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# Exploring the Experiences of High School Refugee English Language Learners

Gabrielle Chelette

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EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF HIGH SCHOOL REFUGEE ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
LEARNERS

by

Gabrielle Chelette

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for graduation with Honors in the Education

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Aliza Fones  
Thesis Mentor

Fall 2018

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the  
Education have been completed.

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Laurie J. Croft  
Education Honors Advisor

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## Abstract

The purpose of my project was to explore the experiences of refugee English Language Learner (ELL) students. The importance of this topic is that refugees have unique needs based on past experiences. Also, teachers might not be experts on refugees and why they left their home country. Finally, we are experiencing an influx of refugees coming to America which makes it imperative to learn to create the best learning environment for these students. My research question is: What are the experiences of high school ELL students? To begin my research I first had to submit an Internal Review Board application. Once I received the approval, my mentor sought out an appropriate school setting to conduct my research. I then did weekly classroom observations for one period, over the course of six weeks, and held weekly meetings with the cooperating teacher for an additional period every week. A questionnaire was composed and distributed to gather data and seek out student who were refugees and would be willing to discuss their experiences in an interview with me. The cooperating teacher, my research mentor and I narrowed down the students who would be best to interview based on scheduling and anticipated experiences that would contribute to my research. I wrote questions and after receiving the approval of my mentor did a pilot interview. After the pilot interview I met with the students, interviewed them separately, transcribed and recorded the interviews. I coded the transcripts and used open and thematic coding to analyze my results. I found that the students came from very different backgrounds leaving their home country because of violence, starvation or possible political persecution. All students had kinetic refugee movements, where they did not have to leave suddenly and had time to prepare for their immigration. Students' socioeconomic classes were all in the middle class, but each student fell into a different pattern

of immigration. The big take away for teachers is the importance of getting to know your students, creating bonds between your students, yourself and the class to encourage a sense of belonging which has been tied to greater overall achievement for refugees in the classroom. Knowing your student's experiences helps to create these bonds and contributes to best practice as a teacher.

The needs of refugee students are different than that of a conventional student, or even than that of a voluntary immigrant. In some instances, in the US refers to refugees as illegal immigrants even though they fit the bill for the United Nation's definition of refugees (McBrien, 2005). The issue with this is that these students no longer have the same legal rights and protections that are afforded to refugees in America. These needs of refugee students are often greater than what can be completely addressed by our current school system: "The myriad of challenges and constraints presented to refugee families upon arrival in the US suggest a rationale for understanding how these factors intersect" (Roxas and Roy, 2012).

The purpose of this project is to explore the experiences of refugee high school students in a midwestern college town. The goal of this project is to learn more about refugee high school students' lives both in and out of school, which can help teachers have better understanding of these students and how to provide more meaningful instruction. When refugees were asked why they left their country, "more than 50 different reasons were given, ranging from former regime and ideological opposition to communism, to desires for family reunification, better education for their children, and an improved standard of living" (Rumbaut, 1991). The importance of this is that no matter how well-educated teachers are on the topic of refugees they might not be an expert on the reason the students left. Therefore, by learning how to be inclusive, accepting and

My research is unique in that I will be conducting qualitative action-based research that examines the needs of refugee high school students through the experiences that they share. The needs of these students will be different because of their age (high school students), location (Midwest America) the resources that are available to these students and the limited ethnic enclaves that are available to them. I want to know the difficulties that these refugee students

face in and out of the classroom that impact their learning so that schools and educators are better able to tailor their instruction and assistance to provide the best academic atmosphere for these students.

In order to portray the status of research on the experiences of refugee English Language Learners (ELLs), I devised three categories from the qualitative and quantitative research that I reviewed. In the first category, I discuss the intersection of socio-economic status, adjustment, race, and political status within the lives of refugee students. The second category is where I focus on the diverse needs of a refugee student specifically their emotional health. The final category is where I examine the academic needs of refugee students.

