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A Heuristic Study On Successful Ethiopian Refugees In British Columbia:  
Identity And The Role Of Community

by

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Faculty of Education

We accept this dissertation as conforming  
to the required standard

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### ABSTRACT

This is a heuristic study about successful Ethiopian refugees in British Columbia. Heuristic research is another building block of phenomenological inquiry; it permits the researcher to discover his/her lived-experience within the phenomena. This research explores and discovers the lived-experiences of participants as articulated feelings and views on their sense of identity. Each participant's stories stand for the realities of who they are and how they made the transition of reconstructing their identity as a means of assimilating into Canadian society. Furthermore, their stories describe the patterns and processes of negotiation and re-negotiation of their identity in order to become successful in their new social environment.

This research highlights ten participants' processes of adapting into a new environment, reconstructing their identity, and embracing change. Although the explored experiences represent only those who made a successful transition and reached a high degree of adaptation and assimilation in Canadian society, the results of this study provide a deeper understanding of Ethiopians in general, the integral role of culture, and its influence on individual identity to most immigrants. The study provides imperative information, as told by Ethiopians, to community,

practitioners, professionals, and scholars as well as adds new knowledge about the complexity of Ethiopian immigrants' stories as no one had asked them before this study.

The study found that participants whose tribal background was considered to be of a minority and experienced oppression and discrimination by the dominant tribe in Ethiopia, coped well with reconstruction of identity as well as with barriers in the Western world. Those who were rooted from the dominant tribe in Ethiopia, experienced adaptation and assimilation in the Western world difficult and at times intolerable. Similarly, the individual definitions of success and failure are associated with the strength of, or in-depth knowledge of one's sources of identity and the degree of connectedness and interdependency. The findings are comparable to explanations of identity patterns (individual, cultural, social, and political) found in similar studies of immigrants or refugees. However, one may notice that none of the participants in this study were from the same tribe and each participant's experiences and meanings either in Ethiopia or Canada are different. Nonetheless, the general sense of identity, roles, and influences of community found in this study validated the explanations and definitions posited in the literature (i.e., associated factors for self definition as well as influences on social and cultural identity). Furthermore, the extracted meanings also have confirmed sources of identity as being congruent to the adopted theory of this

research as it linked to their roots, exposure to diversity, and creativeness not only in determining their skills of accepting or rejecting their new social, cultural, and economic values, but also allowing them to select (filter) values and beliefs that are desirable to become a member of the community in their new country.

Examiners:

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The construction of an identity is fundamental in human development. It is, in my opinion, a means to develop a sense of purpose, commitment to the community, and achieve one's full potential. Undoubtedly, we learn about ourselves by reflecting on our experiences. It is through the process of knowing and restructuring these experiences that we arrive at the point of defining ourselves. However, these definitions are not stagnant, they change overtime. These changes make the concept of identity very complex because we are constantly adjusting and fine-tuning our reactions to situations and our way of being and becoming in reference to others.

In my opinion, identity is a process of knowing. We did not have our sense of identity before our parents gave us the first name they wanted us to be called. Gradually, we have adopted the name to become one of our many identities (i.e., gender, age, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture, occupation, status, ability, and so on). These other parts of our identities are also adopted overtime as we learn how to integrate the myriad of pieces that collectively make us who we are. Therefore, our identities require us to give thought to who we are, who we have become, and what this means in terms of who we choose to be (Robinson, 1999).

This introduction is divided into several sections. It includes descriptions of my sense of identity, personal experiences, contrasting views of identity,

definition of terms, rationale and purpose of the study, the importance of the study, as well as the methodological approaches to the study.

### My Sense Of Identity

I identify myself as an African who was born and raised in East Africa in a country called Ethiopia. In my memory, Ethiopia is a home of invaluable archeological discoveries, magnificent church monasteries and mosques. Like most African countries, Ethiopia is diverse in its population. It is home for many tribal groups, traditions, languages, and beliefs. All of these aspects are recognized as having unique characteristics, moral codes, values, beliefs, languages and dialects that influence both social and individual identity construction of its members. In the end, the tribe is the group that affirms the individual and the community's uniqueness in relation to others.

Prior to 1974, Ethiopians relied heavily on their tribe and community members to define their personal and social identities, as well as their sense of safety and security. The community within the tribes have existed the same way for thousands of years.

The cultural diversity of Ethiopia is complex and cannot be regarded as homogeneous. There are enormous traditional, behavioral, and physical differences among Ethiopians. It is difficult to draw a generalized identity for Ethiopians because of the many customs, tribes, and traditions within.

However, identity for each tribal community is an important component for survival. Each member is expected to assume roles, behaviors, and commitments in order to strengthen the kinship, family, and community relationships in addition to being productive and maintaining tribal philosophy (Lewis, 1997).

The acquisition of distinct individual and social identity in Ethiopia, in this sense, takes place within the worldview of tribes, clans, and community. The assumption is that the acquired behavior, knowledge, and skills of each individual are framed by the history of tribal taboos, legends, myths, and religion. Identity therefore, is transmitted and absorbed through the process of intense experiences such as “rites of passage.” The intensity of these experiences not only influences the individual identity, transmitting the core values of the tribe, but also safeguards the course of life events within the tribe (Gelfand, 1964). Nonetheless, the design, the construction, and claim of identity are processes that involve the whole community and in most tribes, may only be achieved through ceremony and rituals of their ancestors. There is no room for social misfits (Achebe, 1958).

Identity in my country is about morality, values, beliefs, and the maintenance of tribal harmony. Such an identity is powerful because it prescribes moral codes, standards, values, and beliefs on its members. It operates as the judge and jury in order to determine the behavior and personal characteristics of the community. That is why collective identity is one of the most important units in shaping identity for Ethiopians. Tribal identity is also significant because it is

integral in determining opportunities within the Ethiopian social, political and economic arena (Haviland, 1991; Last & Chavunduka, 1986; Lewis, 1997). This is the kind of society that I was raised in and with which I identify.

Ethiopians are identified as a society that is multicultural in its nature, multi-lingual, multi-faith, having multi-tones of skin color. Relatively, everyone lived in peace and harmony until 1974. In 1974, the country went through political turmoil. This sudden political and military change within the governing body transformed the nation's historical traditions and the livelihoods of its people. Collective identity became a detrimental factor determining who lived and who died. Many people from all parts of Ethiopia, regardless of their tribal identity, were terrorized, imprisoned, and killed. For most people, including myself, there were no justified reasons other than our identity was designated as anarchist by the military. As a result, people in general became suspicious of one another; they lost confidence, trust, and faith in their individual and collective identity(ies). These feelings were focused not only towards their tribal members but also to their extended families. In fact, in the process, everyone feared and gradually avoided revealing their identity and connections. My own experience provides an example of this.



