ስለዚ ኩሉ ግዜ ኣብቲ ቤት ትምህርቲ ወጻእተኛ ምዃነይ ንነብሰይ የዘኻኸራ። እቲ ዝገርም ግን ብሰንኪ ላህጃይን መልክዐይን ካባይ ከም ዝመጸእኩ ይሓቱኒ። ኣነ ካብ ኤርትራ ምዃነይ ከነግሮም ከለኹ፡ መብዛሕትእም ኤርትራ ኣባይ ከምዘላ ኣይፈልጡን'ዮም። ሓደ ሓደ ግዜ ነቲ ካርታ ተጠቂመ ኤርትራ ኣባይ ከምዘላ

የርእዮም እየ። ንኢትዮጵያ ግን ብዝበለጸ ዝፈልጥዎ ይመስሉ። ኣነ ድማ ጎረባብቲ ኢና እብሎም። ኣነ ብዝተፈላለየ ኣከዳድና ዝኸደን ይመስለኒ። ከም ሓጺር ስረ ዘይኮነስ ነዊሕ ስረ፡ ሓንሳብ ድማ ኤርትራዊ ባህላዊ ክዳን፡ ስለዚ ካብይ ከም ዝመጸእኩ ይሓቱኒ። ብተወሳኺ ብዛዕባ ላህጃይን መልክዕይን ይሓቱኒ። በዚ ጥራይ እዩ ብዛዕባ ሃገረይን ባህላይን ከመሃሩ ዝፍትኡ እዋን። እንተዘይኮይኑ፡ ኣብ ዝኾነ ቦታ ባህላዊ መንነተይ ኣብ ስርዓተ ትምህርቲ ኣይንጸባረቕ። ሓደ ክብለካ ዝደሊ ነገር እንተሃልዩ፡ ኣብ ክፍሊ presentation ኣብ ዝህልወሉ እዋን፡ ልሙድ ብዛዕባ ባህሊ ኤርትራ፡ ከም ባህላዊ ፈውሲ እዛረብ። ነቲ ኣርእስቲ ምስ መንነተይ፡ ምስ ባህላዊ መንነተይ ከዛምዶ እፍትን። ኣብ መንገዲ ድማ፡ ብዛዕባኡ ዝስምዓኒ፡ እቲ መቐላዊ ባህሊ ከመይ ከም ዝመስል ክነግሮም እፍትን። ክምህሮም ድማ እፍትን። ስለዚ ባዕለይ የስተንትኖ። ብዝኾነ መንገዲ ግን ኣብ ስርዓተ ትምህርቲ ይኹን ኣብ ኮርሳት ወይ ኣብ ኩሉ ቦታ ኣይትርእዮን ኢኹ። ኣይትርእዮን ኢኹ ክትሪኦ ድማ ኣይትጽበን ኢኹ። ንዕኡ ኣይኮነን። ንኸልኡት ብዙሕ ስለ እነኹብር፡ ከም ሰላምታ እንህበም ኣገባብን ንመምህርካ ክትፈታተን ምፍታን ክልኩል ስለዝኾነን እውን፡ እዚ ስነ ምግባራዊ ስርዓት እዚ መንነትና ዝገልጽ ይመስለኒ። ከምኡ ኣይንገብርን ኢና። ብዝተወሰነ መልክዑ፡ ሓደ ሓደ ግዜ ሕቶ እሓትት'የ። እቲ መልሲ ምስቲ ዘንብብክዎ እንተዘይተሰማሚዑ ወይ'ውን ዝያዳ ሕቶታት ዘበራብር እንተኾይኑ፡ ስለምንታይ ከምኡ ኮይኑ ኢሊ ኣይሓትተንን'የ ። ነቲ መምህር ዘየኸብሮ ዘለኹ ኮይኑ ስለ ዝስምዓኒ ዝሃቡኒ ይቐበል። ትፈልጡ'ዶ፡ ነቲ ሕቶ እንተመለሰም፡ ግን ከኣ እንተዘይዓገብ፡ ስዒቡ ዝመጽእ ሕቶ ኣይሓትትን'የ። እንታይ ማለትካ እዩ ኣይብልን፡ ነዚ ብኸልእ መገዲ ብኸመይ ትገልጽ፡ ከምዚ ብንቡር ኣይንገብርን ኢና። እዚ ኣንጻር ክብርታትና ኮይኑ ይስምዓና፡ ምኽንያቱ ወለድና ንመምህራና ኣኸቡር ይብሉና፤ ልክዕ ከምቲ ንወለድና እነኹብር። ከምቲ መጽሓፍ ቅዱስ ዝብሎ ቅድም ንወለድኻ ኣኸቡር ምኽንያቱ ንሱ እዩ እቲ ቀዳማይ ጥብብ። ስለዚ፡ ንወለድኻ ምኽባር ማለት ንመምህራንካ ምኽባር ማለት እዩ። ስለዚ ንሕና ብማዕረ ከምኡ ነኸብሮም ኢና። ስለዚ ድማ ቢቃ ዝበሉናን ኩሉ ዝነግሩና ክንቅበል ጥራይ ኢና እንመርጽ። ከምኡ'የም ዘለልዩና ይመስለኒ።

[Well, I would say no, I don't think so because they have no reason to reflect my culture and I don't even think they're aware of it. Therefore, I always remind myself that I am a foreigner in the school. But interestingly, due to my accent and look, they ask them where I am from. When I tell them that I am from Eritrea, most of them don't know where Eritrea is. I sometimes use the map to show them where Eritrea is. But they seem to know better Ethiopia, and I tell them that we are neighbors. I think I get dressed differently, like

no shorts but long skirt, and sometimes Eritrean traditional dress, so they wonder where I am from, and therefore they ask me in addition to my accent and look. This is the only time they try to learn about my country and culture, otherwise, nowhere is my cultural identity reflected in the curriculum. Oh, one thing I want to tell you is that, whenever there is presentation in class, I usual talk about Eritrean culture, like traditional healing. I try to relate the topic to my identity, to my cultural identity. And on the way, I try to tell them what I feel about it, what the original culture is like, and I try to teach them, so I reflect on it myself. But in any way, you don't see it in the curriculum or in the courses or everywhere, you don't see it and you don't expect to see it, not for that matter. I think they also identity us because we respect others a lot, like the way we greet them, and it is a taboo to try to challenge your teacher. We don't do that. Challenge, in a sense, sometimes I ask a question, and if the answer doesn't match what I have read or provokes more questions, I don't do follow up question. I feel like I am disrespecting the teacher, so I accept whatever they give me. You know, if they answer the question but I am not satisfied, I don't ask follow up question. I don't say, what do you mean? How do you explain this in a different way? we don't do that normally. We feel like that is against our values because our parents tell us to respect our teachers, just like our parents as the Bible says, respect your parents first because that is the first wisdom. So, respecting your parents means respecting your teachers, so we respect them equally that way. And so, we just keep saying, okay, whatever they tell us, we just keep accepting everything they tell us. I think that's how they identity us].

Abrahatsion notes that when making a presentation in class, she takes the opportunity to reflect her cultural identity and addresses questions that come from her peers. She believes that

some aspects of Eritrean cultural identity like respecting teachers like parents, greeting people with two hands and avoiding mini skirts as a dressing style identify her as Eritrean.

Aberash reiterates Abrahatsion's thought and does the same when presenting in class. In fact, she even includes Eritrean traditional healing and treating patients to her presentation and uses the opportunity to talk about her cultural identity. Aberash believes that she has no expectation for the curriculum to reflect her cultural identity in the U.S., but she recalls how her country, Eritrea, was mentioned in her history class, which inspired her to pay attention to the class and made her see herself in the course. She says.

እቲ ዝወስዶ ዘለኹ ኮርሳት ንባህላዊ መንነተይ ወይ ኤርትራውነተይ ዘንጸባርቕ ኣይመስለንን። ኣብዚ ኣብ ኣመሪካ ድማ ከምኡ ክትጽበ ትክእል ዲኻ፡ ርግጻኛ ኣይኮንኩን። ምክንያቱ እቲ ስርዓተ ትምህርቲ ባህሊ ኤርትራ ዘጠቓልል ገይሮም ክነድፍዎ እቲ ምክንያት ስለዘይተረኣየኒየ። ግን ይዝከረኒ ብዛዕባ ታሪኽ ኮርስ ወሲደ ፡ ታሪኽ ዓለም ይመስለኒ፡ እቲ መምህር ድማ ብዛዕባ ኦርቶዶክሳዊ ክርስትና ብኸመይ ከም ዝተቐልቀለ ይዛረብ ነበረ። እቲ መምህር ኣብ ኤርትራ ይምለኽ ምንባሩ፡ ቅድሚ ናብ ኢትዮጵያ ምዝርጋሕ ጠቐሱ። ንነብሰይ ክርኢ ዝኸኣልኩ ኮይኑ ተሰሚዑኒ። ሃገረይ ኤርትራ ክትጥቀስ ኮላ ዓቢ ስምዒት ተሰሚዑኒ። ካብዚ ወጻኢ እቶም ካልኣት ኮርሳት መንነተይ ዘንጸባርቕ ኣይኮንኩን። ግን ነቲ ዝማሃሮ ምስ ባህላዊ መንነተይ ከዛምዶ ዝከኣለኒ እጽዕር። ንኣብነት ብዛዕባ ፈውሲ ወይ ካልእ ሕክምናዊ ጉዳያት presentation ክገብር ከለኹ፡ ብዛዕባ እቲ ኣብ ኤርትራ ዘሎ ባህላዊ ኣገባብን ኣተሓሕዛ ሰባትን እዛረብ። ገሊኡም ይግረሙ፡ ገሊኡም ግን ዝርድኡኒ ኣይመስሉን'የም። ግን ነቲ ርእሰ-ጉዳይ ምስ ባህላዊ መንነተይ ከዛምዶ እፍትን። ግን እቲ ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርቲ ባህላዊ መንነተይ ከንጸባርቕ ኣይጽበን'የ። ምክንያቱ ብቐዳምነት ብቐጽሪ ኣዚና ውሑዳት ኢና። ካልኣይ እዚ ኤርትራ ኣይኮነን። ከምኡ ዝገብሩሉ ምክንያት ኣይረኣየኒን። እቲ ካልእ ምክንያት ኣብ ኮለጅ ባህላዊ መንነተይ ዘይርእየሉ ድማ እቶም ተማሃሮ ስነ-ስርዓትን ዘለዎም ኣገባብን እዩ። ብዛዕባ ኣገባብን ስነ-ስርዓት ዓቢ ስክፍታ ዘለኒ ይመስለኒ። ገሊ ተማሃሮ ብዙሕ ናጽነት ይወሃቡምን ንመምህራናም ክይተረፈ ኣየኹብርዎምን። እዚ ኣካል ባህላይ ዘይኮነ ነገር ይመስለኒ። እቲ ፍልልይ እውን ይርእዮ እዩ። ብሓፈሻ ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርቲ ንመንነተይ ወይ ባህላዊ መንነተይ ዘንጸባርቕ ኣይኮነን። ባህላዊ መንነተይ ድማ ኣብቲ ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርቲ ዝሰማማዕ ኣይመስለንን። እቲ ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርቲ ግን ንዓይ ክቕይረኒ ወይ መንነተይ ክቕይረኒ ዝክእል ኣይመስለንን።

[I don't think the courses I'm taking reflect my cultural identity or Eritreanness, and I'm not sure if you can expect that here in the US because I don't see the reason why they would design the curriculum to include Eritrean culture. But I remember I did a course on history, I think world history, and the teacher was talking about Orthodox Christianity, and how it emerged. The teacher mentioned that it was practiced in Eritrea, before spreading to Ethiopia. I felt like I was able to see myself. I felt great when they mentioned my country. Apart from that, the other courses don't reflect my identity. But I try my best to relate what I learn to my cultural identity, for example, when a presentation is given about healing or other medical issues, I talk about the traditional way of treating people in Eritrea. Some of them get surprised, but some of them don't seem to understand me. But I try to relate the subject matter to my cultural identity but I don't expect the college education to reflect my cultural identity because first of all, we are very few in number. Second of all, this is not Eritrea. I wouldn't see any reason why they would do that. The other reason that that I don't see my cultural identity in the college education is the way the students are disciplined. I think I have a great concern about the disciplining method. Some students are given much freedom and even disrespect their teachers. I think this is something which is not part of my culture. I see that difference as well. All in all, college education doesn't reflect my identity or my cultural identity, and I don't think my cultural identity fits in the college education, but I don't think the college education is going to change me or change my identity].

Even though the participants' cultural identity was not usually reflected in their curricula, they created an opportunity to reveal their identity; therefore, they discovered a sense of self in the dominant American culture within their school.

Impact of cultural identity on schooling

The participants explained that they are very close to their Eritrean cultural identity here in the U.S. and maintain their close relationship in various ways. First, they go to Eritrean church and meet Eritreans families and friends there, in which together they attend the mass in Tigrinya and Amharic and discuss social issues in Tigrinya. Second, the participants explained that they practice their culture tremendously at home. They discuss in Tigrinya their cultural values with their family members at home and learn a lot from their parents and elders about their cultural identity. For example, Rahwa explains how she keeps in touch with her cultural values,

Well, my parents tell me to keep my cultural identity. They advise me to put my culture in my heart wherever I go and advise me to go to church every Sunday. And my parents tell me that culturally we're always hardworking and diligent and so they want me to be like that. And I have a cousin who visits us every Sunday. He teaches me bible and at the same time about our culture because he knows a lot about our culture about Eritrean culture and religion. And also, my dad tells me about Eritrean history, He knows it, he lived through it. So he also teaches me about Eritrean history, about our culture and religion.

In addition, the participants eat Eritrean foods, listen to Tigrinya music, and use Tigrinya to communicate with their family members at home. The participants remarked that they have ways of maintaining their Eritrean cultural identity.

However, the participants' cultural identity appears to have impacted their academic engagement and activities in many ways. Firstly, their culture has put much pressure on them not to speak too much before elders and teachers unless asked, and this has been reflected in their schooling that if there are things they don't understand, they fail to ask questions. Secondly,

since they avoid eye contact during communication with their teachers, they often are not taken seriously and hence impedes their success of communication. Finally, they don't feel comfortable to speak or make a presentation before the whole class and as a result, they are considered as weak students, though this happens due to the culture they learn at home that is out of respect and humbleness; they have to keep a low profile and should not expose themselves of speaking before a large crowd as the Eritrean saying goes, "The more you speak before public, the more you reveal your weakness and foolishness." Letetsion, Rahwa and Abrahatsion reflect how their cultural identity affects their schooling respectively.