My drive to conduct this research project with immigrant refugee students was based on an experience I had at a practicum at another, Midwest Iowa high school. During this practicum I was shocked at how many students were struggling with attendance, staying awake in class, keeping up with work, managing past experiences and stress . After, discussing my findings with my cooperating teacher she reflected that most of these students have had experiences that have not been explored. As a result, there is a need for teachers to be trained on how to specifically work with refugees. As I conducted my research project which just begins to scrape the surface of the issues that these students face on a daily basis I realized that there were themes that needed to be addressed. First, the intersection of socio-economic status, adjustment, race and political status is the starting point for understanding refugees. Next, we must examine refugees' emotional health. Finally, we can tackle the diverse academic needs of these student. These are not all of the issues that are affecting refugees, but it is a starting point.

## Literature Review

### **Intersection of Socio-Economic status, Adjustment, Race, and Political status on Refugees**

Before one can understand the intersections of socio-economic status, adjustment, race, and political status within the lives of refugee students one must examine migration. Migration is about more than a push and pull perspective; it's about obstacles that can impede the transition to a new place such as physical barriers, distance, cost and immigration laws (Pedraza-Bailey, 1985). Refugees' migration is all about whether the refugees had to leave suddenly or if it was taking a long time to develop a situation. To address this, Kunz (1993) developed two models of refugees: motivational and kinetic. These are based on the difference between acute and anticipatory refugee movements. Acute refugee movement is connected to motivation models of refugees because the refugees are motivated to leave quickly because of a sudden political situation such as an overthrown government. Other situations take much longer to develop and therefore the kinetic refugees make anticipatory movements being able to plan for longer periods of time before they must leave their country (Kunz, 1973).

Socio-economic status plays a role in where students are able to settle, in order to understand this more we must examine the immigration patterns. Immigrants often fall into three possible immigration patterns based on political, social and economic factors. The first pattern is upward mobility; in America this is seen as assimilation into the White middle-class. The second pattern is of ethnic solidarity and upward mobility; this is where immigrants settle with people of the same ethnicity and find support through policies spearheaded through the government and socially. The final pattern is an unsuccessful assimilation into poverty, see usually in the inner-city. If the US does not recognize these students as refugees then, parents must settle them in

areas that have high unemployment and crime (McBrien, 2005). If we examine the Cuban refugees that settled in Florida it clear that most of the refugees would be classified in the second immigration pattern this is because there is a large amount of ethnic Cubans located in Miami therefor areas such as Little Havana have developed (Pedraza-Bailey 1985). However, the refugees I am interested in studying have mostly fallen into the final pattern of immigration. In the schools in Iowa in the small city that I am in this is the group of students that I see struggling the most.

In Johnson County, Iowa there are immigrant and refugee services that help with adjustment providing legal aid, advocacy for low wage workers, citizenship classes and English as a Second Language classes (Immigrant Refugee Services, 2017). However, this is not enough support to help the adjustment of the students. When students who are refugees from another country come they are often grouped together by race with the existing students however being African American and being an African refugee for instance are totally different. The ethnic, linguistic, and social backgrounds are very different and by grouping these students together it highlights those differences (Olsen, 1997). This is significant because by grouping these students by race we are effectively diminishing these students' unique cultures. Teachers need to place value on students' culture to ensure that students adjust and feel connected to their school (Kia-Keating and Ellis, 2007).

### **Refugees' Emotional Health**

Refugee students' emotional health is affected by a lot of different factors. Policies are needed for mental health to improve however because its' hard to measure objectively most policies are made to promote the things that can be objectively measure such as welfare dependency, economic "self-sufficiency" and employment rates. However, these things that can be

objectively measured are influenced by mental health. Psychological distress has been linked to alienation and powerlessness regardless of networks of social emotional structures. It is known that that women and unmarried people have higher levels of stress, while people with higher incomes have lower stress (Rumbaut, 1991). It is also known that the more adverse life events the higher amounts of distress that people report. The overloading of refugees is seen when they are expected to find shelter, work, survive, learn a different language, crawl out of poverty, adjust to a new life while facing racism, minority status, constant worry and shock of this new life. Some refugees also are faced with survivors' guilt, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, as well as anxiety and depression. Expectations are usually lower for these students, who face isolation and rejection daily (Roxas and Roy, 2012).