Figure 1. This painting keeps Ethiopians awake, reminding them of their past; the brutality and horrifying conduct of the military Government. Thousands were executed, imprisoned, and tortured. (I took this picture in 1997 on my visit to the monument of the 60 officials executed in 1974 at Addis Ababa Cathedral.)

### Personal Experience

In the Western view, I was imprisoned and tortured where, from an Ethiopian perspective, I was simply punished regardless of right or wrong. The military regime invaded my residence, kidnapped me, and shortly after, tied me to the top of their truck, and I was displayed as an anarchist throughout the city. I was labeled as the number one enemy of the country. People spit and threw stones at me while I was displayed on the back of the truck. My community and tribe members rejected me because they perceived that I had shamed them. It is about the honour of the collective to which I belong. Such community and tribal shame gave strong approval for the Government to further torture, imprison, and even kill me. I spent some time in prison for crimes I never committed. With help from my immediate family, I was temporarily freed. That same day I fled my country. After a difficult journey of thirty-two days, I escaped to another country and became a refugee.

Some of us who managed to survive the brutal action of the Government eventually escaped and migrated out of Ethiopia. As a result, we all gained a new identity called "refugees." I was one of those lucky ones. Eventually, some of us (I am referring to myself and the people I know of) immigrated to Western countries. I came to Canada with physical, psychological, and emotional scars. Nevertheless, my purpose to come to Canada was only to seek temporary safety and security, with the thought that as soon as the dictatorial government left power, I would

return home and regain my social, intellectual, and personal identities. This intent, over the years, became unreal to me because of the new identity I had adopted; I was now “Canadian.”

Throughout my experiences in Canada, I do not feel, deep inside me, that I have changed my identity or the traditional values, beliefs, and behavioural characteristics that initially shaped me. Instead, I have learned to meet the expectations of the Canadian society in order to survive. After all, it was my choice to live in Canada and, therefore, I consciously chose to adapt to my environment.

#### Contrasting Views Of Identity

It is my belief that all identities are socially constructed by way of discourses. Discourses position individuals in power relations with one another. As a result, I am convinced that identities are formed based on a set of ideas and structuring statements that underlie and give meaning to social practices.

Identity has been a fascinating phenomenon for scholars in different schools of thought or fields of study such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and in professions such as teaching, counselling, and many human service practices. Most of these schools of thought and professions have dissected and fragmented the many layers of identity. The Western perspective of identity as defined by the many categories that make up an individual in Western society fail to account for the identity construction of Ethiopians. Nowhere in the Western

literature on identity did I find concepts that describe or relate to Ethiopians or their perspective of identity, other than that of a broadly generalized African identity evolved from the domination and colonization of Africa.

Even those generalized frames of reference lacked information about the role of community members in the process of marking and/or laying foundation as individuals design/redesign, construct/reconstruct, and finally claim identity. Of course, the literature has shown the social, group, cultural, ethnic, and racial identity as well as the political influence on the individuals' sense of self and their overall identity development; yet the factors associated with defining and interpreting identity do not apply to Ethiopian descriptions and conditions of what identity means. However, for Western scholars, these factors (social, group, culture, ethnicity, race, and political influence) help them to focus their lenses on the compartments they want to see. On the other hand, the unobserved parts of identity compartments—those of which are significant to non-Western or Ethiopians' formation of identity—are wrapped up in generalized Western assumptions. Thus, the description and definition of Western observers often contradict an Ethiopian or African sense of identity. For example, Steiner and Garnher (1997) articulate how the western assumption of identity is a problem for Africa. They state that:

The power of observation can be both liberating and daunting for we may sense not only how much we can see from certain places but how little we

see when we are elsewhere. In so doing, assume that your view is somehow “real” or “true” and that your perception is “total” and “collective.” It is that our views are largely determined by the structures of observation. When we look at something we always, necessarily, look from somewhere else: Pure vision is an illusion. “There is no vision without purpose,” for the “world is already clothed in our systems of representation” within the structures that frame our perception (pp. 1-2).

From my philosophical standpoint, identity is not about polishing one’s own statue; rather, it is about participating, connecting, and transmitting responsibility, values, beliefs, and roles to the next generation. Amongst Ethiopians, self-identity cannot be isolated from culture, religion, tribe, family, and community. Due to this firm resistance, we experience difficulty in relating to Western concepts of individualism and/or collectivism because, for Ethiopians, the Western notion of identity symbolizes the political, social, and economic hierarchy, or a systematically conditional membership. Such an approach therefore limits the sense of community and neighbourhood possible, because some may not fit into the criteria of membership and may fail to meet the conditions attached to the collective identity. Consequently, one may resent or not be able to identify as a functioning or contributing member of the neighbourhood or the community. Often this leads to individual or family loneliness structurally forcing them to remain locked in, in isolated living quarters. As a result, either individuals or

families have no possibility of knowing their community members or neighbours, of freely and instinctively participating (significant to Ethiopians in order to establish and maintain the safety and security of the neighbourhood), to rear children, and to help the elderly. For example, how often do we hear that a child is missing or abducted in the West? For Ethiopians, such an event is unheard of because there is an absolute believe that it takes the whole village and/or the community to raise, secure, and nurture a child.

What this suggests to me is that, in a Western view, identity may be a collection of elements that construct an individual's identity. Yet these elements and everything that make up the individual have to be separated and put into different compartments, in order to make sense of the self. For Ethiopians, however, such compartmentalization cuts the person's connection to his or her source of being and becoming. In an Ethiopian's view, everything is associated by way of interconnectedness, interdependence, and differences within the patterns of the natural world that shape the web of life. These cannot be separated. Therefore, for us and for most Africans, individual identity or the separated and/or fragmented identity is meaningless due to the assumption that such an understanding does not account for the collective (tribe, culture, religion, community, and family) attributes. This is because self is connected, related and dependent on tribes, culture, religion, community, and family through the processes of role experience and achieved responsibilities. In fact, these bonds are

expressed throughout the course of life by way of sharing not only the living quarters but also by eating together on one plate, sleeping on one bed, and networking. The only distinct individual identity one can hold refers to spirit, such as *ADOKEBERI* and *ZAR (WKABI)*. These identities may indicate some form of personality inventory, which supplements the individual's role in the tribe, community, or family culture.



Figure 2

This is an example of how Ethiopians eat and share space (my family In Ethiopia, 1997).