Letetsion:

ኣብ ክፍሊ presentation ከገብር ምቹእ ኣይሰምዓንን እዩ። እዚ ድማ ብሰንኪ ባህላዊ መንነተይ እዩ። ምኽንያቱ ኣነ በዚ መንገዲ ስለዘይዓበኹ። እዚ ሓደ ምኽንያት እዩ። ካልኣይ ከምቲ ኣቐዲመ ዝበልኩኹም ምስ መማህርተይ ብዙሕ ኣይራኹብን እዩ። ከምኡ ውን ኣብ ክፍሊ ሕቶታት ኣይሓትትን እዩ። ስለዚ ብዙሕ ኣይሳተፍን እዩ። እዚ ድማ ብሰንኪ ባህላዊ ጽልዋይ እዩ። ብተወሳኺ፡ ከምቲ እቶም ተወለድቲ ዝገብርዎ ኣገባብ፡ ጽቡቕ እንግሊዝኛ ዘይዛረብ ናይ ቋንቋ ሕጽረት ኣለኒ። እዚ ድማ ንኹይራኹብ ይኸልክለኒ። ሕጂውን መንገዲ ባህላይ ምኽታል ኣብ ኮለጅ ዕዉቲ ተማሃሪት ከገብረኒ ከም ዝኸለል እኣምን።

[I do not feel comfortable to make a presentation in class. This is due to my cultural identity because I didn't grow up the way. This is one reason. Secondly, as I told you before, I do not interact much with my classmates. And I do not ask questions in class, so I don't participate a lot and this is because of my cultural impact. In addition, I have linguistic deficiency that I don't speak good English, like the way the native speakers do it, and this prohibits me from interacting. I still believe that following the route of my culture can make me a successful student at college].

Rahwa:

እወ ብሰንኪ ባህላዊ መንነተይ ኣብ ህዝባዊ መደረ ንፍዕቲ ኣይኮንኩን። ከምኡ ውን ይጸልወኒ እዩ ምኽንያቲ ብዙሕ ስለዘይዛረብ፣ ከምኡ ኣይዓበኹን። ከምኡ ውን ቅድሚ ምሉእ ክፍሊ ክዛረብ ወይ ሕቶታት ክሓትት ምቹእ ኣይስምዓንንዮ፣ ትፈልጡዮ። ስለዚ እወ እቲ ባህላዊ መንነተይ ኣብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ንዘለኒ ኣካዳሚያዊ ተመኩሮታትን ጽምዶታተይን ይጸልዎ።

[Yes, I'm not good at public speaking due to my cultural pressure. And it does influence me because I don't talk too much, I was not raised that way. And I do not feel comfortable, you know, to speak before the whole class or ask questions. So yes, the cultural identity affects my academic experiences and engagements at school].

Abrahatsion:

ብዙሕ ዝጸሉ ይመስለኒ። ባህላዊ መንነተይ ንኣካዳሚያዊ ጽምዶይ ይጸልዎ። ንኣብነት ኣብ ክፍሊ ሕቶታት ከይሓትት፣ ኣብ ክፍሊ ከይሳተፍ፣ ሓሳባተይ ብናጽነት ንመምህራነይ ከይገልጽ እፈርሕ። ከምኡ ውን ሓደ ሓደ ግዜ ምስ መምህራነይ ዓይኒ ዓይኖም ከይራኣኹ ዝርርብ ኣብ ዘገብርሉ እዋን፣ ዝሕሱ፣ ሓቂ ዘይዛረብ ዘለኹ ኮይኑ ይስምዖም። ብሰንኪ ባህላዊ መንነተይ እዩ ትፈልጡ ኢኹም። ስለዚ ኣብ ዝኾነ ንጥፈት ፈጺመ ስለ ዘይሳተፍ ንኣካዳሚያዊ ጽምዶይን ንጥፈታተይን እውን ይጸልዎ እዩ። ቢቃ ከምቲ ወለደይ ዝብሉኒ ዝነበሩ ትሑት ክኸውን፣ ቃናይ ትሑት ክኸውን፣ ትሑት ፕሮፋይል ክሕዝ ጥራይ እዩ ዝደሊ። ከምኡ ውን ብሰንኪ ባህላዊ መንነተይ ቅድሚ ክፍሊ ክዛረብ ምቹእ ኣይስምዓንን።

[I think it affects me a lot. My cultural identity affects my academic engagement. For example, I am afraid of asking questions in class, participating in class, and expressing my thoughts to my teachers freely. And also, whenever I sometimes do not maintain eye contact with my teachers, they feel like I'm lying, I'm not telling the truth. It is because of my cultural identity, you know. So it does affect my academic engagement and activities as well because I do not participate at all in any activity. I just want, like my parents used to tell me, be humble, keep my tone down, and keep a low profile. Also, I don't feel comfortable to speak before the class because of my cultural identity].

The participants note that their Eritrean cultural identity affects their academic engagements and activities in school. It often puts the participants in a peculiar situation, in which they do not seem to enjoy making presentations due to their upbringing that they have to be humble, keep their head down and avoid eye contact as a sign of respect. Nevertheless, this may not align with the presentation skills of the non-refugee students who often practiced presentations in their school years and who may have got a useful advice of making an effective presentation from their parents or family members.

Also, their dressing style as female students aligns with their cultural values. Thus, the refugee students may be at a disadvantage due to lack of cultural capital. Bourdieu (1977) states that cultural capital is shaped by one's experiences at home, where there are cultural resources that support someone's position in a social order. Even though cultural capital may be specific based on the particular contexts because what counts as cultural capital in the United States, and at universities, this could be different from the experiences of immigrant students, the participants do not seem to have access to these cultural resources valued by the social order, which may include character traits, cultural goods, and academic credentials; the speaking and dressing styles and the education standards do not seem to align with the cultural identity of the participants.

Culturally related teaching methodology

The other theme that emerged from the data pertained to the culturally related teaching methodology. The participants felt that the teaching methodology being used in the United States was completely different from what they are used to. The communicative teaching approach that centers learners did not seem to give them comfort because culturally they were raised to be good listeners rather than good speakers. For example, during group work, the participants do

not contribute much to the discussion due to their cultural values that emphasize on speaking less, keeping head down and avoiding eye contact. As a result of this pedagogical and instructional differences, the students' academic performances were impacted, as Aberash explains: “ኣብ መወዳእታ ሰሚስተር ግን C- ነጥቢ ብምምዘጋብ ነቲ መምህር ብኸመይ ኢሊ ሓተትኩዎ? ሓንቲ ኩይዝ ከምዘይወሰድኩ ነገሩን። ድሕሪኡ፡ ነቲ ፈተና ንኸወሰድ ካልእ ዕድል ከም ዝህበኒ ከዘኻኸር ፈተንኩ። እቲ መምህር ከምኡ ክብል ኣይዝከሮንዩ ኢሉ መለሰለይ፣ ብሰንኪ'ቲ ዝረኽብኩዎ ነጥቢ ድማ ኣዝዩ ሕማቕ ተሰሚዑኒ። እቲ ግጉይ ርክብ ብቐንዱ ብሰንኪ ቋንቋን ባህላውን ጉድለታት እዩ ነይሩ ይመስለኒ።” [Towards the end of the semester, I scored a C- and asked the teacher how? He told me that I missed one quiz. Then I tried to remind him that he would give me another chance to take the test. The teacher responded that he could not remember say that, and I felt very bad due to the grade I got. I think the miscommunication was mainly due to linguistic, pedagogical, and cultural differences.]

In addition to the cultural factor, their linguistic capacity appears to impact their participation in the group discussion; they can communicate in English but have accent and fear to be judged and labeled as poor students, in which they cannot entertain to be categorized as less performing students because being successful at school is closely related to their cultural identity. Letetsion explains it this way:

ንኣብነት ናይ ጉጅለ ስራሕ ነይሩ፡ ምስ ኣባላት ጉጅለ ብግቡእ ዘይረዳዳእ ኮይኑ ስለ ዝተሰምዓኒ፡ ኣብ ዝኾነ ጉጅለ ተጸንቢረ ነቲ ናይ ጉጅለ ስራሕ ክሰርሕ ኣይከኣልኩን። ስለዚ፡ ቢቃ ባዕለይ ሰሪሐሉ። እዚ ስምዒት እዚ ብሰንኪ ስደተኛ ምዃነይን ኣብ ኣካዳሚያዊ ብቕዓተይ ጽልዋ ዘሕድርን ይመስለኒ። ቢቃ ከምቶም ኣመሪካውያን ተማሃሮ ጽቡቕ ክገብር ዘይከእል ኮይኑ ይሰምዓኒ። ምክንያቱ እንግሊዝኛይ ድኹም ስለ ዝኾነ፡ ካብ ካልእ ባህሊ ድማ እየ ዝመጸእኩ። ከምኡ'ውን እቶም ካልኣት ተማሃሮ ኣብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ንፉዕ ከም ዘይኮንኩን እንግሊዝኛ ክሃረብ ክፍትን ከለኹ ላህጃ ከም ዘለኒን ከይፈርዱኒ እፈርሐ። ኣሉታዊ ርእይቶታት ብዙሕ ክጻወሮ ዘይከእል፡ ብኸምዚ'የ ዓብዮ። ንነብሰይ'ውን ኣብ ከምኡ ዓይነት ኩነታት ክእትዎ ኣይደልን። ስለዚ እዚ ኣብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ናይ ብሓቂ ብዙሕ ጻቕጢ ይገብረለይ። ንቤት ትምህርቲ ክዳሎ ከለኹ ከይተረፈ ብዛዕባኡ እሓሱብ። መምህር ኣብ ክፍሊ

እንታይ ክዛረብ ይሓተኒ ይኸውን? እቶም ተማሃሮ ላህጃ አለኪ እንተበሉኸ? ብዛዕባኡ ብዙሕ እየ ዝሓሰብ። ግን ምስ ሓዲ ተማሃራይ ጥራይ ክረዳዳእ ከለኹ ዝሓሸ ዝገብር ይመስለኒ፡ ቅድሚ ክፍሊ ግን ኣይኮነን።

[For example, there was a group work, and I couldn't join any group to do the group work because I felt like I would not communicate properly with the group members. So, I just worked on it on my own. I think I have this feeling because of my refugee status, it impacts my academic performance. I just feel like I cannot do good like the American students because my English is poor, and I come from a different culture. Also, I fear that the other students may judge me that I am not good at school and that I have accent when I try to speak English. This is how I grew up that I cannot entertain negative comments much, and I don't want to put myself into that kind of situation. So, this puts really much pressure on me at school. I even think about it when I prepare myself for school. What if the teacher asks me to speak in class, what if the students say, oh you have an accent, I don't know it bothers me a lot. But I think I do better when I communicate only with one student, but not before the class].

However, when participants are required to do group work, they prefer to do it with African, Asian and Mexican students, as they feel their English proficiency is similar to theirs and they seem to speak less and believe in communal work and cooperation, and Rozia says, “መብዛሕትኡ ግዜ ምስ ኤስያውያንን ሜክሲካውያንን ክሰርሕ እመርጽ ምኽንያቱ ኣዝዮም ምትሕብባር ስለዘለዎም እዩ ዝብል እምነት ኣለኒ። ስለዚ ምስኦም ብጉጅለ ዝግበር ስራሕ ደስ ይብለኒ።” [I usually prefer to work with Asians and Mexicans because they are very cooperative, I believe. So, I enjoy the group work with them]. In a similar vein, Abrahatsion explains that if she must interact and do group work, she prefers African students, and says, “ኣብቲ ኮለጅ ክራኹብን ክረዳዳእን ዝፍትን ኣዕሩኽ ኣለዉኒ። መብዛሕትኦም ካብ ኣፍሪቃ ዝመጹ ተማሃሮ እዮም። ላህጃኦም ዝያዳ ዝርድኣኒ ይመስለኒ። ምስኦም ድማ ድልዱል ዝምድና ኣለኒ። መብዛሕትኡ ግዜ ምስኦም እየ ዝዘናጋዕ። ምስኦም ገለ ናይ ጉጅለ ስራሕ ክሰርሕ እጽዕር፣ ምሳኢታቶም ክዛረብ ድማ ዝያዳ

ምቹእ ኮይኑ ይስምዓኒ።” [I have friends who I try to interact and communicate at the college. Most of them are students from Africa. I think I understand their accent better, and I have strong relationship with them. I usually hang out with them. I try to do some group work with them, and I feel more comfortable to talk to them]. Thus, the participants often have a preference of students who they would like to work with due to their belief that they have some similarities in terms of English proficiency and one aspect of their cultural values which is communal work.

According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), the main principles of communicative approach include effective communication, learner centered work, and focus on meaning. Due to holding cultural values that emphasize the significance of communal work, the participants found it challenging to do their assignments on their own, without the teacher’s assistance. Also, some of the topics provided for practicing effective communication were unfamiliar and offending to the participants, especially topics related to religion. Letetsion explains,

ኣብዚ ኣብ ኣሜሪካ ኣብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ዘይፈትዎ ነገር እንተሃልዩ መምህራን ኩሉ ኣይገልጹን። ኩሉ ብገዛእ ርእሰኻ ትገብሮ። ንኣብነት፡ ገለ ዓይነት ዕዮ ኣሎ፡ እቲ ዕዮ ድማ ይወሃብካ። መጽናዕትኻ ባዕልኻ ክትገብር ኣለካ፡ ከም ኣብ ኢንተርኔት google ምግባር ዕላማ እቲ ዕዮ ንምርዳእ። ድሕሪኡ ድማ ክሰርሓሉ ነዊሕ ጊዜ ይወስደለይ። መምህራን ኩሉ ዝህቡና ዕዮ ገዛ ምሉእ ብምሉእ እንተዝገልጹልና ጸቡቕ ነይሩ። ከምኡውን፡ ባህላዊ መንነተይ ኣብ ቤት ትምህርትን ክፍልን ይንጸባረቕ ስለ ዘይረኣኹ፡ ኣብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ጓና ኮይኑ ይስምዓኒ። ኩሉ ነገር ንዓይ ይገርመኒ እዩ፡ ከምቲ ዝራኹብሉ ኣገባብን ሓደ ሓደ ጊዜ ድማ እቶም መምህራን ንነገራት ንምግላጽ ዝህቡዎ ኣብነታትን ክሳብ ክንድዚ ከምኡ ኣይፈትዎን እዩ። ብተወሳኺ ከምቲ ዝበልኩኹም ኣብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ብዙሓት ኣዕሩኽ የብለይን። ስለዚ ማሕበራዊ ሂወተይ ኣዝዩ ድኹም እዩ። ምስ ካልኦት ብዙሕ ኣይረዳዳእን እዩ ምበልኩ። እዚ ብዙሕ እዩ ዜበሳጭወኒ። ከምቲ ኣቐዲመ ዝነገርኩኹም ባህላዊ ፍልልያትን ናይ ቋንቋ ፍልልያትን ስለ ዘሎ ኣዘራርባኦም ስለ ዘይዛረብ ዝያዳ እተገለልኩ ኹይኑ እዩ ዚስምዓኒ። እንግሊዝኛ ክዛረብ ክፍትን ክለኹ፡ ላህጃ ከም ዘለኒ ይነግሩኒ። እዚ ድማ ብባህልን ብቋንቋን ዝተፈለኹ ምዃነይ የዘኻኸረኒ። ከምኡ ውን ሓደ ሓደ ጊዜ ኣብ ትሕዝቶ ገለ ኮርሳት ዘይፈትዎ ነገር ኣሎ። ኣብ ገለ መእተዊ ኮርሳት ኣምላኽ የለን ክብሉኒ ከለዉ ምቹእ ኣይስምዓንን እዩ። እዚ ንዓይ ቅቡል ዘይኮነ ነገር እዩ። ምናልባት ብኻልእ ኣረኣእያ ክርእዮ ኣይኮንኩን፡ ዝፍትን ግን ክቕበሎ ዘይክእል ነገር እዩ።

[One thing I don't like about school in here in the United States is that you do everything by yourself like the teachers do not explain everything. For example, there is some sort of assignment, and the assignment is given to you. You must do your research on your own, like googling on the internet. It takes me a long time to understand the purpose of the assignment, and then work on it. I wish the teachers fully explained all the assignments they give us. Also, I feel alien in school because I don't see my cultural identity reflected in the school and classroom. Everything is strange to me, like the way they interact and sometimes the examples the teachers give to explain things. I don't enjoy that so much. In addition, I don't have a lot of friends at school as I told you. So, I would say my social life is very poor and I don't communicate much with others. I guess that part frustrates me a lot. As I told you before because there are cultural differences and linguistic differences like I don't speak the way they speak, I feel more isolated. When I try to speak English, they tell me that I have an accent, which reminds me that I am different culturally and linguistically. And also sometimes there's something I don't like about the content of some courses. In some introductory courses I don't feel comfortable when they tell me that there is no God. This is something which is unacceptable to me. Maybe I'm not trying to view it from a different perspective but it's something which I cannot accept].