Role reversal of parents and children is common which causes tensions later on because refugee children become the parents in a sense taking over the responsibilities of writing checks, service organizations and doctors' visits having to translate the needs of their families. This becomes stressful later on when the parents learn more English and they try to switch the roles back (McBrien, 2005).

Education is crucial for bringing normalcy back to students lives and starting the emotional and social healing process (Sinclair, 2001). This was seen in the evaluation of the Rapid Response Education Program that was created in response to provide support for students from Freetown, Sierra Leone. This was after the violence in 1999. Students with access to education began exhibiting signs of healing within two weeks.

However, with education there are issues when teachers are not properly trained to understand and work with refugee students. The students suffer because of this stereotypes, misunderstandings, prejudice and discrimination can result. This discrimination affects the

acculturation process (McBrien, 2005). Acculturation is the natural change that occurs when a culturally similar group or individual makes contact with a different culture. There are two kinds of acculturation that refugees can experience: sociological and psychological. Sociological acculturation is the societal change that a refugee family is faced with when they come to America and no longer have the skilled or higher status jobs that they once had in another country. Psychological acculturation is where stress is often seen leading to depression or anxiety when trying to adapt to a new culture.

### **Academic Needs of Refugee Students**

When teachers and teacher aids are not trained to understand the issues faced by refugee children in their classrooms, they are prone to speaking or behaving in insensitive ways that bring about embarrassment, shame, or depression in the students (Trueba et al. 1990). Children who have undergone psychological trauma then are exposed to education it helps emotional and social healing by giving hope and promoting a sense of normalcy. Correlation between insufficient English skills and alienation is strong. Lack of transportation leads to alienation from activities. “White students who were interviewed indicated xenophobic beliefs that immigrant students would initiate violence” (McBrien, 2005) This is significant because then Refugee children move between feelings of depression, isolation, and panic (McBrien, 2005). School can be a safe place for students to prepare for new transitions. Resource rooms help to address different languages and English learning, many adults realize that ELL classes are the key to being able to speak English and get good jobs, therefore many parents have their students participate in these classes. New comers must learn the language in order to learn how to make

use of the services and jobs that the country has to offer. The key to preventing conflict is to teach both parents and children English.

These research studies focused on their academic achievement, reception of students at students; struggles they face in home, school and communities. Children are sometimes only allowed to attend schools interruptedly if they cannot pay school fee. “The lives of these young men are complicated in so many ways by their interactions with their teachers and peers at school, by their race and class, and by their life experiences as refugees in transition (Roxas and Roy, 2012).” Structure of the welfare system, and school system impact more than just students. The interpersonal issues impact more than refugee students as well.

Students suffer from dislocation and trauma from living in refugee camps in addition to fleeing a war. They struggle with mainstream subjects, learning English, adjusting to new social conditions, education system, and potential loss of culture. This can lead to behavioral issues such as anxiety, hyperactivity, aggressiveness, withdrawn, or unable to concentrate (Miller, Mitchell, and Brown, 2005). Many students do not live with both parents. Secondary students, only a small fraction of them had interrupted schooling. Decisions about which classes students should be placed in are sometimes made by evaluating students’ oral proficiency which sometimes is not adequate for painting an overall picture of the students’ linguistic ability. Language proficiency 3-5 years for English but it takes 7 years to gain academic English Proficiency. Teachers are overwhelmed, lack appropriate resources and find that they have tense teacher to teacher relationships concerning ELL students. Students who come from literate cultures have an easier time typically than students who come from oral cultural traditions.