*Self* is an abstract concept within the social organization of Ethiopia. The self is disciplined to accept roles and responsibilities in terms of reward and punishment, with no questions asked. Such characteristics in Western society are a violation of one's personal, emotional, psychological, and physical wellbeing, and incongruous with the fundamental rights of individuals. The harmonious, courteous, and ritualized relationships that are found in Ethiopia may be difficult for the West to comprehend because such conduct or orientation includes self-sacrifice for the collective, absolute obedience, and forgiveness. Therefore, the Western notion of identity cannot readily translate into or account for the Ethiopian sense of humanness. In fact, the very term identity has no meaning in Ethiopian language or in tribal dialects. This is because the term splits self from community, individualism from connectedness, and internal roles from external roles. On the other hand, these splits are often typical features of Western identity construction. In contrast to the West, Ethiopians maintain their tradition of collectivism and still practice the simplest forms of collectivism as they sit around the table to share their food with the others, as they feed others before themselves, and as they exhort those who stop, to eat more. Westerners rarely do this. Nonetheless, this is just one aspect of relationships for Ethiopians, not seeing oneself as a unique and discrete entity/personality but the embodiment of social networks and relationships with all. In other words, identity is framed in the family, tribe, community, culture, religion, and in nationality.

When identity is individualized as it is in the West, the process of experience and/or the result of experience, pleasant or otherwise, implicates the state of normality or abnormality of the individual. The difference is that for Ethiopians the process of acquiring life skills requires a physical, emotional, psychological, and social challenge. Even torture as experienced in some rites of passage has neither similar translation nor significant psychological or emotional impact, as it is interpreted in the West.

### Definitions

I choose Backer's (1991) definition of the terms that are embedded in this research. According to Backer, *COMMUNITY* is a group of individuals or families that share certain *values*, services, institutions, interests, or geographic proximity. In Amharic (Ethiopian national language), the term refers to *Sefer*, *Mender*, or *Kebele*, which means more or less the same. Role is a culturally determined pattern of behaviour that is prescribed for an individual who occupies a specific status; it *is* also a social norm that is attached to a given social position that dictates reciprocal action. This also interpreted to mean *Mina or Halafinet* to highlight the responsibility.

*IDENTITY* is an individual's sense of self and of uniqueness as well as the basic *integration* and continuity of *values*, *behaviours*, and thoughts that are maintained in varied circumstances. There is no term in Amharic that refers to identity, but the concept of *Maninet* has some relationship to identity; however

often such a concept may indicate tribal location or conduct (i.e., Menzea, Gojame, Gurage, Oromo, and so on).

According to Levinson and Ember (1996), *ADAPTATION* is defined “as cultural traits, or complexes of traits, that enhance the production of individuals who carry these traits or complexes in their head”(p. 4). *ACCULTURATION* “is a cultural process (behavioral), whereas assimilation is a social process (integration)” (p. 112). *ASSIMILATION* “is the process by which individuals of a foreign or minority culture enter the social position of the standard or dominant culture in which they reside” (p. 112).

According to Sills (1968), *ASSIMILATION* “is a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons or groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons or groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life” (p. 438).

According to Barker (1991), *ADAPTATION* is “the active efforts of individuals over their life spans to achieve goodness of fit with their environments to survive, develop, and reproduce” (p. 4). *ASSIMILATION* is “the social integration or adoption of one group’s values, norms, and folkways by other group” (p. 17).

I am aware that the concept of assimilation is often associated with forceful integration resulting in negative experiences for most indigenous people throughout the colonized world. However, for the purposes of this research the

concept fits well to the participants' perceptions of their progresses while living in Canada. It is assumed to be positive amongst refugees,, in order to articulate their survival skills while in the belly of the dominant culture. Thus, Barker's definition fits the intended description of Ethiopian refugees.

*SUCCESS* is defined only within the context of the participants' reference, such as having freedom, family, education, business, helping tribe and community, and learning to speak the English language.

### Rationale and Purpose of the Study

This study examines Ethiopian experiences of assimilation in Canada in order to determine their present sense of identity, and the attached meanings of their past individual and collective identities. Their stories represent their reality and must be understood within the cultural context of their identity production and reproduction. Since the past conditions the present, the present must not be understood as an isolated moment or a "slice of time."

I was interested in finding literature that addressed ways that Western scholars were using the models of fragmented or compartmentalized identities to make sense of Ethiopian identity. This pursuit allowed me to ascertain ways in which Ethiopians, who have settled in Canada, have re-negotiated their identity in order to become successful in the West.

My intention in conducting this research was to hear and document how some Ethiopians have made the leap, especially those who forcefully (not by

choice) had to adopt a new environment, new identity, and embrace change. Some Ethiopians have been lost and unable to get out of culture shock, still living in the time warp of the 1970s Ethiopia. On the other hand, some Ethiopians have come to Canada with nothing and have become very successful.

This study examined the experiences of those who made a successful transition and reached a high degree of acculturation and integration in Canadian society. I anticipate that the results of this study will provide a deeper understanding of the process of assimilation, the integral role of culture and its influence on individual identity, specifically for teachers, scholars, professionals, and counselling practitioners, as well as Ethiopians in Canada.

#### Importance of the Study

One of the assumptions many people have regarding immigrants in general, and about Ethiopians in particular, is that they are culturally, linguistically, and religiously different. In essence, they have been marked as “others.” This does not imply that they experience negative reception by Westerners. I find it important to understand Ethiopian immigrants who are successful in order to mentor others. In this way, the study can give the human face as told by Ethiopians to community, practitioners, professionals, and scholars. In addition, this research project adds new knowledge about the complexity of the phenomenon in reference to the stories of Ethiopian immigrants, as no one had asked them to tell their stories before this study. Thus, it is my hope that the study will add to the existing

counselling, education, and human service literature, which I believe to be useful for referring and mentoring Ethiopians. The assumption that Ethiopians often feel categorized as “others” by the mainstream may be due to their colour, language, and personal characteristics; their story, therefore, would add to mainstream awareness about not only Ethiopians, but also African immigrants in general.

Thus “the otherness of other” would not only be respected and accepted as parts of the pattern of the society, but would also enhance the individual’s self-esteem through strong self-identification. It also eliminates prejudice and racism, by fostering improved intercultural exchanges through increased empathy and understanding. These factors may hopefully motivate scholars and professionals to discover the complexity of their world, or to exercise their imagination beyond the dominant discourse, which, from an Ethiopian perspective, includes fostering interrelationships, interdependency, and connectedness.