The principles of the communicative approach do not seem to align with the Eritrean cultural values that emphasize less speaking, avoiding eye contact and keeping head down, but the participants feel comfortable to do the group work with Asians, Mexicans and Africans, as they believe in cooperation and communal work.

The other aspect of culturally related teaching methodology was the method of discipline. The participants believed that maintaining discipline in a classroom was important and thought it

was the responsibility of the teacher to do so. They explained that in their previous schooling experiences in Eritrea and Ethiopia, their teachers were strict in disciplining the students and never allowed students to wear miniskirts, jewelry and tattoos, and used to hit them for violating the school rules. The participants' perception towards the method was positive and related it to their cultural and religious values which align with the teachers' method of disciplining and values. Abrahatsion said,

ኣብ ኤርትራን ኢትዮጵያን ንዘለዉ ተማሃሮ ንምግባጽ፡ መምሃራንና ኣዝዮም ዕቱባት ስለ ዝነበሩ፡ ጽቡቕ ጠባይ ከንሕዝን ከምኡ ከንዓቢን ይደልዩና ነበሩ። ንኣብነት ኣብ ኤርትራ ንሕና (ደቂ ኣንስትዮ) ማኒ ስረ ወይ ሓጺር ስረ ከንክደን ኣይፍቀደልናን። ከምኡ ውን ንቐሳት፣ ዋላ ሓንቲ ምውጋእ ኣይፍቀደልናን። ምስ መምሃራንይ ዝሰማማዕ ይመስለኒ ምኽንያቱ ምስ ሃይማኖታዊ ክብርታተይን ስድራቤታዊ ክብርታተይን ስለ ዝሰማማዕ። ብተወሳኺ መምሃራንና ሕገ ሴት ትምህርቲ እንተጥሒሰና ይቐጽዑና ነይሮም፡ ከም ብበትሪ ምቕጥቃጥ። ኣብዚ ኣመሪካ፡ መምህራን ከምኡ ዓይነት መቐጸዕቲ ኣይህቡናን? ምስ ከም ብበትሪ ምቕጥቃጥ። ኣነ ኣንጻር እቲ መምሃራን ኣብ ዓድና ዝገብርዎ ዘለዉ ኣገባብ ኣይኮንኩን። ካብ ሰናይ ድሌት ተበጊሱ ጽቡቕ ባህሪ ዘለና ንፉዓት ተማሃሮ ከንክውን እዩ ዝደሊ ነይሩ።

[When it comes to disciplining the students in Eritrea and Ethiopia, our teachers were very serious and wanted us to behave well and grow that way. For example, in Eritrea we (Females) were not allowed to wear mini skirt or shorts, and no tattoos, no piercings and I think I agree with my teachers because it aligns with my religious values and my family values. In addition, our teachers used to punish us, like used to beat us if we violated the school rules, unlike in the U.S. Here in the U.S, the teachers don't give us that kind of punishment, like hitting us with a stick. Look, I am not against the teachers' way of disciplining us back home. It was out of good faith and wanted us to be good students with good behavior].

Furthermore, the participants explained that the teacher is in charge of the classroom, and anything that takes place inside the classroom should be with the permission of the teacher, and this has great cultural value, as teachers should be respected like parents as the bible teaches. However, the disciplining method they experienced in the United States was different, and Rozina explains, “እቲ ኣሉታዊ ተመኩሮ እቶም ተማሃሮ ጽቡቕ ስነ-ስርዓት ዘለዎም ኮይኑ ኣይስምዓንን እዩ። ንመምሃራናም ዝደለይዎ ክዛረቡ ናጻ እዮም። ከምኡ ውን ሓደ ካብቶም ተማሃሮ ኣብ ክፍሊ ሓንቲ ዴስክቶፕ ከም ዝሰበረ ይዝከረኒ፡ እዚ ድማ ናይ ብሓቂ ጓና ኮይኑ ተሰሚዑኒ ግን እቲ ፕሮፌሰር ብዛዕባኡ ዋላ ሓንቲ ኣይበለን። ከም ኤርትራዊት መጠን ኣነ ከምኡ ስለ ዘይዓበኸ፡ ከምዚ ንመምሃራናም ክመለሱ ዝግብእም ኮይኑ ኣይስምዓንን።” [the negative experience is that I don't feel like the students are well disciplined. They are free to say whatever they like to their teachers. And I remember one of the students broke a desktop in the classroom, and I thought that was really weird, but the professor did not say anything about it. As an Eritrean, I don't feel like they should behave this way because I didn't grow up that way].

Rahwa agrees with Rozina and underscores the significance of discipline in class and appreciated her teachers in Eritrea and Ethiopia for shaping them to be well-disciplined and ethical people, and said, “መምሃራንና ድማ ኣዝዮም ጽኑዓት እዮም ነይሮም። ኣብ ክፍሊ ንኸግስጹና ኣዝዮም ጽዒሮም እዮም።” [They[teachers] worked very hard to discipline us in class]. In sum, the participants associated discipline with their cultural values and previous schooling experiences and thought that discipline was very important for students. For example, the following practices were important: only using the restroom with the teacher’s permission, not using a cell phone in class, the teacher using punishment to discipline a student who doesn’t behave well in class, and knocking at the door to get the teachers’ permission to get into the classroom.

Even though the teachers instructed that the refugee students don’t need permission to go to the restroom and knock at the door to come in if they are late, the students kept practicing it due to their belief that teachers should decide for everything inside and outside the classroom.

Finally, the other aspect related to the culturally teaching methodology was the teachers' teaching style. The participants explained that part of the teaching style in Eritrea and Ethiopia was that the teachers had absolute power and whatever they said was taken as correct, and the way they shared their feedback with the students was not in a way that teaches the students but blamed them for the poor academic performance and informed the parents about the result. The students did not have any opportunity to explain, and instead parents and teachers coerced them to work hard to perform better, which the refugee students often found it demotivating, and Abrahatsion explained, “ኣብ ኤርትራን ኢትዮጵያን ብትምህርቲ ድኹም እንተኾይንካ፡ እቶም መምህራን ብዛዕባኡ ምስ ወለዲ ይዛረቡ፡ እኹል ስራሕ ስለዘይሰራሕኩ ድማ ይወቅሱኒ። ኣበርቲዐ ከሰርሕ ኣይድርኹንዮም። ድኹም ተማሃራይ ወይ ሸለልተኛ ተማሃራይ ኢሎም ጥራይ እዮም ዝጽውዑኒ። እዚ ኣዝየ እየ ዝጸልኦ ።” [In Eritrea and Ethiopia, if you perform poor academically, the teachers talk to parents about it and blame me for not doing enough. They don't motivate me to work hard. They just label me as a poor student or careless student. I hate that so much].

On the other hand, the participants appreciated the curriculum and teaching style of their teachers in the United States, and thought the curriculum was helpful to know oneself and motivating to learn more, though they did not see their cultural values being included in the curricula. They explained that their teachers kept their grades and personal information private, gave comments in a constructive and engaging manner, and the teachers' feedback contributed to their academic success, motivated them to work hard and build up confidence, and never discouraged them when they gave wrong answers in class. Letetsion stated,

ጽቡቕ፡ገለ ካብቲ ኣብዚ ኣመሪካ ዝረኹብኩዎ ኣወንታዊ ተመኩሮታት፡ ብመጀመርታ እቲ ስርዓት፡ ስርዓተ ትምህርቲ፡ ከም ሰብ መን ምዃንካ ንክትፈልጥ ዝሕግዘካ ይመስለኒ። ኣነ እታ ከፋል ኣዝየ እየ ዝፈትዋ። ርእሰ ተኣማንነታይ ንምህናጽ ዝሕግዘኒ ይመስለኒ። ስለዚ ድማ ኣዝየ ኣወንታዊ ተመክሮ እዩ። ኣብ ኢትዮጵያ ይኹን ኣብ

ኤርትራ ዘይረኣኹዎ ነገር እዩ። ስለዚ ድማ እቲ ዝያዳ ደስ ዘብል ተመኩሮይ ንሱ እዩ። ካብዚ ብተወሳኺ ኣብ ገለ ኮርሳት ድኹም ነጥቢ እንተረኹብኩ ዳሓን እዩ። ካልኣይ ዕድል ኣለኒ ነቶም ኮርሳት ክደግሞም። ካልእ ዕድል ኣለኒ ነቶም ኮርሳት ዳግማይ ክወስዶም። f grade ወይ ገለ ስለ ዝረኹብኩ ኣይስገግን እዩ። የግዳስ ምኽሪ ይህቡኒ። ምኽሪ ይህቡኒ፣ ዘይከም ኣብ ኤርትራን ኢትዮጵያን። ልክዕ እዩ ኣብ ኤርትራን ኢትዮጵያን ኣብ ኮለጅ እኳ እንተ ዘይኣተኹ ኣብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ኣትዮ። ኣካዳሚያዊ ብቐጻትካ ከተመሓይሽ ዕድል ረኺብካ ኣለኻ። ንሳቶም ከኣ ትምህርቲ ብምሃብ ነቲ መርመራ ንኸትዳሎ ኺሕገዙኻ ይኸእሉ እዮም። ከምኡውን፡ እቲ ካልእ ኣወንታዊ ተመክሮ ኣብዚ ዝተፈላለየ ኮርሳት ስለዝወሃብ፡ ኣሰልጻዊ ኣይኮነን። ኣብ ቀዳማይ ሰሚስተር ገለ ኮርሳት ትወስድ ድሕሪኡ ኣብ ዝቐጽል ሰሚስተር ካልእ ኮርሳት ትወስድ። ኣብ ዝተፈላለየ ሰሚስተራት ዝተፈላለየ ኮርሳት ምውሳድና ደስ ይብለኒ። እዚ ድማ ኣዝዩ መሳጢ ይገብር። እዚ ድማ ከም ኣወንታዊ ተመክሮ እየ ዝሪኣ።

[Well, some of the positive experiences I have had here in the United States are, first of all, I think the system, the education system, helps you to know who you are as a person. I love that part and I think it helps me to build up my confidence and so that is a very positive experience. It's something which I didn't see in Ethiopia or Eritrea. And so that is my most pleasant experience. In addition to that, even if I score poor grades in some courses, it is fine. I have a second chance to repeat the courses. I have another opportunity to retake the courses. I don't get dismissed because I score an f grade or something. Instead, they give me counseling. They give me advice, unlike the situation in Eritrea and Ethiopia. Of course, I didn't go to college in Eritrea and Ethiopia, but I went to school. You've got an opportunity to improve your academic performance, and they can help you to prepare for your examination by offering tutorial classes. And, the other positive experience is that variety of courses are given here, so it's not boring. You take some courses in the first semester and then the next semester you take other courses. I like the fact that we take different courses on different semesters; that makes it very interesting, and I see that as a positive experience].

However, outside of the tutorial classes, the refugee students explained that they did not have any kind of support, as the college lacked support system designed for refugee students. For example, there was no cultural orientation given to the refugee students, nor was there an orientation concerning the teaching methods they follow, and this was confirmed by the Director for Student Services. However, the director explained that the school's top priority was to consider all students' diverse cultures through multicultural club. In sum, the teaching methodology, including the communicative approach, the disciplining method and the teaching style, was different to the learners and was not associated with their cultural and religious values.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the five participants, Abrahatsion, Letetsion, Aberash, Rahwa, and Rozina, described the differences between their culture and the culture they experienced within their postsecondary institution. The participants' background, resettlement experiences in the United States, and their schooling experiences in Eritrea and Ethiopia were described. In addition, themes that emerged from the data, gathered through interviews and focus group discussion, were presented; these included negotiating and renegotiating cultural identity, maintaining cultural identity, negotiating home culture versus college culture, reflecting refugees' cultural identity in school, the impact of cultural identity on schooling, and the influence of culturally related teaching methodology. The relation of each theme to the scholarly literature follows in Chapter 5.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The study used an intrinsic case design (Yin, 2014; Stake, 2005) to examine the ways Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity and describe the role that schooling plays in shaping their cultural identity in the postsecondary institutions in the U.S. Midwest. Upon the analysis of the participants' interviews and focus-group discussion, six themes were identified: negotiating and renegotiating cultural identity, maintaining cultural identity, home culture versus college culture, reflecting refugees' cultural identity in school, the impact of cultural identity on schooling, and the experience of culturally related teaching methodology. This research contributes to the existing literature by raising awareness of how diversity and inclusion in higher education are reflected in refugee students' experiences. Refugee students' histories and identities should be incorporated to the college curriculum.

In addition, the study invites policymakers, curriculum experts and higher education professors to consider culturally responsive pedagogy when designing policies and delivering courses. Refugee students' cultural identities and practices must be explored further to enable them to be successful academically. The study also challenges higher education institutions to broaden the scope of multicultural education to include the voices, identities, and values of refugee students to ensure the promotion of cultural competence (Gay, 2013).

Even though further research should be explored to include refugee students from other countries, the findings of this research illuminate how Eritrean political refugee students construct their cultural identities in a higher educational setting. Further, the research describes the role that schooling plays in shaping refugee students' cultural identities. This appears to be significant for the higher education institutions in the U.S. Midwest, as it presents them with an idea about the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy in their curricula as a method of

creating an inclusive classroom. In this chapter, I summarize the study through responding to the study's research questions. I then draw connections between the findings and the theories in the literature review. Finally, I pose recommendations for educational policy makers, note the limitations of the study, and articulate directions for future research.