Family size influences a child’s GPA often with larger families resulting in lower GPAs for the individual students. For the Indochinese students who are refugees, homework is seen as

a priority. It is the students home responsibility to do homework, they do not have household chores, and spent a lot of time doing homework with siblings. It is common to find the older siblings helping the younger siblings with homework after dinner. Homework is seen as a family affair. Parental English literacy skills are not viewed as the be all end all to children's achievement. Parents may read in their native language or simply share emotional and cultural connections with their children that help contribute to their child's success (Caplan, Choy and Whitmore, 2007).

The more students feel like they belong in a school, the better the students do emotionally. They have higher self-efficacy and lower depression no matter the amount of exposure to adverse situations. The more attached, involved and committed the students were to their school the higher the students believed they could perform (Kia-Keating and Ellis, 2007).

### **Methodology**

The idea for this project started when I was doing my undergraduate ELL placement at a local high school for practicum. I realized that English Language Learner students, especially refugee students, had experiences that were vastly different from mine yet were going mostly unexplored. When I had the opportunity to pick a research subject for my honors research project I knew I wanted to explore the refugee students' experiences more.

For my project, I first did a pilot interview to practice interviewing, and to gauge the appropriate wording and flow of the interview. This will allow me to make any necessary adjustments to my interview questions and the order in which I asked the questions. After my pilot interview, I conducted one semi-structured interview with three refugee high school students. The interview took between 10 and 20 minutes in length and will take place at their high school. The semi-structured interview included questions about students' school day (i.e., what classes they take, who they spend time with) and their daily life (i.e., out of school activities, community involvement).

### **Participants and Setting**

The three students that I selected were a result of input from a Questionnaire that I generated (these questions can be seen in the Appendix), to get additional information about the students in my cooperating teacher's class and to provide me with more background for my interviews. These students indicated that they would willingly participate in my research and share their experiences knowing that no compensation of any kind would be provided. The answers that I received opened my eyes to the differences in lifestyles, responsibilities and educational backgrounds that these ELL students have. The Midwest High School I decided to use for my research is a school that reports their demographics as 63.0% White, 0.2 % Native

American, 17.8 % Black, 7.2 % Asian, 6.3 % Hispanic, 0.2 % Pacific Islander, and 5.3% Multi-Racial. The school has a Free or Reduced Lunch Population of 24.7 %. Its English Language Learners program is 5.8% of the school's total population (educateiowa.gov, 2018). In Fall 2018 I visited the ELL classroom and observed 45 minutes a week, which is equal to one period, for 6 weeks. I also made sure to communicate with my cooperating teacher (I met with her for 45 minutes a week as well) and mentor on a weekly basis. This allowed me to collaborate about students, policies and the community actions that could possibly have affected my research. This additionally provided me an opportunity to gain a more holistic approach. As stated in Merriam, "In a qualitative case study of a community school program, for example, a holistic picture of the program would involve the experiences and perceptions of people having different associations with the program" (Merriam, 2009).

#### **Data Sources.**

Data was gathered during three interviews I conducted with students. I did one with each student which lasted 10-20 minutes long. The semi-structured interviews included questions about students' school day (i.e., what classes they take, who they spend time with) and their daily life (i.e., out of school activities, community involvement). I did audio record the interviews, I took notes additionally and transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews. I also coded the interviews after while reading through the transcriptions. I manually coded instead of using software to code. This way I could pick up on patterns that I might not have thought of before. The coding that was used was open and thematic coding (Merriam, 2009)

**Data Analysis.**

Data Analysis was done after coding. I looked at the information that I had found and looked at what my research indicated were the most pressing issues that refugees face. The issues that appeared most frequently were stemming from the Mother code of Emotional Issues. The daughter codes from that, Trauma/ Past Experiences, Fear, Feelings about coming to the US. Emotional Issues were present with all of the students that were interviewed.

## **Results and Discussion**

I interviewed three students Aida, Mohamad, and Banga (pseudonyms). Each student came from a different country in Africa. Aida came from Ethiopia, Mohamad from Guinea and Banga from Zimbabwe. The students each came from vastly different socioeconomic backgrounds Aida being from a higher class, Mohamad middle class and Banga from lower class. Aida is more middle class in America, but still maintains a higher position than Mohamad while Banga is still in a lower class. I used open coding and thematic coding to analyze the transcripts and results.