Consequently, all scholars and/or professionals may be challenged to discover who they are, what history brought them to where they are, why they are different from others in terms of ethnicity, colour, gender, sexuality, and belief system. These factors, therefore, generate a sense of curiosity, and open interaction. As scholars and/or professionals are encouraged to participate in these interactions, they share their uniqueness with others and may appreciate diversity. As Capra (1996) illustrates, identity “recognizes the fundamental interdependence of all phenomena and the fact that, as individuals and societies, we are all

embedded in (and ultimately dependent on) the cyclical processes of nature” (p. 6). Hence, unless we embrace differences and interdependencies in all educational structures, we inevitably will be stuck with those simple linear formulas that are divisive and leave no room for discovery. My reality is that “if I cannot see myself, I cannot see others clearly; and if I cannot see others clearly, seeing myself becomes more and more difficult” (sources unknown).

### Approach To The Study

The methodological approach is used is based on a qualitative, descriptive, heuristic style. Heuristic research is one of the building blocks of phenomenological inquiry. It permits the researcher to discover his/her lived-experience within the phenomena and reflect. It explains the conceptual tools to understand, assess, and develop relevant and appropriate heuristics in relation to a given problem (Giorgi, 1999; Krieger, 1991; Tyson, 1992). The heuristic method is a problem-solving strategy that organizes experience, guides the research, and allows the researcher to refer to his/her own lived-experience. With heuristics, people simplify problems by abstracting essential details and then using the simplified problem as a guide or model for solving the full problem (Tyson, 1992). Heuristics simplify the infinite range of variables, prioritize information, and speed up the trial-and error search entailed in problem solving (Tyson, 1992). It enables researchers to uncover patterns in experience and to integrate diverse and seemingly unrelated information. Hence, in heuristics the organizing of

information reformulates the original problem to make it solvable. This research uses the heuristic strategy and principles as it provides a way to access the cross-cultural significance of lived-experiences.

## Chapter 2

### Review of the Literature

#### Background

This chapter examines background materials and relevant information relating to Ethiopia, culture, identity development, Afro-centric versus Euro-centric, and the location theory model, significance of definitions, factors for self-definitions, and cultural and social components of identity formation. Since the focus of the study is the stories of Ethiopian refugees living in British Columbia, it is important to understand where the participants came from. Two important sources of information for more in-depth understanding can be found on the website [ethio.com](http://ethio.com), on '*profile of Ethiopia*' and Tebeje's (1989) publication of *Cultural Interaction*, which provide in-depth snapshots of both Ethiopia and Ethiopians.

#### The Country

Ethiopia spans across 1,221,900 square kilometers, forming a major portion of the easternmost African landmass known as the Horn of Africa. Contemporary Ethiopia now has no free access to the sea due to the separation of Eritrea in the early 1990s. In the past, however, ancient Ethiopia's vast and well-documented cultural activities were tied to her access and control of waterways, such as the Red Sea and the Nile River ([ethio.com](http://ethio.com)).

The topography of Ethiopia contains a massive highland complex of mountains and dissected plateaus divided by Great Rift Valley running generally southwest to northeast and surrounded by lowlands, steppes, or semi-desert. Great terrain diversity determines wide variation in climate, soils, natural vegetation, and settlement patterns ([ethio.com](http://ethio.com)).



Figure 3

The elevation and geographic location produce three climatic zones: cool zone—above 2,400 meters where temperature range from near freezing to 16 C to 30 C; and hot zone—below 1,500 meters, with both tropical and arid conditions, and daytime temperatures ranging from 27 C to 50 C. The normal rainy season is from mid-June to mid-September (longer in the southern highlands), preceded by intermittent showers from February or March; the remainder of the year being generally dry.

### The People

In 1992 the population was estimated to be approximately 54 million people, with a three percent or higher annual growth rate. Ethiopia is primarily rural with an urban population estimated to be about eleven percent of the total population. Life expectancy is 50 years for males and 53 for females.

There are over one hundred distinguishable ethno-linguistic entities, and at least seventy languages spoken as mother tongues. The largest group is the *Oromo*, which consist of approximately forty percent of total population. *Amharic* is Ethiopia's official language and roughly 30 percent of the total populations is Amhara. The *Tigray*, speaking *Tigrinya*, constitute twelve to fifteen percent of the total population. Smaller ethnic groups include *Somali*, *Gurage*, *Awii*, *Afar*, *Welamo*, *Sidama*, and *Beja*.

## Culture

According to Tebeje (1989), Ethiopia is different from other African societies in two ways. First, it has never been colonized; cultural dislocation perpetrated by colonizers in many African countries did not occur in Ethiopia. Not being colonized, Ethiopians were able to preserve their culture without major foreign interference. Ethiopia is thus distinguishable from many African societies in its cultural development. Generally, this ethnic group has high cultural and traditional adherence, and is resistant to new ideas and practices. They do not break easily from tradition, and, as a result, many cultural values and customs remain intact. Ethiopians' sense of tradition is perhaps a result of circumstances in which the foundation of their history was substantiated.

Second, Tebeje (1989) notes that Ethiopians in comparison to other Africans have a strong national identity, which may be a contributing factor in their sense of pride and superiority. However, there is a paradox in the national identity in that ethnic or tribal affiliation is much stronger than national identity. As a result of this inherent cultural pride, other Africans often deem some Ethiopians racist. Although they may possibly exhibit some prejudicial attitudes, the truth is that they feel tremendous pride in their history, national freedom, and general appearance. This cultural awareness as well as importance of national identity has strongly influenced Ethiopians' understanding of cultures, as well as their ability in dealing with inter-racial interactions.

### Religion

About 50 percent of the population are Ethiopian Orthodox. The Amhara and Tigray people identify mainly with Orthodox religion but are accepted by other groups. There are approximately two percent Protestant and Roman Catholic combined, and approximately 40 percent are adherents of Islam. The remainder of the population practice various indigenous religions.

### Thought/Rationality

Ethiopians form their thought and rationality outlooks mostly on the following: (i) religion, (ii) magic or folk beliefs, and (iii) common social values such as pride, revenge, and fear of criticism (in Amharic this is called “yulignita”). Religion influences many areas of rationality, as God is the central element in the thought of the people. “The power of God” and/or “the will of God,” are among the most common explanations given for problems, achievements, failures, and successes.

Conversely, a great deal of magic or folk beliefs influence the rationality of many Ethiopians. In other words, people are connected to traditional spiritualities, which evolve from ancestors and representative gods for different occasions such as (Adbar), and (Wkabie). They reign from once in a year to ongoing occurrences throughout the year, which are different from institutional religions rooted in either Christian or Islam. It is also possible for a religious person to have magic or folk beliefs. Good/bad luck, destiny, and the work of evil, are among the common

magic or folk beliefs identified in standard Ethiopian logic. Common social reasoning and rationality also upholds the virtues of physical power, victory, revenge, and conquest in physical terms.