Summary of the Study

The goal of the study was to understand how Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions in the Midwest United States. There is limited literature that addresses refugee students' identity construction, and most of the studies focus on younger refugees in the K-12 setting (Uptin, 2013; Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Erden, 2017; Saleh, 2018). The studies largely report that lack of refugee education policy, the cultural gap and language barrier, present challenges that often prevent refugee students from being successful.

Felix (2016) studied refugee students in the higher education, but mostly focused on their experiences and the challenges they faced while navigating higher education. However, little is known about how Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identities in the postsecondary setting. This study makes a distinction between refugees and immigrants, as the scholarly literature tends to use these terms interchangeably. Refugees are forced to flee their countries involuntarily and often stay in the refugee camps in the first host countries before they are given legal refuge by the second host countries. On the other hand, immigrants often move from one country to another voluntarily for economic reasons, specifically in search of a better and prosperous lifestyle, and hence the UNHCR classifies them as 'economic immigrants' rather than refugees (Rong & Preissle, 1998).

Moreover, this study draws on cultural reproduction, acculturation/assimilation, transculturalism, and biculturalism theories to examine the political refugee students' ways of negotiating their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions and the impact of their schooling experiences in shaping their cultural identity. This study employed an intrinsic case design, in which there was a unique case bounded by time, context, and place as a way to understand the lives and experiences of the refugee students in the postsecondary institution landscape (Yin, 2014; Stake, 2005). Thus, the case, in this research, was political refugees, more specifically the ways the political refugee students negotiated and renegotiated their cultural identity. The case was bounded by the 2022-2023 academic year, by Eritrean political refugees participating in the experience, their college and curricula contexts and the multicultural education policy.

Findings as they Relate to the Research Questions

Research question 1: How do Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions in the U.S. Midwest?

A major finding of the study is that the participants identified themselves as culturally Eritrean students and thought they were different from the rest of the student population due to their cultural identity. According to Norton (1997), cultural identity is the “relationship between individuals and members of a group who share a common history, a common language, and similar ways of understanding the world” (p. 420). The participants, who are female Eritrean political refugees, shared common characteristics and aspects that identified them as culturally Eritrean students. The aspects include language, i.e. they all use Tigrinya as their mother tongue, though Aberash can speak Saho as an additional language. Tigrinya is a working language in Eritrea and Eritrean communities in the US. In addition, Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity as their religious affiliation, means of communication which approves avoiding eye contact,

speaking less and keeping head down, dressing style, which avoids miniskirts and shorts, and having unique cultural names formed the cultural identity of the participants of the study.

The female refugee students came in contact with the dominant culture at school but did not appear to feel a sense of belongingness to the two cultures and remained defiant of their cultural identity. They did not express the desire of developing bicultural identity. This finding is on the contrary to what is available in the literature. Felix (2016) found that refugee students in the higher education developed a bilingual identity when they came in contact with the dominant culture, and states, “All participants had to undergo a process of acculturation as they learned about and adapted to the culture of the United States. Traditionally, acculturation targets minority groups adopting the habits and language patterns of the dominant group” (p. 189).

The participants constructed their cultural identity in school and were not in a position to negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity. This was the result of a strong community influence, in which they frequently gathered in their places and their own church. Most importantly, Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity, the religious affiliation of the participants, appeared to have influenced them greatly in keeping up their cultural identity. Yet, they were pulled to fit in the social, economic, and political structures of the host country (Bernstein & DuBois, 2018). They faced discrimination as a result of their accent and were mistreated by their peers that their contributions to the group work were given less value.

This contradicts between the U.S. friendly policy of welcoming refugees and how they are treated at school, a finding in line with Felix’s (2016) study. Due to this, some of the refugee students were in a position to be flexible in being Eritrean and reflecting Eritrean cultural identity at home and pretending to be American in school to avoid discrimination and isolation. For example, Rahwa did not talk to her parents about everything, and was very careful not need

discipline. While in college, though, she felt relatively at ease to talk to her friends despite her cultural pressure that one has to listen too much, not speak too much.

Thus, Rahwa balances the home culture and school culture by being Eritrean when she is home and being American when she is in school. Furthermore, the refugee students found a means of maintaining their cultural identity by frequently visiting Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo church and discussing their cultural values and resources with their parents at home and reflecting them at school during group work. This kind of connection to their community of national origin with the same language and ethnic background was necessary for the participants to maintain their cultural identity. Such a connection impacted the participants to major in nursing due to its perceived good pay and allowed them to prioritize their education. This enabled them to create a strong group identity as refugees.

Research question 2: How does the postsecondary schooling experience shape the cultural identity of Eritrean political refugee students in the U.S. Midwest?

An interesting finding in relation to this research question is that college education had very little to do with participants' cultural identity. Participants did not see their identities, histories, values, and cultural practices in the postsecondary institution in the U.S. Midwest. As Bourdieu (1977) argues, schooling plays a great role in transferring non-academic and cultural values, but it appears that these values reflect the elite social class within the United States and do not align with the values of the Eritrean political refugee students in shaping their cultural identity.

Hence, the participants' academic activities were highly influenced, as they lacked cultural capital, which is accumulated because of one's experiences at home, where there are cultural resources that support their position in a social order. This is consistent with Bourdieu's

(1977) theory of cultural reproduction, which states that schools play a pivotal role in reproducing the values of the cultural capital of the elite social class. In a similar vein, Rong and Preissle (1998) argue that schooling has been used to acculturate and shape refugees' cultural identity to the dominant culture, an explanation consistent with the finding of the study. Also, Felix (2016) reported that refugee students' cultural values do not align with the dominant culture being promoted in the US schools, which is consistent with the findings of the present study.

Another interesting finding in relation to the second research question is that participants of the study did not have a unique support system to meet their educational needs. For example, no cultural orientation was given to the refugee students except the general orientation directed at all international students. The Director for Student Services confirmed the claim that no cultural orientation was given specifically to refugee students, but an orientation to all incoming international students. This made it difficult for the participants of the study to navigate the higher education system. A similar finding was reported by Anselme and Hands (2012), who emphasized that refugee students need *special support* (p. 92). Thus, it remains desirable to meet the needs of the refugee students to be successful at school.

Similarly, there was a finding that the teaching methodology being used in the postsecondary institution lacked cultural responsiveness in alignment with the cultural values of the refugee students. The communicative approach that was being employed in the participants' classrooms, which emphasized on effective communication, learner-centered approach, and focus on meaning (Lightbown and Spada, 2013), did not align with the refugee students' cultural way of communication, which included avoiding eye contact, keeping head down and speaking less. The practice of culturally responsive pedagogy is popular in the U.S. was not

reported by the participants; culturally responsive pedagogy is defined as acknowledging the different teaching methodologies related to the diverse learners' language, family background, cultural values and cultural identities (Ndemanu and Jordan, 2018).

Another finding was related to the communicative approach that some of the topics for discussions, and did not give the refugee students comfort to talk about. For example, Letetsion mentioned that her discussion about the existence of God was offensive to her. This may be tied with her cultural identity where one of the aspects that shaped the participants cultural identity was her Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity. In addition, the discipline method, which is part of the teaching methodology, was perceived differently by the participants of this study. They thought it was the responsibility of the teacher to maintain discipline in the classroom and to strictly enforce discipline and prohibit female students from wearing miniskirts, jewelry or tattoos. The existing literature states that understanding the refugee students' cultural and linguistic repertoire could enhance quality schooling, and Ndemanu and Jordan (2018) write, "It is critical that teachers move beyond seeing their African immigrant students from a deficit lens to understanding their intellects and the rich frames of cultural and linguistic reference they bring to the classroom, which can enrich learning for all if properly exploited" (pp. 77-78).

The other interesting finding was that the school culture was notably different from the participants' home culture and worked to balance them, though participants' home culture was more influential to the participants than the school culture. This contradicts with the Felix (2016) finding, which reported that the school culture played a significant role in developing the refugee students' bicultural identity. The participants in this study were in the stage of selective assimilation, as they found a means to practice their culture and use their language at least with each other, but did not have the sense of bicultural identity, though they were getting immersed

into the dominant culture (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Moreover, the participants of this study practiced their home culture at school, despite discrepancies. They did not argue with their parents during disagreement at home and took their parents' thoughts as correct due to their religious, Orthodox Christianity, influence. They appeared to have taken this aspect of cultural identity to school and did not feel comfortable to argue with their teachers as well. This indicates a cultural gap between the participants' home and college cultures. A cultural gap means "theoretical, conceptual, and practical disconnects and spaces between the culture (values, traditions, customs, beliefs, etc.) of the learners and the communities from which they come and the educational institutions and the proponents thereof" (Berry and Candis, 2013, p. 45). This finding is in line with Ogbu's (1982) study which reported the cultural mismatch between the immigrants' home and school cultures.

Also, there is a finding that the participants favored the teaching style of teachers and found them to be engaging, motivating and encouraging. Even though the refugee students enjoyed the curriculum to some extent that it enabled them to think about themselves, they stated that their identities, histories, and values in the higher education curriculum and extra curricula activities were not included. The extra-curricular activities, like social science club, reading club and festival activities did not give them an opportunity to represent their cultural identities and values, which often discouraged them from participating in such activities. This finding is consistent with Jack's (2019) argument that "access is not inclusion" (p. 159). Providing access for refugee students to higher education may mean that we need to work more to ensure better inclusion and diversity by incorporating refugee students' values, histories, and identities into the college curriculum.

Moreover, college education should support refugee students in their efforts to maintain their cultural identity, which is consistent with the efforts and principles of universities to diversify their campus in the U.S. (Jack, 2019). Part of this support could be to broaden the scope of multicultural education to include the voices, identities, and values of the refugee students to ensure the promotion of cultural competence (Gay, 2013).

Relationship to Extant Literature

There are connections between the current study and the existing literature related to the refugee students' concepts and challenges in the postsecondary institutions. The participants identified as female political refugees rather than as immigrants. They were forced to flee their countries due to political reasons and stayed in the refugee camps in the first host country before they were admitted as political refugees to the second host country. The concept of refugees as demonstrated by the participants is consistent with the definition of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2001). They differed from the immigrant population due to their involuntary movement and political reason, as Rong & Preissle (1998) indicated but contradicted Ogbu's (1991) view that refugees are neither involuntary nor volunteer immigrants.

In addition, the findings of the study showed that the participants faced challenges, which are consistent with the scholarly literature. Firstly, the participants experienced what Kirova (2012) calls "negative internalization" in which their values were misrecognized in reference to symbolic violence in the post-secondary institution. The values of greeting with two hands and bowing to show respect, avoiding eye contact, depending on their parents' decisions, and taking tattoos as taboos were not welcomed by their peers and teachers, instead they were seen as weak and less intelligent students. Secondly, the participants of this study were exposed to a different education system and cultural experiences, and hence were left in cultural shock. The

participants had not had an opportunity of making presentations in class, participating in group work with members coming from different cultural backgrounds, and exposing to curriculum that does not reflect their identities. They found the college to be ‘culturally alienating place’ (Joyce et al., 2010). Related to the education system was the fact that the participants found that they had a lack of proficiency in English, despite the English as a Second Language class they took. This is consistent with the available literature that linguistic deficiency is described as the major obstacle for higher education refugee students (Joyce et al., 2010; Ramsay and Baker, 2019). Finally, the participants reported that their institution did not provide them with any unique support that would target their needs, nor did they understand their traumatic experiences (Anselme and Hands, 2012). The findings of the study were consistent with the existing literature on acculturation and cultural reproduction theories.

Acculturation

This study employed acculturation process theory (Portes & Zhou, 1993) as a lens to understand and interpret the political refugee students’ ways of negotiating their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions and the impact of their schooling experiences in shaping their cultural identity. According to LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton (1993), the acculturation process becomes inevitable when refugees are exposed to another cultural world and may possess the two cultures without losing their own cultural identity. Refugees may be pulled into the dominant culture to fit in the social, economic, and political structures of the host country (Bernstein & DuBois, 2018). The theory is tied to the findings of the study that the participants used different strategies to maintain their cultural identity in school but were pulled into the dominant culture to fit in politically, socially, and economically. For example, the refugees

reported that they faced the same challenges as African Americans as a result of political and social structures.

A very important part of acculturation process that aligns with the finding of the study is selective assimilation, a theory that provides an opportunity for the accommodation of the refugees' cultures, languages, and other aspects selectively while getting plunged into the dominant culture (Portes & Zhou, 1993). The participants of the study explained that they were culturally different students and kept up their cultural identity by using opportunities like making presentations about their culture and traditional healing and by using their language, Tigrinya, if there is one who understands them. For example, Rozina explains it this way, “እቲ ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርቲ ምስ ባህሊይ ዝተኣሳሰር ኣይመስለንን። ይኹን እምበር፡ ገለ ከም ሶስዮሎጂ ዝኣመሰሉ ኮርሳት ኣለዉ፡ ኣብኡ ዝተመሃርኩም ምስ ባህሊይ ኣተሓሒዞ፡ ኣብ ክፍሊ ብዛዕባ ባህላዊ መንነተይ መግለጺ ከቕርብ ዕድል ይረክብ። ንኣብነት፡ ኣገባብ ርክብ ወይ ሰባት ኣብ ዝተፈላለዩ ባህሊታት ዝረዳድኡሉ ኣገባብ፡ እዚ ከም ዕድል ባህሊይ እውን ከንጸባርቕ እየ ዝሪኡ።” [I don't think the college education is related to my culture. However, there are some courses like sociology, where I relate what I learn to my culture and get an opportunity to make a presentation about my cultural identity in class. For example, means of communication or the way people communicate across different cultures, I see that as an opportunity to reflect my culture as well].

Another theory, part of the acculturation process, that aligned with the findings of the study was Ogbu and Simons' (1998) cultural- ecological theory. The authors argue that minority groups' identity development and schooling correlate to their official status in the United States. Immigrants who were coerced to leave their countries are more likely to get immersed into the local culture and own 'compatible' cultural identities in which they gain access to the two cultural worlds (Benet- Martínez et al., 2002). Their priority is to use the available resources to economically develop themselves and do not tend to think of racial segregation as the major

obstacle as long as they are secured economically. This tendency appears to provide them with an opportunity to succeed at school (Benet-Martínez et al., 2002). However, the participants of this study, political refugees, developed an ‘oppositional identity’ to any kind of downward and upward assimilation and focused on maintaining their cultural identity at school, which may at times interfered with their schooling activities. The theory provided insight that the participants attempted to maintain their cultural identity in school by opposing any activity that contradicts with their cultural practice like eating pork and wearing mini skirts. Furthermore, the study found that the Eritrean political refugee students used different strategies to keep up their cultural identity at school: these are wearing a t-shirt that displays the Geeze alphabet, having an Eritrean female hairstyle called *Kino*, and keeping their head down during communication with people.