### **Open Coding**

#### **Identity change**

When Aida was interviewed she explained that she had undergone a personality change. This caught my attention because a change in identity usually comes from a significant event in one's life. Aida describes her identity change, "Yes, that began after I came here. When I was in back home I used to love to talk to people. Like there and here everything is different."

As it was in Ethiopia she was a very talkative and open person, however she began to resonate with a closed off identity in America. Aida said, "I have so many cousins that I grew up with there and I would tell and share my day. So when I was there I was a different person. But now that I came here I am more like a silent person. Quiet person."

She used to be a people person which has changed with the move to America, "Okay the past me I loved to share my ideas with everyone, open person, that's what everyone told me, smart, my senior year my GPA was 4.0 and like on the national exam I scored in the top percent of the whole country. And like I'm like that person I love people so much." She has succumbed to her new identity, as she says "The now me is like a quiet person. Start to be serious."

#### **Emotional issues**

Emotional Issues can be seen in different parts of Aida's interview. The first time it can be seen is when she talks about the cultural differences with physical contact in America. Coming from a tribal background in which everyone is considered family it was difficult to understand the idea that in America physical contact is not made readily with everyone. As stated in the interview, "There like everyone is family, even here when you want to hug your friend when you walk with your friend in the hallway like everyone things something different here. But there everything is fine. You can hug you can do whatever you want your friend, and nobody will think anything weird."

Emotional issues for Aida can be seen additionally when we talk about her being a refugee, she is torn between the idea of what constitutes a refugee. Coming from a family who was stable financially, she was a political refugee who was helped to leave through the support of the U.N. As quoted from the interview,

"I see a lot of refugees there like Somalin they even have a camp, not a big camp like in Kenya it's a very small camp, but you feel so bad when you see them like am I refuge? Like they are a real refugee; they don't have home, they don't have job, they don't have nothing they don't even speak our language. They just stay there because they can't do anything. There are other refugee that are from Eritrea. Eritrea was like our country, but it was taken over by the government that is Ethiopia now. The government is okay with our government now because we have a new Prime Minster now he is fixing everything now."

## **Fear**

Mohamad was the only student who was afraid. He describes himself as someone who is “shy, talk too much.. scared.” He was not comfortable talking about what he was afraid of. As we began to speak more I realized he was dealing with past issues/trauma.

### **Dealing with past issues/trauma**

Mohamad’s favorite thing about Iowa City was that “it’s quiet” and “there’s not too much violence.” When prompted to elaborate, he divulged that everyday in Guinea there was a lot of violence. He describes that its violent “Most of the time. Cause even the army there , its because of the President that this is all happening.” The political unrest and tensions, make it hard to escape the violence. “For no reason, you’ll be just walking, or capture a lot of people and just take them somewhere.” He makes it clear that the only way to survive is to stay at home, “They’ll see you out of nowhere and just beat you to death.”

Banga’s past issues were with war and starvation. This is significant because it shows that those are struggles he had to live with which is important because these are struggles that not every immigrant has had to live through and what makes a refugee immigrant ELL student different. As quoted from Banga, “It was like in the old days my parents were running from war in the Congo. In the Congo my two sisters were born, they were born in Congo then my parents moved to Zambia. That’s when I was born, and then it wasn’t long before we moved to Zimbabwe, I lived for nine years. That’s what I really remember. And that a when my little brother was born. That was in Zimbabwe. Like when we were moving all of our friends, they were crying, my dad wanted to move because of war and us to have education. And a better life so we would avoid war and starvation.”

Aida carries the emotional pain with her having witnessed other refugees living in extreme poverty she references it in her interview. Aida, “But the first Prime Minster he had a

big problem because both governments don't like each other. To come from Eritrea to Ethiopia you can't so, Eritrea people will walk from Eritrea to Ethiopia there is no shelter to sleep or something they just walk in the night and sleep on the ground to escape from the soldiers they are just shoot, shooting, it comes with me here but I've never been in camps."