### Health

In Ethiopian culture, good health, and long life are most cherished, and considered some of the most important values. It is believed that, if individuals are healthy and blessed with a long life, they will then accomplish their goals and dreams. Some people visit churches and sacred places (in Amharic called “tebel”) in search of cures, while others seek healing from traditional healers known for their spiritual powers.

### Concept of Time and Space

Ethiopians have an interesting way of conceptualizing time. For instance, day and night are determined by the appearance of the sun, i.e., day starts when it rises and night begins after sunset. Ethiopia also follows the ancient Julian calendar where the 365-calendar year is divided into twelve months of 30 days each. The extra five days (six days in a leap year) make the last odd month known as “Paguem.” In essence, there are thirteen months in a year.

In a standard Ethiopian rationality, time is an endless reservoir. It is limited only by death or sickness that results in inactivity. In other words, time is always available as long as one is alive and well. Ethiopian lifestyle is relatively unstructured within flexible time frames. So when an individual dies, he or she is

considered inactive in a physical sense, not in spirit. Most Ethiopians are guided by the natural cycles and/or the seasons of Ethiopia.

The concept of space reflects the communal ways of living where people share houses and farms, and there is physical closeness among people. Privacy is not particularly important and there is no inhibition in sharing bedrooms or even beds with friends and relatives of the same sex. People see themselves as part of the world and believe in good hospitality.

### Morality

Christian and Moslem concepts of morality overlap in several respects. Both religions attach great importance to such moral values as helping the poor (giving alms), and fasting and praying (going to church or a mosque) regularly. Others include obedience to parents, respect for the elderly, modesty, fidelity, and honesty.

It is (to both religions and traditions) considered immoral to think highly of oneself. The moral sanction against self-importance is so severe that compliments are received with little acknowledgment or demonstrative gratitude. Churches, schools, and communities all teach these values, while families and elders reinforce their importance through constant supervision and reiteration.

### Communication

Ethiopians are better communicators when they are in a familiar environment. A culturally-ingrained attitude of cautious shyness and manners

often inhibits open communication with unfamiliar people, or in new surroundings. The norm is that one always has to present oneself as reserved or formal. Communication is certainly reflective of embedded cultural values and social distinctions. There are traditional means and ways of communication. Ethiopians, in general, follow traditional manners in communication with individuals of different age, sex, and social status. Non-verbal communication is equally well-developed. For example, some common introductory non-verbal cues are: head bowing, handshakes, two-handed handshakes, and kisses.

### Manners

Ethiopians are generally formal and cautious about their manners. From an early age, children are taught standards of public behaviour, appearance, hospitality, courtesy, communicating with people of different social categories, and others. The honourific pronoun, “*erswo*” (you in Amharic) is a respectful form of address. This pronoun is commonly used and is considered an important sign of good manners. Those who are not adherent to such traditions are often labeled as mannerless in English and (*baleg-a or se-d* in Amharic).

### Humour

As stated above under the heading of manners, Ethiopians normally prefer to present themselves as serious or reserved. Yet, they do have a great sense of humour. They like exchanging jokes, quips, and enjoy laughter a great deal. Deprecating jokes laden with meaningful moral endings are particularly popular in

Ethiopian humour. People tell such jokes about Ethiopians, their government, ethnic groups, women, politicians, and other social categories. This humour often reflects social attitudes toward cultural values, social categories, family matters, and individuals. Ethiopians are quite appreciative of jokes as long as there is no deliberate attack on their national pride.

### Leisure Time

The most popular pastime in Ethiopia is social visiting. It is not only a leisure-time activity but also an important social norm. Visits are expected of people on the birth of a child, death, sickness, and in times of stress. Neighbours visit each other more than once every day for what they call “coffee time.” Moreover, friends, relatives, and neighbours exchange visits regularly. Visits are informal, unannounced, and may last for hours. In a sense, this indicates a strong sense of flexibility and a willingness to change plans.

### Personal Identity

Personal identification is traditionally collective because people lived, worked, and entertained in groups. An individual’s identity is established on the basis of family, parish, community, and/or other collectivities. In less homogeneous communities, tribal background and place of origin (regional location) are important means of identity. People are often identified by their ethnic groups as “Amhara,” “Oromo,” “Trigraway” or “Eritrean,” or by their places or origin such as from “Wollo,” “Gondar”.

As a result, ethnic or tribal background and place of origin generate a firm sense of identity and solidarity among people who come from common areas or belong to similar ethnic or tribal groups. However, individuals are often discriminated against because of their ethnic or tribal background. Group consciousness among Ethiopians has reached a stage where, to some individuals, ethnicity has become more important than either individual or national identity.

### Marriage

Traditionally, marriage is a social union, necessarily arranged by the families of the bride and groom. The important characteristics that distinguish a traditional marriage from a modern marriage are: (i) procreation (having a family) is the sole reason, (ii) there is virtually no participation by the bride and groom in the decision-making process, and (iii) the choice of the bride is made without the consent of the two. Dating is increasing in popularity among the youngest Ethiopian generation, and is usually done without the knowledge of the parents. Chastity still remains socially and culturally sacred, and premarital sex is a serious social taboo, considered a subject of great secrecy and source of humiliation.

Since family is among the most important social units, divorce is unacceptable under almost any circumstance. It is believed that “a bad marriage is better than a divorce.” Parents, relatives, friends, and socially-respected individuals play important roles in counseling during a marital crisis.

### Family

The family is an important unit with economic, emotional, and social roles. Family connections confer social recognition, community membership, and identity in individuals. The parent-child relationship is strictly based on respect for, and obedience to parents. Independent thought and decisions by children are not allowed. Children are expected to seek approval from parents and to follow parental guidance. They are punished harshly (physically and/or emotionally) and leniency of parents or reasoning with them is uncommon.

### Status

Society in Ethiopia has always been divided by class, religion, ethnicity and other factors, such as the reigning political forces). The less homogenous urban population has concepts of social status in terms of authority, education, and material wealth.

### Education

Education is placed among the most important objectives for individuals, families, as well as the nation. Being educated is associated with attributes such as wisdom, kindness, and farsightedness. There is great respect for people with education and mistakes are often attributed to “being uneducated.”

### Work

Ethiopians regard work almost with reverence. They believe that work is a means of security and a source of happiness. Affluence is seldom mentioned as a

reason to work. As a result, Ethiopians take their jobs seriously and feel a great sense of pride in being independent as a family. It is seen as a misfortune for an able-bodied man not to work. The primary work ethic includes: (i) respect for authority; (ii) discipline; and (iii) diligence. Since it is culturally unacceptable to talk about oneself in a manner that is elevated above another, the art of selling oneself is poorly developed in Ethiopia. Primarily, Ethiopians tend to play down their positive qualities and find competitive environments uncomfortable.