Cultural reproduction

This theory offered insight into understanding and interpreting the schooling experiences that contributed to the cultural identity construction, and the ways the refugee students negotiated and renegotiated their cultural identity construction. Bourdieu (1977) argues that schools’ role in reproducing the values of the cultural capital of the elite social class is tremendous. Cultural capital is shaped by one’s experiences at home, where there are cultural resources that support someone’s position in a social order (Bourdieu, 1977). This may bring some advantage to the dominant groups, as they have access to the cultural resources valued by the social order, which could be character traits, cultural goods, and academic credentials.

This point is consistent with the findings of the present study that the participants’ traits, dressing styles, speaking styles and presentation assessment standards did not match the cultural resources that support the dominant groups’ position in the social order. The participants of this study, all female refugee students, did not approve of wearing mini skirts or shorts. Not only

their parents, but their community and religion, Orthodox Christianity, forbade them from wearing dresses that show their body. Also, during conversation, the female refugee students reported that they use their two hands to greet people, avoid eye contact and keep their head down when communicating with their elders and teachers. And the participants avoided eye contact, stood on one spot, and spoke lightly as a sign of respect to the teachers and students during presentations. None of these resources were reflected in their school, nor were they endorsed by the elite social class. This is evident that schools promote and reproduce the values of the cultural capital of the dominant groups. This may make the refugee students feel weak and less intelligent, leading to the social and structural inequalities in the society (Giroux, 1997).

Transculturalism and Biculturalism

Transculturalism and biculturalism theories did not appear as expected in the findings. The participants of the present study arrived in the United States after getting resettled first in Ethiopia, the first host country. This enabled the participants to come into contact with other cultures, which is transculturalism, defined as the “process of individuals and societies changing themselves by integrating diverse cultural life-ways into dynamic new ones” (Hoerder, Hebert, & Schmitt, 2006, p.13). This process provides an opportunity for refugee students to experience two cultural worlds. In a similar vein, biculturalism, which provides opportunities to refugees to develop bicultural identities by embracing their histories, values, and national identities like being Eritrean and American would be advantageous to the participants of the study. However, these two theories did not appear in the findings of the study, as the participants insisted on constructing their cultural identity, though at time they pretended to be Americans at school to avoid isolation and to conform to the educational system and standards, but never sought to develop the American identity. Instead, they largely focused on maintaining Eritrean cultural

identity and described themselves as culturally different students in the post-secondary institution in the Midwest. For example, Abrahatsion said,

እወ ኣነ ኤርትራዊት ተማሃራት እየ፡ ምስ ዘይኤርትራውያን ተማሃሮ ብዙሕ ፍልልያት ስለዘለኒ ድማ ብባህሊ ዝተፈለገኹ ኹይኑ እዩ ዚሰምዓኒ። ንኣብነት ኣነ ዝዛረበሉ ኣገባብ፡ ኣነ ዝዋሰኡሉ ኣገባብ፡ ትፈልጡ ኢኹም፡ ብዙሕ ፍልልያት ኣለና። ንሕና ኤርትራውያን ዝያዳ ኣብ ባህልና ወይ ባህላዊ መንነትና ኢና ነተኩር። ንኸንዘራረብ ክፉታት ዝኾንና ኣይንመስልን። ብቋንቋና ወይ ባህልና ድማ ንሕብን። ከምኡ'ውን ኣብ ኣስማት ፍልልይ ኣሎ። ኤርትራዊ ኣስማት ኤርትራዊ ትርጉም ኣለዎ፡ ምስ ኤርትራዊ ባህሊ ድማ ይዛመድ። ካብእም ዝፍለየና ድማ ንሱ እውን ይመስለኒ። [Yes, I am an Eritrean student, and I see myself culturally different because I have a lot of differences with non-Eritrean students. For example, the way I speak, the way I act, you know, we have a lot of differences. We, Eritreans, focus more on our culture or cultural identity. We don't seem to be open to negotiate. And we are proud of our language or culture. Also, there are differences in names. Eritrean names have Eritrean meaning and related to Eritrean culture. And I think that's also what makes us different from them].

Just like the other participants of the study, Abrahatsion explained that she sees herself culturally Eritrean student and is not open to negotiate her cultural identity. She continued to explain that her name, language, and culture are completely unique, which contributed to constructing her cultural identity.

The participants of the present study appeared to be conservative on constructing their cultural identifies, which perhaps did not leave a room for biculturalism and transculturalism to interpret their experiences. They maintained a close relationship with their community in the United States. They went to the Eritrean Orthodox Tewahedo church, met with Eritrean friends, and discussed ways of keeping up their cultural identity in the church. Also, the participants reaffirmed that the Eritrean Orthodox church keeps teaching them to be ethical and disciplined

and to keep Eritrean values, which helped them to maintain their cultural identity. Most importantly, Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity, the religious affiliation of the participants, appeared to have influenced the findings greatly. In addition, the participants of the study discussed Eritrean cultural values, histories and norms during lunch and dinner ceremonies called *Maadi*. All these activities may have played a role in keeping the participants from seeking to develop bicultural identity.

Finally, the aspects added to the theories that I did not see in the existing literature is religion. Religion, Orthodox Christianity played a pivotal role in helping the participants of the present study to keep up their cultural identity and restrict their practices in the postsecondary institution. Orthodox Christianity forbade them from eating pork, wearing mini skirts, having tattoos and maintaining eye contact during conversations, though they never exhibited their religious belief due to their immersion in the dominant culture. In sum, the acculturation process and cultural reproduction theories helped participants interpret and understand the political refugee students' identity construction and their schooling experiences in shaping their cultural identity in the post-secondary education. However, transculturalism and biculturalism did not appear in the findings as expected.

Recommendations for curriculum experts and policy makers

This study examined identity construction of Eritrean political refugee students in the postsecondary education in the U.S. Midwest. It found out that the higher education refugee students felt a strong sense of their cultural identity and the important aspects that shaped their identity are reported as well. The study also provided evidence that there appears to be a discrepancy between the participants and the rest of the student population. I think it is the responsibility of institutions of higher education to provide the participants, not only as female

refugee students but also as a minority, with resources that would help them to continue to build up their cultural identity and bring them to the larger community in the U.S. Based on this, the study makes the following recommendations.

The importance of culturally responsive pedagogy

The participants of the study reported that they could not see their cultural values, histories, and identities not only in the curricula but also extra curricula activities. Culturally responsive pedagogy appears to be a common practice in schools in the U.S. Midwest; however, integrating it to the college education system could be more advantageous for refugee students. This could take place in various ways. For example, in the subject matter syllabus/curriculum we prepare, we may include the cultural values, histories and identities of those refugee students who outnumber. These students could feel close attachment if they see their values and identities and could help ensure an inclusive classroom.

The importance of specific support for refugee students in post-secondary institution

Most of the postsecondary institutions have support, but having unique support services for refugees would be crucial. Refugee students are different from the rest of the student population due to the traumatic experiences they have had and possibly disruption of education. Establishing a special support office and hiring refugee scholars who can understand them better, and possibly who can speak their native languages, could bring the students to the board of larger population and integrate them easily. This could give refugee students an opportunity to explore all the resources available in the school. The model of the University of Maryland could be followed; this model includes a refugee office and provides advice and counseling to the refugees in addition to ESL classes. This strategy could assist many needy refugee students.

The Importance of Social Connections and Community

The study found out that refugee students have proximity with their social circles and communities. They seem to discuss everything, including school affairs there, like choosing a major, problems they have with teachers or their peers, etc. For example, in this study, the participants had close connections with the Orthodox Tewahedo Christian church that serves them in their own language. The participants go to the church not only to attend mass but to have social gatherings there and talk through issues related life. Designing a curriculum that includes visiting such social institutions so that higher education systems know them better can foster greater involvement with our education system. This can play a pivotal role in sharing responsibilities to assist refugee students and in creating inclusion and diversity.

Limitations of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore an in-depth understanding of how Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions in the U.S. Midwest and the role of schooling in shaping their cultural identity, and qualitative research was used to investigate their lived experiences and understand the meanings ascribed to them by collecting data systematically and analyzing them rigorously (Merriam, 2009). The study considered five Eritrean political refugee students who attended postsecondary institution in the U.S. Midwest. Refugee resettlement agencies could not help in the recruitment because it was difficult for them to provide participants who met the criteria set by the study; the criteria included being Eritrean political refugees, having stayed in the U.S. for a minimum of six months, and attending the same school in the U.S. and refugee camp. The participants, all females, who met the above recruitment took part in the study.

Moreover, data were gathered through an in-depth interview which was conducted in three phases and focus-group discussion. Using more instruments like observation would have provided a room for data triangulation, though member checking was used to ensure that the participants' stories were captured correctly.

Finally, in qualitative research, the researcher's positionality and identity are important as they are the tool through which data is gathered from the participants. My professional and personal experiences were closely related to the experiences of the participants, though I was aware of my connections and biases, and tried my best to remain neutral so that the findings of the study reflect the true representations of the participants' responses.

Future research

My study focused on cultural identity construction of Eritrean political refugee students in a postsecondary institution in the U.S. Midwest. Due to the nature of case study methodology, I only considered five participants and one country, Eritrea, in the study. Considering more African countries, especially from a specific region, would be an interesting study to conduct because it may give us a fuller picture of implementing culturally responsive pedagogy for African refugees in the United States.

In addition, the study focused only on college students. Involving parents, professors, and school administrators in trying to understand the experiences and cultural identity construction of higher education refugee students could yield a very interesting result that could be a resource for teachers, policy makers, curriculum experts and scholars. Also, instead of focusing on one state, considering two states, at minimum, would produce a full document about African refugee students.

Since the study addressed the experience of female refugees, considering all genders would be interesting. Most importantly, this is a qualitative study, but treating the same study using mixed methods and involving as many participants as possible, especially when there is funding available, could produce a milestone document that helps us to fully understand the schooling experiences of refugee students in U.S. postsecondary institutions. As part of this project, one can also compare the experiences of refugee students with the international students so that higher education institutions provide quality services to their customers.

Conclusion

The study addressed these two research questions: 1) How do Eritrean political refugee students negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity in postsecondary institutions in the U.S. Midwest? 2) How does the postsecondary schooling experience shape the cultural identity of Eritrean political refugee students in the U.S. Midwest? The study found that the Eritrean political female refugee students identified themselves as culturally Eritrean students and differentiated themselves from the rest of the student populations due to their strong sense of cultural identity. The aspects that shaped their Eritrean cultural identity were their language, religion, names and cultural way of communication. Also, the study noted that the participants did not feel a sense of bilingual identity and were not in a position to negotiate and renegotiate their cultural identity, though they admitted that they were pulled to fit in the social, economic, and political structures of the host country; the study also indicated that the refugee students faced discrimination and isolation mainly due to their English accents.

Moreover, the study documented that the refugee students' histories, values and cultural practices were not included in the higher education curriculum in the U.S. Midwest. Instead, the cultural values of the elite social class were reflected in the curricula and extra-curricula

activities in the school. Similarly, the study provided evidence that there was no unique support designed to meet the needs of the refugee students. In addition, the teaching methodology used by the school did not align with the standards and norms of the Eritrean political refugee students, and the school culture was completely different from the home culture for the participants, but they used different strategies to maintain their cultural identity.

The study recommends that higher education in the U.S. Midwest practice pedagogy that is culturally responsive, not only to the domestic students, but also to refugee students. Also, the institutions, curriculum experts and policy makers should devote their resources to meet the special needs of the refugee students and should work to broaden the scope of multicultural education to create inclusive higher learning environment and to ensure cultural competence.

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Appendix A: IRB letter approved



Date: February 8, 2022

TO: Samuel Habtemariam, (samuelderma@ku.edu)

FROM: Alyssa Haase, IRB Administrator (785-864-7385, irb@ku.edu)

RE: **Approval of Initial Study**

The IRB reviewed the submission referenced below on 2/8/2022. The IRB approved the protocol, effective 2/8/2022.

IRB Action: APPROVED		Effective date: 2/8/2022	Expiration Date: N/A
STUDY DETAILS			
Investigator:	Samuel Habtemariam		
IRB ID:	STUDY00148223		
Title of Study:	Cultural Identity Construction among Political Refugee Students: The case of Eritrean College Students in the Midwest		
Funding ID:	None		
REVIEW INFORMATION			
Review Type:	Initial Study		
Review Date:	2/8/2022		
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent Form 2.docx, • Consent Form_Tigiryana.docx, • hrpp-phase-3-reactivation-checklist_Habtemariam.docx, • Recruitment Material for students.docx, • Research Protocol -2.docx, • Sample focus group discussion_Samuel_H.docx, • Sample Interview questions_Samuel_H.docx 		
Exemption Determination:	• (2)(i) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation (non-identifiable)		
Additional Information:			

KEY PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES Consult our website for additional information.

1. **Approved Consent Form:** You must use the final, watermarked version of the consent form, available under the "Documents" tab, "Final" column, in eCompliance. Participants must be given a copy of the form.
2. **Continuing Review and Study Closure:** You are required to provide a project update to HRPP before the above expiration date through the submission of a Continuing Review. Please [close your study](#) at completion.
3. **Modifications:** Modifications to the study may affect Exempt status and must be submitted for review and approval before implementing changes. For more information on the types of modifications that require IRB review and approval, [visit our website](#).
4. **Add Study Team Member:** [Complete a study team modification](#) if you need to add investigators not named in original application. Note that new investigators must take [the online tutorial](#) prior to being approved to work on the project.
5. **Data Security:** [University data security and handling requirements](#) apply to your project.
6. **Submit a Report of New Information (RNI):** If a subject is injured in the course of the research procedure or there is a breach of participant information, an RNI must be submitted immediately. Potential non-compliance may also be reported through the RNI process.
7. **Consent Records:** When signed consent documents are required, the primary investigator must retain the signed consent documents for at least three years past completion of the research activity.

8. **Study Records** must be kept a minimum of three years after the completion of the research. Funding agencies may have retention requirements that exceed three years.

Appendix B: Consent form, English version

Consent Form

Cultural Identity Construction Among Eritrean Political Refugee College Students

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Curriculum and Teaching at the University of Kansas supports the practice of protection for human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to sign this form and not participate in this study. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to explore the cultural identity construction of Eritrean political refugee students and how schooling shapes the refugee students' cultural identity.

PROCEDURES

The study will use interview and focus-group discussion methods.

1. There will be three interviews via Zoom, for about 90-120 minutes each from February to May 2022.
2. There will be one focus-group discussion about your college experiences as refugees for two hours. Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others.

All interviews and focus-group discussions will be audio-taped, and recordings will be kept digitally, and password secured. You have the right not to be audio-recorded or to stop being audio-recorded in the middle if you don't want to. Only I will transcribe the recordings and have access to them. After seven years, the recordings will be destroyed.