It is important to recognize and to acknowledge the pain that these students have gone through it allows the students to sit with their discomfort but eventually move forward from it.

### **Roles and Responsibilities in Family**

All of the students reflected similar responsibilities, cooking, and taking care of siblings. This indicated that these roles are expected to be fulfilled. As Aida said, "Yes, so I am the oldest girl for now, I take care of the home too, if my mom is cooking I help her cook. If my mom is not there I cook, I help get my sister ready braid her hair." Mohamad his duties are contingent on him not having a job, "I mean I don't have a job right now so I just help my sister cook." Banga his is helping take care of the youngest child, "help my siblings cause my parents work. Take care of my brother he is two years old now." Because these students have additional home responsibilities that are often tied to culture it is valuable to know that when assigning homework and extra tasks for after school.

## **Thematic Coding**

### **Intersection of socio-economic status, adjustment, race and political status of refugees**

#### **Financial issues**

Banga was the only student to talk about financial issues. For him it was highlighted in an inability to pay for club soccer which is often used to help bolster players chances of getting recruited for college. As Banga said,

“There is no soccer team for me anymore in town and my coach visited me last year he was planning on making a team for us here that was similar to the one we had here but yeah that one was free but now all the clubs here... so expensive, every year you have to pay money, so expensive. On that team we didn’t have to pay at all. Cause he was trying to help people get scholarships especially refugees.”

This highlights a socio-economic struggle that refugees must overcome, having escaped war and starvation there is not extra money for soccer opportunities that have no guarantees about scholarships.

### **Relationships with teachers**

Mohamad and Banga both wanted to see teachers be more understanding of them as refugees and of immigrants. Mohamad’s advice to teachers was, “Take some time to get to know your students a lot better. Just like slow down, some teachers take it too fast. Slow down make sure they are knowing things. Make sure they know every step of the way.”

Banga wanted teachers to focus more on helping students with vocabulary and pronunciation. As quoted from the interview, “They might not know some of the words so you gotta know how to help them understand the words. Their accent might be different so you just gotta listen better. Their accent might make it sound like they are saying something else. I think that’s it.”

These quotes are important because they illustrate the link between relationships with teachers and success in the classroom for refugee ELL students.

### **Leaving Home**

Mohamad and Banga reflected happily on leaving the US. I believe this is because of their status in Africa. Mohamad said, It was fun. It was exciting too, when I first came it was weird when I saw elevators how they go up and come down. Them tall buildings and it was just, it was just so crazy. I wasn't use to seeing tall buildings." Banga reflected on the his journey to America as well,

"It was like, when I was coming, it was like, we were like in an airplane there were like video games and we didn't know what they were. So we just like kept using the controls and it was like so fun, my family members enjoyed it. Then we went to a house they had chicken on the table, they gave us me a soccer ball, my brother a basketball, and my other brother a football. We were like enjoying that day and then we couldn't sleep we were so excited. Then the next day we spent making our bed, putting stuff away and putting stuff in the freezer."

Leaving for them represented a new, life, new beginning and hope. They were moving to a better, life away from violence, war and starvation however for Aida it represented, leaving a comfortable life with a strong support network that was cultivated through her tribe. As stated in the interview,

"But I was like I've been in very good school since I was kindergarten second grade to grade ten. I was going to like big school, I was living like good life. My mom and dad were working life so nice to keep me in a good way yeah so he come back home and after seven years he goes back again. Life was getting so hard at home. After seven years he got the chance to come to US. It took like a year form when he started the process but he's like a refugee he had a conflict with the government so the UN they like thought it might effect us like the people from the government. The process was so fast, it take like eight months or like six months."