### Financial Affairs

The majority of Ethiopians believes that the future is decided only by God, and man cannot change it. There is thus a tendency to plan and work for the present; the focus on meeting daily needs generates great complacency toward the future. This complacency is, however, tempered by a philosophy that says human beings are liable, and “one needs to always be prepared for bad days.” This alternative belief compels Ethiopians to save their money. Their concept of saving may essentially be crisis-preparedness, and most would shy away from ambitious investments or long-term planning. So, in understanding the makeup of Ethiopians as an entity, one must look at the factors (social, spiritual, economical, etc.) that influence identity formation. This is a difficult challenge and that is why the Locational theory is invaluable in understanding identity. The challenge in this study was to make the metaphors, nuances, and symbol representations inherent in the Ethiopia language and culture, understandable to Western readers.

### Theoretical Background

To further understand the descriptions of Ethiopians and the patterns of assimilation and acculturation in Canada, Bekerie's (1997) Locational theory is utilized. Bekerie provides an in-depth and comprehensive description of the theory processes derived from a purely African perspective. He starts by bringing forward the most important parts of African traditions, traditions that separate Africans from Europeans. According to him "oral tradition plays a very important role in African knowledge, history, culture, and African identity" (p. 14). In order to appreciate the sources or the locations of Africans' experiences, one must apply a non-European model of inquiry so that the devices used to ensure the remembrance and retelling of African stories could be adequately examined and recorded. He adds that "Africans—transfer the traditional, cultural, historical, spiritual knowledge and meanings to the next generation through carving, furrowing, painting, and sculpting" (p. 3). According to Bekerie, when a Western frame of reference is used to observe and evaluate, Africans are seen in an inferior light. In fact, he strongly articulates that: "It is indeed absurd to assume that Africans, who used their hands to carve, sculpt, furrow, paint and shape various macro and micro objects, were somehow literally handicapped" (p. 3). In other words, Africans are highly literate and capable despite centuries of the Western view of Africa "primitiveness."

Bekerie disagrees with Western belief, and states: “This was, in fact, the product of compulsive assumption, casual invention, and biased concoction disguised as universal scholarship emanating, in most instances, from external sources” (p. 2). In other words, assumptions were and still are the product of the hegemonic Euro-centric mode of knowledge. Bekerie goes on to say that:

The profile of knowledge and its horizons were defined by Europeans and our education usually does not go beyond this framework. It is not surprising; therefore, that some Africans follow their European mentors in limiting the scope of their knowledge to that defined by Europeans. In fact, there was a refusal to see Africans as the creators of original cultures which flowered and survived over the centuries in patterns of their own making which historians are unable to grasp unless they forego their prejudices and rethink their approach (1997, p. 3).

Consequently, this research takes on Bekerie’s locational theoretical model in order to contrast and articulate the African and, in particular, the Ethiopian sense of identity and sense of success in adapting to a Canadian social milieu, and assimilating into Western culture. The sense of oppression is a common experience in the psychic of Africans, including Ethiopians. It is important to understand that the history of oppression is a part of the personality of Africans, particularly those living as minorities in predominately “white” countries such as

Canada. A discussion of Bekerie's locational theoretical model can explain much about how Ethiopians see themselves.

### Afro-centric Versus Euro-centric and The Theoretical Locational Model

Bekerie's theoretical model focuses on such identity as a concentrated expression of the history and cultures of the Ethiopian, and African people in general. This is an expression of their cultural depth and identity and their sense of connectedness to other people in the world. The system is also a model of their self-definition. This inside-outside approach is presented as an alternative model to outside-inside models of interpretations (i.e., *inside* refers to how people view themselves within the culture, and *outside* refers to how people see themselves in relation to the world).

According to Bekerie: "A locational model further assumes a model of place or location. It is a theory that locates situations, events, and / or authors within the framework of an Africa-centered perspective" (p. 12). It is a model that located the African peoples and their histories of their own origin (Africa), in their own diversity (African World), and in their own creativity. It is also "concerned with African people being subjects of historical and social experiences rather than objects in the margins of European experiences" (Bekerie 1997, p. 12).

The model suggests that African people are active, primary, and central agents in the making of their history (Bekerie 1997). According to him: "The model also rejects the notion of universality compulsively assumed by hegemonic

Euro-centrism (p. 13). What is Euro-centrism? Bekerie (1997) regards Euro-centrism as “a centralist phenomenon in the sense that it assumes the existence of irreducibly distinct cultural invariants that shape the historical paths of different peoples (p. 13). Furthermore, he indicates the process as “Euro-centric dogma, because philosophy is regarded as the highest discipline and philosophy is presumed to be Greek” (p. 13). In other words, by rejecting the universal or Euro-centric approach and embracing an Afro-centric model, one can have a better understanding of the “African experience.”

The rise of Europe as a major power in the 15th century—commencing with the Renaissance and reaching its zenith in the 19th century—and its eventual conquest and occupation of over 85 percent of the world’s territory, as noted by Bekerie (1997), suggests that conquest resulted in a hegemonic ideology that is disguised as universalism. The result is that Europe imposed its image on the peoples of Africa, Asia, and the Americas through enslavement, colonialism, and neocolonialism. Thus, following Bekerie’s idea of Euro-centerism, the imitation of the Western model by all people was viewed as the only solution to the challenges of our time.

“The global expansion of capitalism from its European origin has certainly led to the notion of European universalism, but what has been attained is a truncated universalism incapable of resolving the problems engendered by its own

expansion” (Bekerie, 1997, p. 12). Bekerie, aptly characterized Euro-centrism as “a mythic construct” (p. 13), as it is based in both location and relation to the world.

Even in today’s debate of multiculturalism, both conservative and liberal circles oppose the concept of location. “The conservatives simply want to maintain the status quo, i.e., hegemonic Euro-centrism, whereas the liberals confuse location with hegemony, thereby maintaining essentially the same position as the conservatives” (Bekerie 1997, p. 13). The liberals present the nomadic model, a model that negates the notion of location.

Nomads move in circles within a clearly defined space and time. And this predictable mobility does not negate the notion of location. In fact, it presents a different form of articulation.

Location does not mean the presence of one immovable center. Africanness finds its focused expression, for instance, when it takes into consideration the diverse experience of African peoples throughout the world. The continent of Africa simply provides a point of origin, which is one of the key elements of the concept of location. Origin, however, is not synonymous with location. Diversity and creativity are also critical element in conceptualizing location (Bekerie, 1997, p. 14).