RISKS

No risks are anticipated. I will meet you at Refugee Resettlement agencies near your residence in a private setting.

BENEFITS

Your benefits as research participants could be that you will share your stories about your schooling experience and how it shapes your cultural identities. In other words, you are contributing your stories to a study. Also, this may benefit the education system in getting informed about the refugee students' cultural identity, which may help them revise their curriculum so that it considers the cultures of the newcomers to create more inclusive environment and culturally relevant pedagogy.

Dissertation Proposal

PAYMENT TO PARTICIPANTS

You will receive no payment.

PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY

Your name, and your schools' names will not be associated in any publication or presentation with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. Instead, the researcher will use pseudonyms instead of your name, school and district names. Your

identifiable information will not be shared unless required by law or you give written permission. Permission granted on this date to use and disclose your information remains in effect indefinitely. By signing this form, you give permission for the use and disclosure of your information for purposes of this study at any time in the future.

INSTITUTIONAL DISCLAIMER STATEMENT

In the event of injury, the Kansas Tort Claims Act provides for compensation if it can be demonstrated that the injury was caused by the negligent or wrongful act or omission of a state employee acting within the scope of his/her employment.

REFUSAL TO SIGN CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You are not required to sign this Consent and Authorization form and you may refuse to do so without affecting your right to any services you are receiving or may receive from the University of Kansas or to participate in any programs or events of the University of Kansas. However, if you refuse to sign, you cannot participate in this study.

CANCELLING THIS CONSENT AND AUTHORIZATION

You may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. You also have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose further information collected about you, in writing, at any time, by sending your written request to: Samuel Habtemariam, Department of Curriculum and Teaching, J.R.Pearson Hall, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045 or samueldermas@ku.edu

If you cancel permission to use your information, the researcher(s) will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation, as described above.

QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTICIPATION

Questions about procedures should be directed to the researcher(s) listed at the end of this consent form.

PARTICIPANT CERTIFICATION:

I have read this Consent and Authorization form. I have had the opportunity to ask, and I have received answers to, any questions I had regarding the study. I understand that if I have any additional questions about my rights as a research participant, I may call (785) 864-7385, write the Human Research Protection Program (HRPP), University of Kansas, 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7568, or email irb@ku.edu.

Dissertation Proposal

I agree to take part in this study and to be audio recorded as a research participant. By my signature I affirm that I am at least 18 years old and that I have received a copy of this Consent and Authorization form.

_____	_____
Type/Print Participant's Name	Date

Participant's Signature	

Researchers Contact Information

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785-864-9670

Appendix B1: Consent form, Tigiryna version

ቅጥረ ፍቻድ

ህንጻት ባህላዊ መንነት ኣብ ኤርትራውያን ተማሃሮ ኮለጅ ፖለቲካዊ ስደተኛታት

መእተዊ

ኣብ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ካንሳስ ክፍሊ ስርዓተ ትምህርትን ኣስተምህሮን፡ ኣብ ምርምር ንዝሳተፉ ደቂ ሰባት ዝምልከት ልምዲ ምክልኻል ይድግፍ። እዚ ዝስዕብ ሓበሬታ ኣብዚ መጽናዕቲ ክትሳተፉ ትደልዩን ክትሳተፉ ትደልዩን ንኸትውስኑ ተዋሂቡኩም ኣሎ። ነዚ ቅጥረ ምፍራም ክትኣቢን ኣብዚ መጽናዕቲ ዘይምስታፍን ትኸእል ኢኻ። ክትሳተፍ እንተተሰማሚዕካ እውን ኣብ ዝኾነ እዋን ክትሰሙሩ ናጻ ምዃንካ ክትፈልጥ ይግባእ።

ዕላማ ናይቲ መጽናዕቲ

ዕላማ ናይዚ መጽናዕቲ፡ ህንጻት ባህላዊ መንነት ኤርትራውያን ተማሃሮ ፖለቲካዊ ስደተኛታትን፡ ትምህርቲ ንባህላዊ መንነት ስደተኛታት ተማሃሮ ብኸመይ ከም ዝቐርጹን ንምድህሳስ እዩ።

ኣገባባት

እቲ መጽናዕቲ ቃለ መሕትትን ትኹረት ጉጅለ ዘተን ዝጥቀምሉ ሜላታት ክጥቀም እዩ።

1. ብመንገዲ ዙም ሰለስተ ቃለ መሕትት ክግበር እዩ፤ ካብ ለካቲት ክሳብ ግንቦት 2022 ነፍሲ ወከፎም ኣስታት 90-120 ደቓይቕ።
2. ንክልተ ሰዓታት ብዛዕባ ተመኩሮታት ኮለጅካ ብዛዕባ ተመኩሮታት ኮለጅ ሓደ ፎኮስ ጉጅለ ዘተ ክህሉ እዩ። እቶም ተመራመርቲ ምስጢራዊነት ናይቲ ዳታ ንምሕላው ኩሉ ጥንቃቄታት እኳ እንተገበሩ፡ ባህሪ ፎኮስ ጉጅለታት ግን እቶም ተመራመርቲ ምስጢራዊነት ንኸይውሕሱ ዝኸልክል ምዃኑ ክንሕብር ንፈቱ። እቶም ተመራመርቲ ንተሳተፍቲ ብሕታዊነት ብጻትኩም ተሳተፍቲ ክተኸብሩን ኣብቲ ፎኮስ ግሩፕ ዝተባህለ ንኸልኦት ክይትደግሙን ከዘኻኸሩ ይፈቱ። ኩሎም ቃለ መሕትትን ፎኮስ ጉጅለ ዘተን ብድምጺ ክቐረጹ እዮም፤ ቅዳሓት ድማ ብዲጂታል ክቐመጡ እዮም፤ ከምኡውን ብፓስዎርድ ውሑስ ክኸውን እዩ። ድምጺ ዘይምቐራጽ ወይ'ውን እንተዘይደሊኻ ኣብ ማእከል ድምጺ ምቐራጽ ደው ናይ ምባል መሰል ኣሎካ። ኣነ ጥራይ እየ ነቲ ቅዳሓት ክጽሕፎን ክረኽቦን ዝኸእል። ድሕሪ 7 ዓመት ድማ እቶም ቅዳሓት ክድምስሱ እዮም።

ሓዲጋታት

ዝኾነ ሓዲጋ ከመጽእ ትጽቢት ካይግበርን። ኣብ ጥቓ መንበሪ ዝሆኑም ኣብ ዝርከባ ትካላት ዳግመ-ምጥያስ ስደተኛታት ኣብ ናይ ብሕቲ ቦታ ክረኽቡኩም እዮ።

ጥቕምታት

ከም ተሳተፍቲ መጽናዕቲ መጠን ዘለካ ረብሓታት፡ ብዛዕባ ተመኩሮ ቤት ትምህርትኻን ንባህላዊ መንነትካ ብኸመይ ከም ዝቐርጸን ዛንታታትካ ከተካፍል ትኽእል ኢኻ። ብኸልእ ኣዘራርባ ዛንታታትካ ንመጽናዕቲ ትበርክት ኣለኻ ማለት እዩ።

ከምኡ'ውን እዚ ነቲ ስርዓተ ትምህርቲ ብዛዕባ ባህላዊ መንነት ናይቶም ስደተኛታት ተማሃሮ ሓበሬታ ኣብ ምርካብ ክጠቅም ይኽእል'ዩ፤ እዚ ድማ ንባህሊታት ናይቶም ሓደስቲ መጻእቲ ኣብ ግምት ብምእታው ዝያዳ ሓጃፊ ሃዋህውን ባህላዊ ምትእስሳር

ዘለዎ ስነ-ምምሃርን ንምፍጣር ስርዓተ ትምህርቶም ንምኽላስ ክሕግዞም ይኽእል።

ክፍሊት ንተሳተፍቲ ዝኾነ ክፍሊት ካይክትረኽቡን ኢኹም።

ምስጢር ተሳታፊ

ስምካ፡ ከምኡ'ውን ኣስማት ኣብያተ ትምህርትኻ ኣብ ዝኾነ ሕታም ወይ ኣቀራርባ ምስቲ ብዛዕባኻ ዝተኣከበ ሓበሬታ ወይ ምስቲ ካብዚ መጽናዕቲ ዝተረኽበ ውጽኢት መጽናዕቲ ካይክተሓሓዝን እዩ። ኣብ ክንድኡ እቲ ተመራማሪ ኣብ ክንዲ ስምካ፡

ኣስማት ቤት ትምህርትኻን ኣውራጃኻን ቅጽል ስም ክጥቀም እዩ። ብሕገ እንተዘይተገዲድካ ወይ ብጽሑፍ ፍቓድ

እንተዘይሂብካ መለለዩ ሓበሬታኻ ካይክካፈልን እዩ። ኣብዚ ዕለት እዚ ሓበሬታኻ ንምጥቃምን ንምግላጽን ዝተዋህበ ፍቓድ

ንዘይተወሰነ ግዜ ኣብ ግብሪ ይጸንሕ። ነዚ ቅጥዒ ብምፍራም፡ ኣብ መጻኢ ኣብ ዝኾነ እዋን ንዕላማታት እዚ መጽናዕቲ

ሓበሬታኻ ክትጥቀመሉን ክትግለጽን ፍቓድ ትህብ።

ትካላዊ ናይ ሓላፍነት ምውሳድ መግለጺ

ኣብ እዋን ጉድኣት እንተጋጠሙ፡ ሕገ ጠለባት ዕንወት ካንሳስ፡ እቲ ጉድኣት ብሰንኪ ሸለልትነት ወይ ብጌጋ ተግባር ወይ ምግዳፍ ናይ ሓደ ሰራሕተኛ ግዝኣት ኣብ ውሽጢ ሰፍሓት ሰራሕ ዝሰርሕ ምጂኑ ክረጋገጽ እንተኽኢሉ ካሕሳ ይህብ።

ፍቓድን ፍቓድን ምፍራም ምእባዩ

ነዚ ናይ ፍቓድን ፍቓድን ቅጥዒ ክትፍርም ኣየድልዩካን እዩ፤ ካብ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ካንሳስ እትረኽቡ ወይ ክትረኽቡ እትኽእል ዝኾነ ይኹን ኣገልግሎት ወይ ኣብ ዝኾነ መደባት ወይ ፍጻመታት ዩኒቨርሲቲ ካንሳስ ክትሳተፍ መሰልካ ከይጸለወካ ድማ ክትኣቢ

ትኽእል ኢኻ። ይኹን እምበር፡ ምፍራም እንተ ኣቢኻ፡ ኣብዚ መጽናዕቲ እዚ ክትሳተፍ ካይትኽእልን ኢኻ።

ነዚ ፍቓድን ፍቓድን ምስራዝ

ኣብዚ መጽናዕቲ ክትሳተፍ ዝሃብካዮ ፍቓድ ኣብ ዝኾነ እዋን ክትስሕብ ትኽእል ኢኻ። ብተወሳኺ ብዛዕባኻ ዝተኣከበ ተወሳኺ ሓበሬታ ንምጥቃምን ንምግላጽን ፍቓድካ ክትስርዞ መሰል ኣሎካ። ብጽሑፍ፣ ኣብ ዝኾነ እዋን፣ ብጽሑፍ ሕቶኻ ናብዚ ዝስዕብ ብምልኣኽ፡ ሳሙኤል ሃብተማርያም፣ ክፍሊ ስርዓተ ትምህርትን ኣስተምህሮን፣ ጆይ.አር.ፒርሰን ሆል፣ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ካንሳስ፣ ሎሬንስ፡ KS 66045 ወይ samueldermas@ku.edu

ሓበሬታኻ ክትጥቀመሉ ፍቓድ እንተሰሪዝካዮ፡ እቲ ተመራማሪ(ታት) ብዛዕባኻ ተወሳኺ ሓበሬታ ምእካብ ክቋርጽ እዩ። ይኹን እምበር፡ እቲ መጽናዕታዊ ጉጅለ፡ ከምቲ ኣብ ላዕሊ ዝተገልጸ፡ ቅድሚ ስርዓ ድልዝኻ ምቕባሉ ዝተኣከበ ሓበሬታ ክጥቀምን ክገልጽን ይኽእል።

ሕቶታት ብዛዕባ ተሳትፎ

ብዛዕባ ኣገባባት ዝቐርቡ ሕቶታት ናብቲ ኣብ መወዳእታ ናይዚ ቅጥዒ ፍቓድ ተዘርዚሩ ዘሎ ተመራማሪ(ታት) ክቐንዕ ኣለዎ።

ናይ ተሳታፊ ምስክር ወረቐት

ነዚ ናይ ፍቓድን ፍቓድን ቅጥዒ ኣንቢቦዮ ኣለኹ። ነቲ መጽናዕቲ ብዝምልከት ዝነበረኒ ሕቶታት ክሓትት ዕድል ረኺብ እዩ። መልሲ ድማ ረኺብ እዩ። ከም ተሳታፊ መጽናዕቲ መጠን ብዛዕባ መሰላተይ ዝኾነ ተወሳኺ ሕቶታት እንተሃልዩኒ፡ ብስልኪ (785) 864-7385 ክድውል ከም ዝኽእል ይርዳኣኒ። ንፕሮግራም ምክልኻል ምርምር ሰብ (HRPP)፡ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ካንሳስ፡ 2385 Irving Hill Road, Lawrence, Kansas 66045 ክጽሕፍ ከም ዝኽእል ይርዳኣኒ። -7568፡ ወይ ብኢሜይል irb@ku.edu።

ኣብዚ መጽናዕቲ ክትሳተፍን ከም ተሳታፊ መጽናዕቲ ብድምጺ ክቕረጽን ይሰማማዕ። ብፌርማይ እንተወሓደ ወዲ 18 ዓመት ምዃነይን ቅዳሕ ናይዚ ቅጥዒ ፍቓድን ፍቓድን ከም ዝረኽብኩን የረጋግጽ።

ስም ተሳታፊ _____

ዕለት _____

ፌርማ ተሳታፊ _____

Researchers Contact Information Dr. Samuel Habtemariam Principal Investigator Department of Curriculum and Teaching JRP Hall University of Kansas	Dr. Heidi Hallman Faculty Adviser Department of Curriculum & Teaching University of Kansas
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Lawrence, Ks 66045

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Lawrence, KS 66045

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Appendix C: Sample interview questions, English version

Sample Interview questions

Phase I Interview (Background and Previous Learning Experiences)

Time of Interview:

Date:

Zoom link:

Interviewer: Samuel Habtemariam

Hello. Thank you for having agreed to participate in my study about cultural identity construction among political refugee students. This is the first phase of the interview and during this phase, I ask you questions about your background and previous learning experiences before moving to the United States. Please keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers, but just your opinion. During data analysis, I will quote you and use your words, but will not identify your identity. Instead, I will use pseudonym to represent your name and your college.

Throughout the study, all the data you provide me will remain confidential. Any questions? As you read and signed the consent form in English and Tigrinya, your responses will be recorded so that I capture your perspectives accurately. But after two years, they will be damaged. Okay, Let's start.