### **Summary of Findings, Implications, Conclusion**

In my research I found the in terms of migration that all of the student were kinetic refugees. This is because they all had a change to anticipate that they needed to leave. However, Aida's father was an example of an acute refugee movement because he was fleeing as a political refugee. Therefore the act of him leaving was much more sudden and navigated through the United Nations. Aida's immigration to the US was also handled by the UN because of the possible ramifications of her fathers actions denying Kenya's governments requests. The other students did not have the UN to handle their immigration process and fast track it. The motivation for leaving their countries was violence, starvation and possible political persecution form the government.

Additionally, I found the socioeconomic classes of each of the students that were interviewed were very different. The only student who found his status remaining almost unchanged coming to America was Mohamad. When he came to America he was coming out of a middle class household. He still has a middle class family in America. His family does not spend time with other people from Guinea, and therefore because of income and living situations he falls into the first pattern of upward mobility as his family is assimilating to the White middle class as McBrien defines it (McBrien, 2005). Banga by contrast has moved into the lower middle class while coming to America, he is no longer starving and living in absolute poverty. His family is still struggling financially, and his family is quite large, they have not had a successful assimilation in terms of moving into what is seen as the White middle class. Aida is in the middle class but because of her continual connection to her ethnic roots she would be categorized in the second immigration pattern outlined by McBrien.

The implications of my data is really the importance of teachers taking time to develop relationships with their students. All the students emphasized that they wish the teachers took time to get to know them to understand their backgrounds. This is important no matter what age students teachers have. The students need to feel like they belong in the classroom. When student feel like they belong in their classroom they do exponentially better. When they feel connected to the school, they come to class, they aren't sleeping, they are engaged- this is what we want as teachers. Schools are safe havens for refugee children. It helps establish a sense of normalcy and routine in refugees' lives that they might not have had for a long time. Mohamad for a long time had interrupted schooling because of the extreme violence in Guinea. Most of the time he did not attend school.

In conclusion, each student interviewed was a refugee, but it is clear that each one of their experiences were different. The students still carry the pain and memories but also the joy that they had in their home countries. It's imperative that teachers recognize the unique backgrounds that all of their students come from and work with them to develop relationships with their students. These relationships help not only the adjustment period but benefit both parties as it also develops the teachers understanding of situations that they have not experienced.

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**Appendices**

Appendix A: Student questionnaire questions.....pg 25

Appendix B: Interview questions.....pg 26

**Appendix A: Questionnaire Questions**

1. What is your student ID number?

2. What grade are you in?
3. Where were you born?
4. What language do you speak at home?
5. When did you come to Iowa?
6. Do you work?
7. What do you do after school?
8. How many times have you moved in your life?
9. How many different schools have you gone to?
10. Was there ever a time that you didn't go to school?
11. If you did not go to school for a period of time can you explain why?
12. Do you plan on going to college?
13. What responsibilities do you have at home?
14. Who is in your family in Iowa?
15. Were either of your parents a refugee?
16. Would you be willing to meet and talk with Ms. Gabby about your experiences?
17. Please add any additional thoughts or questions you have.

### **Appendix B: Interview Questions**

1. What's your favorite thing to do when you are not at school?

2. Can you give me three words to describe yourself?
3. Can you tell me about your experience coming to the U.S.?
  - a. What do you remember?
  - b. Who was with you? Who was not with you?
  - c. Do you remember why you left?
4. How long did coming to the U.S. take, days, weeks, months, years?
  - a. Did you go anywhere else in before you came to the U.S.?
  - b. Did you go anywhere in the U.S. before you came to Iowa?
5. What do you like about living in Iowa City? Does your family spend time with people who are from the same country as you?
6. What is difficult for you here?
7. Who helps you when you are having hard times here? What helps you feel better?
8. What do you have to help your family with when you are at home?
9. Who do you mostly hang out with at school?
10. What languages do you speak with your friends?
11. What languages do you speak at home?
12. What languages do you speak outside of school?
13. Is your family religious?
14. Can you describe a typical day for me from the time you wake up till you go to bed?
15. Do you have any questions for me?