Africa is the cradle of the evolution and world dispersion of a cultural style very different from the European one. The hegemonic rise of Europe has been

hostile to Africa, Africans, and African traditions ((Bekerie, 1997). Although they have been deeply affected by European cultural styles, Africans have inspired ways that suggest what a humanistic resurrection of modern life might look like. It is to be noted that future research should provide us with multiple locations.

Bekerie's (1997), Equation for a Locational Model: A Proposal

$$L = (O+D+C)$$

Where

L = Locational model

O = Origin

D = Diversity

C = Creativity

Figure 4

This equation is proposed in order to facilitate a systematic construction, analysis, interpretation, and understanding of knowledge. It is an equation designed to capture the dynamics of people and their cultural and material environments (Bekerie, 1997). Bekerie adds that this is an attempt to elaborate the paradigm of location. "More specifically, Locational Model means the study of African peoples and their philosophy of life from their origin, grounded in their diversity and creativity. It is a means that places or locates African people in their own center stage" (Bekerie, 1997, p. 15).

For Bekerie (1997), “Afro-centricity” is a locational model and it is a term coined by fusing two important conceptual words: Africa and center. As Bekerie (1997) describes:

Whereas Africa is a collective and plural term encompassing diverse cultures and experiences, center is a claim to a place. Africa is central to African people’s sense of identity and cultural distinctiveness. Africa is not only a source of their historical beginnings, but it also serves as a benchmark of their cultures, belief systems, philosophies, family structures and functions and knowledge of themselves and the world (p. 16).

The model emphasizes or seeks a way to actualize the intrinsic goodness of every individual. The sense of self-discovery, the realization of self-worth, and the process of empowerment are components of the Locational model of analysis. Here, the major claim is that, given the right conditions and opportunities; it is possible to improve the life prospects of people (Bekerie, 1997). “Locational theory is also relevant for epistemological and axiological purposes. These terms address the issues of method of knowing, valuation, and cultural celebrations” (Bekerie, 1997, p. 17). How and what we know are usually governed by the nature of our training and the sociology of knowledge. Axiology is best expressed in the context of extended nature of our family structure. The values we share are rooted

in commonality and community. Bekerie (1997) fits the elements of the equation into the analysis of these delineations in the following way:

- 1.) Origin is suggested as constituting both the temporal and spatial configurations of the African people's sense of existence, beginning of history, and history. The recent discoveries of human fossils in the Rift Valley of Ethiopia, the mitochondrial DNA studies that trace the origin of our remote ancient ancestors to Africa, as well as botanical, archaeological and sociolinguistic studies make origin one of the most fundamental components of our theoretical construct. Africa has now been universally recognized as the cradle of humankind (i.e., not only about its rich and diverse cultures but also about its links to the genetic of human, thanks to the archaeological, palaeontological, carbon-dating techniques and genetic engineering work of researchers and scholars from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas).
- 2.) Diversity is suggested to be perhaps the most salient feature of the Afro-centric Locational equation. Our heritage and ways of life seem to be governed by this important principle. The misuse and abuse of this principle, among other factors, may have allowed Europeans to dislocate Africans for more than four hundred years. Ironically, the principle of diversity also became instrumental in the resistance, retention, and reconstruction of African ways of life, in the diasporic African world.

Diversity is a cardinal principle of survival, revival, and proliferation. It is also diversity that allows us to maintain a distinctive sense of creativity.

- 3.) This component of the equation is creativity, which may further be subdivided into creativity in freedom and creativity under duress. In other words, freedom provides ownership and under duress limits or ignores the sources of creativity. Creativity means the cultural and experiential components that might further branch out into agriculture, writing, mining, philosophy, architecture, trade, language, navigation, aesthetics, etc. Origin, diversity and creativity then, in various degrees of combinations, emphasis and foci, can be envisaged as constituents of the core elements of the Afro-centric Locational theory. The dynamic interaction of these elements is believed to have given rise to the various historical, cultural and social expressions of the African people.

#### Assumption of Identity

The assumption is that identity has been and continues to be an interesting and challenging subject to the research inquiry. There is no shortage of literature about identity. It has been overwhelmingly researched, theorized, analyzed, dissected and defined from numerous perspectives. Perhaps, this is because according to Roth (1998):

[identity] discourses—take time to develop and to become shared ways of providing observational and theoretical descriptions. New discourses are

not adapted from one day to the next, or even within the span of a few years. Rather, old language games fall out of use, and new ones take over with the change of generations (p. 5).

Any individual, in understanding his or her world, is continually involved in the activity of interpretation. This interpretation is based on prejudice or (pre-understanding), which includes the assumptions implicit in the language that the person uses. Adding to this, Roth (1998) explains that:

[Identity] is routinely in a state of change rather than status, in the medium of socially, culturally, and historically ongoing systems of activity, involving people who are related in multiple and heterogeneous ways, whose social relations, interests, reasons, and subjective possibilities are different, and who improvise struggles in situated ways with each other over the value of particular definitions of the situation, in both immediate and comprehensive terms, and for whom the production of failure is as much part of the routine collective activity as the production of average, ordinary knowledgeability (p. 12).

To understand the design, redesign, and construction of identity or “self” and the influences in the process, I decided to review the researched literature that focused on defining and explaining identity and its construct in relation to community (social) and individuals. The first part explores definitions and the

interpretation of 'self.' The second part seeks to explain elements that define identity formation.

I: Significance of Definitions

Definitions

McGee (1999) states that “we should take definition more seriously, for definitions play an important role in our interpretation of the world. Definitions, whether explicit or implied, are the points at which many arguments begin” (p. 141). Definitions often encourage perceptions that are permanent and unchangeable. Yet, definitions held as contingent and fluid categories, are always subject to revision and renegotiations. For example, racial identity is an experience that one has, rather than something that one is (McGee, 1999). Consequently, choice is implied for an individual who slides back and forth between the experiences of two racial identities in some fluid, indeterminate middle position between those identities.

Therefore, definition does not entail any presumption that permanent essences exist. In fact, McGee (1999), argues that:

the act of definition isolates what might at the moment seem to be particularly important ideas or attributes of a concept, but those important ideas or attributes could be called into question in the future, when a different set of attributes seems more central to describing the term at hand (p. 151).

In other words, all definitions despite their level of entrenchment are contingent, given that they are continuously subject to revision. Because the popular imagination tends to understand definitions as objectively true and right, arguments based on definition have the advantage of seeming to be grounded in a fact or set of facts that must be taken as given and cannot be disputed (McGee, 1999). The description of definition, as depending on experience, may seem radically subjective. However, the argument is that words are surrounded by clusters of related words, phrases, ideas, and specific cases that are learned through experience, all of which combine to give the debater a rough guide to meaning in the community when she or he selects one term over another. “Only when essences are abstracted from those experiences and posited as such do definitions come into being and take on a sense of permanence. However, such foundations never exist outside of language, and those foundations can collapse whenever the community ceases to adhere to those definitions (McGee, 1999, p. 156).