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age?
3. How do you identify your gender?
4. Which place were you born in Eritrea?
5. What was it like to live and grow up in Eritrea?

6. For how long did you go to school in Eritrea?
7. How do you describe your schooling experiences in Eritrea?
8. How old were you when you left Eritrea?
9. Why did you leave Eritrea?
10. Which refugee camp did you live in in Ethiopia before resettling in the United States?
11. For how long did you study in the refugee camp in Ethiopia?
12. How do you describe your schooling experiences in the refugee camp in Ethiopia?
13. Which year did you move to the United States?
14. Why did you choose to come to the United States?
15. How old were you when you got resettled to the United States from Ethiopia?
16. Who did you get resettled with to the United States?
17. How do you describe your resettlement process to the United States?

Thank you! we will meet for the second phase interview, and I will email you the date and the purpose of the interview. Have a good day!

Phase II Interview (Schooling Experiences in the US)

Time of Interview:

Date:

Zoom link:

Interviewer: Samuel Habtemariam

Hello and welcome to the second phase interview. In this session, we focus on your schooling experiences in the US and how they shape your cultural identity. I will record this interview session like the first phase to capture your perspectives accurately. But after two years, all recordings will be damaged. I just would like to remind you that as stated in the consent form, if there are questions you don't want to answer or if you want me to stop recording at any time during our conversation, please let me know. Thank you!

1. When did you join the college?
2. Why did you choose to go to college?
3. How did your refugee resettlement experiences affect your decision of going to college?
4. Who helped you apply for college?
5. How do you describe the role of the resettlement agencies in your college application process?
6. What did you think of college education in the United States before admission?
7. What does it feel like to be a college student as a political refugee?
8. How did the resettlement agencies help you in terms of studying a specific discipline of your choice?
9. What kind of support system do you think there is at your school?
10. Do you think the support system at your college is specifically helpful for refugee students? Why?

11. How do you describe your schooling experiences at your college here in the United States?
12. How do you describe your social experiences as an Eritrean refugee student at the college?
13. How do you describe your participation in non-academic activities in your college?
14. In your opinion, how do you compare the experiences of refugee students with non-refugee students at your college?
15. Can you share with me your most pleasant and frustrating experiences at your college?
16. How do such schooling experiences shape your cultural identity?
17. Do you feel like your cultural identity fits in your college education? Why?
18. As an Eritrean political refugee, do you feel like you belong to the college culturally? Why?

Thank you! we will meet for the second phase interview, and I will email you the date and the purpose of the interview. Have a good day!

Phase III Interview (Negotiating Cultural Identity)

Time of Interview:

Date:

Zoom link:

Interviewer: Samuel Habtemariam

Hello and welcome to the third phase interview. In this session, we focus on how you negotiate and renegotiate your cultural identity. I will record this interview session like the first and second

phases to capture your perspectives accurately. But after two years, all recordings will be damaged. I just would like to remind you that as stated in the consent form, if there are questions you don't want to answer or if you want me to stop recording at any time during our conversation, please let me know. Great, let's start.

1. How do you describe your nationality?
2. How do you describe yourself culturally?
3. Do you see yourself as a different student culturally? Why?
4. Do you consider yourself as an American college student or Eritrean college student?
Why?
5. In what ways did you think college education would help you to keep up your cultural identity?
6. How do the curricula affect your cultural identity?
7. In what ways do the curricula help you to maintain your cultural identity?
8. How does your cultural identity affect your academic experiences at school?
9. How do you describe the differences between the college culture and home culture?
10. How much do you practice your culture at home?
11. What do your parents tell you about your culture at home?
12. Do your family members talk about Eritrean culture at home? Why?
13. What language do you use to communicate with your family members at home?
14. What foods do you eat at home?
15. What music do you listen to at home?
16. Which cultural holidays do you observe at home?
17. What do you do to balance the college culture with home culture?

18. How influential do you think the college culture is over your home culture?
19. In what ways do you reflect your home culture at school?
20. In what ways do you reflect your cultural identity at school?
21. In what ways does your cultural identity affect your academic engagement and activities?
22. How do the other students in your school react to your cultural beliefs and practices?
23. How do you balance your cultural identity with the college culture?
24. How do you negotiate and renegotiate your cultural identity at school?

This is the end of the interview sessions. I sincerely appreciate you for taking time to share your perspectives. I will email you the transcribed material and you will get an opportunity to read and revise your responses. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email samueldermas@ku.edu. Thank you again!

Appendix C1: Sample interview questions, Tigiryna version

ንኡብነት ናይ ቃለ መሕትት ሕቶታት

ቀዳማይ ምዕራፍ ቃለ መሕትት (ድሕረ ባይታን ቅድሚ ሕጂ ዝነበረ ተመኩሮ ትምህርትን)

ቃለ መሕትት ዝግበረሉ ግዜ፤

ዕለት:

ዙም ሊንክ፤

ሓታቲ: ሳሙኤል ሃብተማርያም

ሰላም. ብዛዕባ ህንጻት ባህላዊ መንነት ኣብ ተማሃሮ ፖለቲካዊ ስደተኛታት ኣብ ዝገበርከዎ መጽናዕቲ ክትሳተፉ ስለ ዝተሰማማዕኩም የቐንየልና። እዚ ቀዳማይ ምዕራፍ ናይቲ ቃለ መሕትት ኮይኑ ኣብዚ ምዕራፍ እዚ ቅድሚ ናብ ኣሜሪካ ምግባዝካ ብዛዕባ ድሕረ ባይታኻን ቅድሚ ሕጂ ዝነበረካ ናይ ትምህርቲ ተመኩሮታትን ሕቶታት እሓተካ። ርእይቶኹም ጥራይ እምበር ቅኑዕን ጌጋን መልሲ ከምዘየለ ኣብ ግምት ኣእትውዎ። ኣብ እዋን ዳታ ትንተና ክጠቀሰካን ቃላትካ ክጥቀምን እዩ። ግን መንነትካ ኣይፈልጥን እዩ። የግዳስ ስምካን ኮለጅካን ንምውካል ቅጽል ስም ክጥቀም እዩ። ኣብ ምሉእ እቲ መጽናዕቲ ኩሉ እቲ እተቐርበልኒ ዳታ ምስጢራዊ ኮይኑ ክቐጽል እዩ። ዝኾነ ሕቶታት ኣለኩም? ነቲ ናይ ፍቓድ ቅጥዒ ብእንግሊዝኛን ትግርኛን ኣንቢብኩም ኣብ ዝፈረምኩምሉ እዋን፡ መልሲታትኩም ከምዝገብ እዩ። ምእንቲ ኣረኣእዮኹም ብትኽክል ክሕዝ። ድሕሪ ክልተ ዓመት ግን ክጉዳእ እዩ። ሕራይ ንጀምር።

1. እንታይ ትበሃል?
2. ዕድመኻ ክንዲይ እዩ?
3. ጾታኻ ብኸመይ ትፈልዮ?
4. ኣብ ኤርትራ ኣብ ኣየናይ ቦታ ኢኻ ተወለድካ?
5. ኣብ ኤርትራ ምንባርን ምዕባይን ከመይ ነይሩ?
6. ኣብ ኤርትራ ክንዲይ ግዜ ትምህርቲ ከይድካ?
7. ኣብ ኤርትራ ዝነበረካ ናይ ትምህርቲ ተመኩሮታት ብኸመይ ትገልጹ?
8. ካብ ኤርትራ ክትወጽእ ከለኻ ዕድሜኻ ክንዲይ እዩ ነይሩ?
9. ስለምንታይ ካብ ኤርትራ ወጺእካ?

10. ቅድሚያ ፍብ አሜሪካ ምቕማጥካ ኣብ ኢትዮጵያ ኣብ ኣየናይ መዓስከር ስደተኛታት ኢኻ ትነብር ነይርካ?
11. ኣብ መዓስከር ስደተኛታት ኢትዮጵያ ክንደይ ግዜ ተማሂርኩም?
12. ኣብ ኢትዮጵያ ኣብ ዝርከብ መዓስከር ስደተኛታት ዝነበረካ ናይ ትምህርቲ ተመኩሮታት ብኸመይ ትገልጹ?
13. ኣብ ኣየነይቲ ዓመት ኢኻ ፍብ አሜሪካ ገግዝካ?
14. ስለምንታይ ኢኻ ፍብ ሕቡራት መንግስታት አሜሪካ ክትመጽእ ዝመረጽካ፤
15. ካብ ኢትዮጵያ ፍብ አሜሪካ ክትቐመጥ ከለኻ ዕድሜኻ ክንደይ እዩ ነይሩ?
16. ምስ መን ኢኻ ፍብ አሜሪካ ሰፊርካ?
17. መስርሕ ምጥያስ ፍብ አሜሪካ ብኸመይ ትገልጹ?

የቐንየለይ! ንኻልኣይ ምዕራፍ ቃለ መሕትት ክንራኹብ ኢና፤ ዕለትን ዕለማን ናይቲ ቃለ መሕትት ድማ ብኢመይል ክገልጸልኩም እየ። ብሩኽ መዓልቲ ይግበረልካ!

ካልኣይ ምዕራፍ ቃለ መሕትት (ተመክሮታት ትምህርቲ ኣብ አሜሪካ)

ቃለ መሕትት ዝግበረሉ ግዜ፤

ዕለት፡

ዙም ሊንክ፤

ሓታቲ፡ ሳሙኤል ሃብተማርያም

ሰላምን እንቋዕ ፍብ ካልኣይ ምዕራፍ ቃለ መሕትት ብሰላም ብደሓን መጻእኩም። ኣብዚ ክፍሊ እዚ፡ ኣብ አሜሪካ ኣብ ዝነበረካ ናይ ቤት ትምህርቲ ተመኩሮታትን ንባህላዊ መንነትካ ብኸመይ ከም ዝቐርጽን ኢና ነተኩር። ነዚ ናይ ቃለ መሕትት መደብ ከም ቀዳማይ ምዕራፍ ክምዝግቦ እየ ኣረኣእያታትኩም ብትኽክል ንምሓዝ። ድሕሪ ክልተ ዓመት ግን ኩሉ ቅዳሓት ክጉዳእ እዩ። ቢቃ ከዘኻኸረኩም ዝደለ፡ ከምቲ ኣብቲ ናይ ፍቓድ ቅጥዒ ተገለጹ ዘሎ፡ ክትምልሱ ዘይትደልዩ ሕቶታት እንተሃልዩም ወይ'ውን ኣብ ዝኾነ እዋን ኣብ እዋን ዕላልና ምቕራጽ ክቋርጽ እንተደሊኹም፡ በጃኹም ኣፍልጡኒ። የቐንየለይ!

1. መዓስ ኢኻ ፍብቲ ኮለጅ ተጸንቢርካ?
2. ንምንታይ ኢኻ ፍብ ኮለጅ ክትከይድ መሪጽካ?
3. ናይ ስደተኛታት ዳግመ-ምጥያስ ተመኩሮኻ ፍብ ኮለጅ ንምኻድ ኣብ ዝገበርካዮ ውሳኔ ብኸመይ ጽልዎ ኣሕዲሩካ?
4. ንኮለጅ ክተመልከት መን ሓጊዙካ?

5. ኣብ መስርሕ መመልከቲ ኮለጅካ ተራ ናይተን ትካላት ዳግመ-ምጥያስ ብኸመይ ትገልጸም?
6. ቅድሚ መቐባል ኣብ ኣሜሪካ ብዛዕባ ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርቲ እንታይ ሓሲብኩም?
7. ከም ፖለቲካዊ ስደተኛ ተማሃራይ ኮለጅ ምዃን ከመይ ይስምዓካ?
8. እተን ትካላት ዳግመ-ምጥያስ ብመንጽር ዝመረጽካዮ ፍሉይ ስነ-ፍልጠት ኣብ ምጽናዕ ብኸመይ ሓጊዘንካ?
9. ኣብ ቤት ትምህርትኹም እንታይ ዓይነት ናይ ደገፍ ስርዓት ኣሎ ትብሉ?
10. ኣብ ኮለጅኩም ዘሎ ናይ ደገፍ ስርዓት ብፍላይ ንተማሃሮ ስደተኛታት ሓጋዚ ይመስለኩም? ንምንታይ?
11. ኣብዚ ኣብ ኣሜሪካ ኣብ ዝርከብ ኮለጅካ ናይ ትምህርቲ ተመኩሮታትካ ብኸመይ ትገልጸ?
12. ኣብ ኮለጅ ኤርትራዊ ስደተኛ ተማሃራይ ኮይንካ ማሕበራዊ ተመኩሮታትካ ብኸመይ ትገልጸ?
13. ኣብ ኮለጅካ ኣብ ዘይኣካዳሚያዊ ንጥፊታት ዘለካ ተሳትፎ ብኸመይ ትገልጸ?
14. ብናትካ ኣረኣኢያ፡ ተመክሮ ስደተኛታት ተማሃሮ ምስ ዘይስደተኛታት ተማሃሮ ኣብ ኮለጅካ ብኸመይ ትነጻጽሮ?
15. ኣብ ኮለጅካ ዘጋጠመካ ኣዝዩ ደስ ዘብልን ተስፋ ዘቐርጽን ተመኩሮ ከተካፍለኒ ትኸእል ዲኻ?
16. ከምዚ ዝኣመሰለ ናይ ቤት ትምህርቲ ተመኩሮታት ንባህላዊ መንነትካ ብኸመይ ይቐርጽ?
17. ባህላዊ መንነትካ ምስ ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርትኻ ዝሰማማዕ ኮይኑ ይስምዓካ ድዩ? ንምንታይ?
18. ከም ኤርትራዊ ፖለቲካዊ ስደተኛ መጠን፡ ብባህሊ ናይቲ ኮለጅ ምዃንካ ኮይኑ ይስምዓካ ድዩ? ንምንታይ?

የቐንየለይ! ንኻልኣይ ምዕራፍ ቃለ መሕትት ከንራኹብ ኢና፤ ዕለትን ዕላማን ናይቲ ቃለ መሕትት ድማ ብኢመይል ከገልጸልኩም እዮ። ብሩኽ መዓልቲ ይግበረልካ!

ሳልሳይ ምዕራፍ ቃለ መሕትት (ምድርድር ባህላዊ መንነት)

ቃለ መሕትት ዝግበረሉ ግዜ፤

ዕለት፡

ዙም ሊንክ፤

ሓታቲ፡ ሳሙኤል ሃብተማርያም

ሰላምን እንቋዕ ናብ ሳልሳይ ምዕራፍ ቃለ መሕትት ብደሓን መጻእኩም። ኣብዚ መደብ እዚ፡ ንባህላዊ መንነትካ ብኸመይ ትደራደርን ዳግማይ ትደራደርን ትኸረት ንገብር። ነዚ ናይ ቃለ መሕትት መደብ ከም ቀዳማይን ካልኣይን ምዕራፍ ከምዝግበ እዩ ኣረኣኢያኹም ብትኸክል ንምሓዝ። ድሕሪ ክልተ ዓመት ግን ኩሉ ቅዳሓት ከጉዳእ እዩ። ቢቃ ከዘኸኸረኩም ዝደሊ፡ ከምቲ

ኣብቲ ናይ ፍቓድ ቅጥዒ ተገሊጹ ዘሎ፡ ክትምልሱ ዘይትደልዩ ሕቶታት እንተሃልዮም ወይ'ውን ኣብ ዝኾነ እዋን ኣብ እዋን ዕላልና ምቕራጽ ክቋርጽ እንተደሊኹም፡ በጃኹም ኣፍልጡኒ። ብሉጽ፡ ንጀምር።

1. ዜግነትካ ብኸመይ ትገልጽ?
2. ብባህሊ ንነብስኻ ብኸመይ ትገልጽ?
3. ንነብስኻ ብባህሊ ከም ዝተፈለየ ተማሃራይ ትርእያ ዲኻ? ንምንታይ?
4. ንነብስኻ ከም ኣመሪካዊ ተማሃራይ ኮለጅ ዲኻ ትቕጽራ ወይስ ኤርትራዊ ተማሃራይ ኮለጅ? ንምንታይ?
5. ትምህርቲ ኮለጅ ባህላዊ መንነትካ ንምቕጻል ብኸመይ መንገዲ ክሕግዘካ እዩ ኢልካ ሓሲብካ?
6. ስርዓተ ትምህርቲ ንባህላዊ መንነትካ ብኸመይ ይጸልዎ?
7. እቲ ስርዓተ ትምህርቲ ባህላዊ መንነትካ ንምዕቃብ ብኸመይ መገዲ ይሕግዘካ?
8. ባህላዊ መንነትካ ኣብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ንዘሎካ ኣካዳሚያዊ ተመኩሮ ብኸመይ ይጸልዎ?
9. ኣብ መንጎ ባህሊ ኮለጅን ባህሊ ገዛን ዘሎ ፍልልይ ብኸመይ ትገልጽ?
10. ኣብ ገዛኻ ባህልኻ ክሳብ ክንደይ ትለማመድ?
11. ወለድኻ ብዛዕባ ባህሊ ኣብ ገዛኻ እንታይ ይነግሩኻ?
12. ኣባላት ስድራኻ ኣብ ገዛኻ ብዛዕባ ባህሊ ኤርትራ ይዘረቡ ድዮም? ንምንታይ?
13. ኣብ ገዛኻ ምስ ኣባላት ስድራ ቤትካ ንምዝርራብ እንታይ ቋንቋ ኢኻ እትጥቀም?
14. ኣብ ገዛኻ እንታይ ዓይነት መግቢ ትበልዕ?
15. ኣብ ገዛኻ እንታይ ሙዚቃ ኢኻ እትሰምዕ?
16. ኣብ ገዛኻ ኣየኖት ባህላዊ በዓላት ኢኻ ተኸብሩ?
17. ባህሊ ኮለጅ ምስ ባህሊ ገዛ ሚዛን ንምሃብ እንታይ ትገብር?
18. ባህሊ ኮለጅ ኣብ ልዕሊ ባህሊ ገዛኻ ክሳብ ክንደይ ጽልዎ ዘለዎ ይመስለካ?
19. ኣብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ንባህሊ ገዛኻ ብኸመይ መገዲ ኢኻ እትንጸባርቕ?
20. ኣብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ባህላዊ መንነትካ ብኸመይ መንገዲ ኢኻ ተንጸባርቕ?
21. ባህላዊ መንነትካ ንኣካዳሚያዊ ጽምዶኻን ንጥፈታትካን ብኸመይ መንገዲ ይጸልዎ?
22. እቶም ካልእት ኣብ ቤት ትምህርትኻ ዘለዉ ተማሃሮ ንባህላዊ መንነትካን ኣሰራርሓኻን እንታይ ምላሽ ይህቡ?

23. ባህላዊ መንነትካ ምስ ባህሊ ኮለጅ ብኸመይ ሚዛን ትህቦ?

24. ኣብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ንባህላዊ መንነትካ ብኸመይ ትደራደርን ዳግማይ ትደራደርን?

እዚ ድማ መወዳእታ ናይ ቃለ መጻኢት ክፍለ ግዜታት እዩ። ግዜ ወሲድካ ኣረኣእያኻ ንምክፋልካ ካብ ልቢ የመስግነካ። እቲ ዝተጻሕፈ ጽሑፍ ብኢመይል ክገብረልኩም እዩ። መልስታትኩም ከተንብቡን ክትእርሙን ዕድል ክትረኽቡ ኢኹም። ዝኾነ ሕጻን ምስ ዝህልወኩም ብኢመይል samuelderma@ku.edu ክትረኽቡኒ ትኸእሉ ኢኹም። ደጊመ የቐንየልና!

Appendix D: Sample focus group discussion, English version

Sample focus group discussion questions

Hello and thank you for coming to this focus-group discussion. In this session, we discuss in detail issues related to the ways you negotiate and renegotiate your cultural identity. I have eleven questions for you, but I may also have follow up questions. Please feel free to discuss in Tigrinya. I will record the discussion to capture your perspectives accurately. But after two years, the recording will be damaged. I just would like to remind you that as stated in the consent form, if there are questions you don't want to answer or if you want me to stop recording at any time during our discussion, please let me know. Thanks!

1. What is it like to be an Eritrean refugee student in a college?
2. How do you compare your experiences as a refugee student with non-refugee students at your college?
3. Can you share with me your most and least pleasant experiences at your college?
4. How do you describe your college education experiences in relation to maintaining your cultural identity?
5. How do you think your college education shapes your cultural identity?
6. In what ways does your college education impact your cultural identity?
7. In what ways do you think the curricula affect your cultural identity?
8. How close are you with your home culture? How do you keep your home culture outside home?
9. In what way does your cultural background affect your academic engagements at school?
10. How does your home culture impact your school culture? How do you deal with it?

11. What strategies do you use to negotiate and renegotiate your cultural identity? How do you balance between your culture and the dominant culture?

This is the end of our discussion. I sincerely appreciate you for taking time to share your perspectives. I will email you the transcribed material and you will get an opportunity to read and revise your responses. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via email samueldermas@ku.edu. Thank you again!

Appendix D1: Sample focus group discussion, Tigiryna version

ንኡብነት ናይ ትኹረት ጉጅለ ዘተ ሕቶታት

ሰላም ኡብዚ ናይ ትኹረት ጉጅለ ዘተ ስለ ዝመጸእኩም ድማ የቐንየልና። ኡብዚ መደብ እዚ፡ ምስቲ ባህላዊ መንነትካ እትደራደራሉን ዳግማይ እትደራደራሉን ኣገባብ ዝተኣሳሰሩ ጉዳያት ብዝርዝር ንዛተ። ዓሰርተ ሓዲ ሕቶታት ኣለዎን፡ ግን ከኣ ናይ ምክትታል ሕቶታት እውን ክህልወኒ ይኸእል እዩ። ብትግርኛ ክትዛተዩ ናጻ ትኹኑ። ኣረኣእያኹም ብትኸክል ንምሓዝ ነቲ ዘተ ክምዝግቦ እዩ። ድሕሪ ክልተ ዓመት ግን እቲ ቅዳሕ ክጉዳእ እዩ። ቢቃ ከዘኸኸረኩም ዝደለ፡ ከምቲ ኣብ ቅጥዒ ፍቓድ ዝተገልጸ፡ ክትምልሱ ዘይትደልዩ ሕቶታት እንተሃልዮም ወይ'ውን ኣብ እዋን ዘተና ኣብ ዝኾነ እዋን ምቕራጽ ክቋርጹ እንተደሊኹም፡ በጃኹም ኣፍልጡኒ። የቐንየለይ!

1. ኣብ ኮለጅ ኤርትራዊ ስደተኛ ተማሃራይ ምዃን ክመይ ይመስል?
2. ከም ተማሃራይ ስደተኛ መጠን ምስ ኣብ ኮለጅካ ዘለዉ ስደተኛታት ዘይኮኑ ተማሃሮ ክመይ ጌርካ ትወዳደር?
3. ኣብ ኮለጅካ ዝነበረካ ኣዝዩን ዝወሓደን ደስ ዘብል ተመኩሮ ክተካፍለኒ ትኸእል ዲኻ?
4. ምስ ምዕቃብ ባህላዊ መንነትካ ብዝተኣሳሰር ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርቲ ተመኩሮታትካ ብኸመይ ትገልጽ?
5. ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርትኻ ንባህላዊ መንነትካ ብኸመይ ይቐርጽ ይመስለካ?
6. ናይ ኮለጅ ትምህርትኻ ኣብ ባህላዊ መንነትካ ብኸመይ መንገዲ ጽልዎ ኣለዎ?
7. እቲ ስርዓተ ትምህርቲ ንባህላዊ መንነትካ ብኸመይ መንገዲ ይጸልዎ ይመስለካ?
8. ምስ ባህሊ ዝኸኸ ክሳብ ክንደይ ትቀራረብ? ክመይ ጌርካ ባህሊ ዝኸኸ ካብ ዝ ወጸኡ ትሕዞ?
9. ባህላዊ ድሕረ ባይታኻ ኣብ ቤት ትምህርቲ ንዘሎካ ኣካዳሚያዊ ጽምዶታት ብኸመይ ይጸልዎ?
10. ባህሊ ዝኸኸ ኣብ ባህሊ ቤት ትምህርትኻ ብኸመይ ይጸልዎ? ክመይ ጌርካ ኢኻ ትገጥሞ?
11. ንባህላዊ መንነትካ ንምድራርን ዳግማይ ንምድርዳርን እንታይ ዓይነት ስትራተጂታት ትጥቀም? ኣብ መንጎ ባህልኻን እቲ ዓብላሊ ባህልን ብኸመይ ሚዛን ትሕዝ?

እዚ መዛዘሚ ዘተና እዩ። ግዜ ወሲድካ ኣረኣእያኻ ንምክፋልካ ካብ ልቢ የመስግነካ። እቲ ዝተጻሕፈ ጽሑፍ ብኢመይል ክገብረልኩም እዩ። መልስታትኩም ከተንብቡን ክትእርሙን ዕድል ክትረኽቡ ኢኹም። ዝኾነ ሕቶ ምስ ዝህልወኩም ብኢመይል samueldermas@ku.edu ክትረኽቡኒ ትኸእሉ ኢኹም። ደጊመ የቐንየልና!

Appendix E: Recruitment material for students, English version

Dear Student,

My name is Samuel Habtemariam, and I am doing my PhD in curriculum studies at the University of Kansas. My research interests include refugee education, culturally responsive pedagogies and bilingual education. Currently, I am collecting data for my PhD dissertation titled “Cultural Identity Construction among Political Refugee Students: The case of Eritrean College Students in the Midwest”. I use interview and focus group discussion methods to collect data from the participants, and I will audio-record all the data.

Thus, you are invited to voluntarily participate in the study. You may withdraw from participating in the study at any time. All collected data will remain confidential and will not be accessed by anyone except by my advisor, Dr. Hallman. In addition, I will not use your real name in the dissertation. Instead, I will use pseudonyms (Unreal names) during analysis and throughout the study.

If you are willing to participate in the study, you will be interviewed three times during the Spring semester 2022 and will take part in the focus group discussion once. I would welcome an opportunity to talk about the study and your possible involvement in the study. I can be reached via email, samueldermas@ku.edu or cellphone number, 316-339-3254. Please let me know when we can talk at your earliest convenience

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

Samuel Habtemariam

Appendix E1: Recruitment material for students, Tigiryna version

ክቡር ተማሃራይ፡

ሳሙኤል ሃብተማርያም ይበሃል፡ አብ ዩኒቨርሲቲ ካንሳስ ድማ ብናይ ስርዓተ ትምህርቲ ናይ ፒኤችዲ ትምህርተይ ይገብር ኣለኹ። ናይ ምርምር ድሌታተይ ትምህርቲ ስደተኛታት፡ ባህላዊ ምላሽ ዝህብ ስነ-ምምሃርን ክልተ ቋንቋታት ትምህርትን ይርከብዎም። ኣብዚ ሕጂ እዋን “ህንጻት ባህላዊ መንነት ኣብ ተማሃሮ ፖለቲካዊ ስደተኛታት፡ ጉዳይ ኤርትራውያን ተማሃሮ ኮለጅ ኣብ ማእከላይ ምዕራብ” ብዝብል ኣርእስቲ ናይ ፒኤችዲ ዲሰርተይ ዳታ ይእክብ ኣለኹ። ካብ ተሳተፍቲ መረዳእታ ንምእካብ ናይ ቃለ መጻኢትን ፎኮስ ግሩፕ ዘተን ማህተት እጥቀም፤ ንኹሉ እቲ መረዳእታ ድማ ብድምጺ ክምዝግብ እየ።

በዚ ኸምዚ፡ ኣብቲ መጽናዕቲ ብወለንታኹም ክትሳተፉ ዕድመ ቀሪቡልኩም ኣሎ። ኣብ ዝኾነ እዋን ኣብቲ መጽናዕቲ ካብ ምክፋል ክትሰሙ ትክእሉ ኢኹ። ኩሉ ዝተኣከበ መረዳእታ ምስጢራዊ ኮይኑ ብዘይካ ኣማኻሪይ ዶክተር ሃልማን ብዝኾነ ሰብ ኣይክረኽቦን እየ። ብተወሳኺ ኣብቲ ዲሰርት ትክክለኛ ስምካ ኣይክጥቀሙን እየ። የግዳስ ኣብ እዋን ትንተናን ኣብ ምሉእ መጽናዕትን ቅጽል ስም (Unreal names) ክጥቀም እየ።

ኣብቲ መጽናዕቲ ክትሳተፉ ፍቓደኛታት እንተኾይንኩም፡ ኣብ ጽድዖ ሰሚስተር 2022 ሰለስተ ግዜ ቃለ መጻኢት ክግበረልኩም እየ። ኣብቲ ናይ ፎኮስ ግሩፕ ዘተ ድማ ሓዲ ግዜ ክትሳተፉ ኢኹም። ብዛዕባ እቲ መጽናዕትን ኣብቲ መጽናዕቲ ክትገብርዎ እትክእሉ ተሳትፎን ክዛረብ ዕድል እንተዝረከብ ብሓገስ ምተቐበልኩ። ብኢሙይል፡ samueldermas@ku.edu ወይ ብቑጽሪ ሞባይል፡ 316-339-3254 ክትረኽቡዎ ትክእሉ ኢኹም። በጃኹም ኣብ ዝጥዕሙኩም ግዜ መዓስ ክንዛረብ ከም እንክእል ኣፍልጡኒ።

ስለቲ ግዜኻ የቐንዩልና!

ብቐንዕና፣

ሳሙኤል ሃብተማርያም