## II: Factors for Self-definitions

### a: Sense of Individuality

According to Brookins (1996), “the definition of self-concept refers to a multidimensional construct through which individuals define themselves and is largely based on the reflected appraisals received from significant others” (p. 384). This definition of self-concept includes structure, or identity dimensions, and self-

evaluation. One's identity is related to the meanings that constitute the self, and includes the individual's assumed and ascribed social roles; the qualities that the individual and others attribute to the self; and the sense of uniqueness or understanding one has about the self based on one's own experiences (Brookins 1996). Understanding one's identity essentially answers the question "Who am I?"

The self-evaluation component, in general, relates to the relative value that individuals place on themselves and their role identities. Adding to this, Brookins (1996) explains that "self-evaluation includes an individual's self-esteem, which refers to the positive or negative regard one has toward the self; self-efficacy, which is related to one's belief in one's abilities, competencies" (p. 400). It also refers to personal control over the self; and what Gecas and Mortimer (1987) refer to as authenticity, or the meaningfulness and significance that one ascribes to one's identity and individual characteristics. According to Waterman (1985), identity must be viewed as both a process and an outcome, and 'refers to having a clearly delineated self-definition, a self-definition comprised of those goal, values, and beliefs that the person finds personally expressive, and to which he or she is unequivocally committed" (p. 6). This development and subsequent commitment occurs in a variety of domains, including but not limited to, the areas of career selection, political ideology, worldview (including moral and ethical concerns), and the adoption of social and sex roles (Waterman, 1985). Failure to establish identity can lead to role confusion, commitments to negative or dysfunctional

roles, or both. Ethnic identity or one's view of self from a group perspective is derived from examining one's race and ethnicity. According to Rotheram and Phinney (1987), "ethnic identity refers to one's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one's thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behavior that is due to ethnic group membership" (p. 13).

Self-definition is a personality style associated with internally developed identity and behavior, and is differentiated from social definition because of the tendency to adopt the social category of self (Jenkins, 1996). "Socially defined persons should be more comfortable with the de-individuation associated with high levels of inclusion and a strong collective identity, whereas a self-defining person should be more comfortable with a relatively more individuated, less inclusive level of optimal distinctiveness" (Jenkins, 1996, p. 99). The content of identity and associated behaviours for socially defined individuals is closer to cultural or sub-cultural norms, while for self-defining persons, it is more in line with personal or disposition preferences. "Thus what self-defining and socially defined individuals actually do in a given situation varies depending on ambient social norms (for the socially defined) and other personality features such as attitudes, values, motives, and other personality traits (for the self-defining)" (Jenkins, 1996, p. 100). The expected behaviours for socially defined persons should change with historical changes in social norms or with age-related changes in normative behavior definitions.

One mode of investigating identity is through microsociological theory that sets out to explain individuals' role related behaviours in society. There are also other theories that set out to explain group processes and inter-group relations (i.e., social and psychological theories) (Hogg, 1995). All three theories suggest that 'self' is a mediated construct within the relationship of the social structures and individual behavior. Yet the socio-cognitive processes that are associated with 'self' and identity-related behaviour are placed on roles of inter-group relations. For this reason, it is important to compare descriptions of identity from different perspectives including Locational theory.

According to Hogg (1995), "identity theory refers to the multiple components of self as identities (or, more specifically, role identities). The notions of identity salience and commitment are used in turn to account for the impact of role identities on social behavior" (p. 255). Nonetheless, most identity theorists have tended to focus more on the individualistic consequences of identity-related processes (Rosenberg 1981). Hogg (1995) further explains that "identity theory, views the self not as an autonomous psychological entity but as a multifaceted social construct that emerges from people's roles in society; variation in self-concepts is due to the different roles that people occupy" (p. 255). The distinction is that role identities are self-conceptions, self referent cognitions, or self-definitions that people apply to themselves as a consequence of the structural role positions they occupy, and through a process of labeling or self-definition as a

member of a particular social category (Burke, 1980; Thoits, 1991). Thus, “role identities provide meaning for self, not only because they refer to concrete role specification, but also because they distinguish role from relevant complementary or counter-role” (Hogg, 1995, p. 256). While society provides roles that are the basis of identity and self, the self is also an active creator of social behaviour (Stryker, 1980).

Role identities are interpreted as a performance or assigned function of person or persons (Callero, 1985). From this perspective, a role is a set of expectations and assigned behavior that is considered appropriate by others (Simon, 1992). There are two expected perceptions: one, enacting a role satisfactorily should enhance the individual feelings of self-esteem; two, poor role performance may engender doubts about the individual’s self worth. In other words, the self-defining roles that people occupy in society are central to one’s identity far more than the wider range of different social attributes (i.e., societal standards) that can be ascribed to self. This is an important factor because, “social attributes are considered to have an indirect impact on self through their effect on the role positions people can hold, the relative importance of their role identities, and the nature of their interactions with others” (Hogg, 1995, p. 257).

Furthermore, the level of individual understanding of the social attributes that shape and frame identity and the commitment to conform to the roles, determines how ‘self’ stands within. Commitment is significant because it

signifies the degree to which the individual's relationship to particular others is dependent on being a given kind of person.

The central characteristics of identity theory according to Hogg (1995), are:

1) it represents a social psychological model of self in that social factors are seen to define self; 2) the social nature of self is conceived as derived from the role positions that people occupy in the social world; 3) in an enduring sense, these role identities are proposed to vary in regard to their salience; and 4) although identity theorists acknowledge that reciprocal links exist between self and society, they have been most interested in individualistic outcomes of identity-related processes. The impact of role identities on relations with others has not been an important focus of the theory, and their influence on the broader social structure has not been spelled out clearly (p. 259).

Further, Hogg (1995), explains that the social identity and self-categorization models of group processes have a number of important features: 1) they are general theories of the social group, not constrained by group size, dispersion, and so forth; 2) they incorporate the role of both the immediate and the more enduring inter-group context in group behaviour; 3) they account for the range of group behaviors (e.g., conformity, stereotyping, discrimination, ethnocentrism) in terms of a limited number of theoretically integrated generative principles; 4) they are basically socio-cognitive; and 5) they do not construct group processes from interpersonal processes (p. 262).

The process of self-categorization depersonalizes perception, feelings, and action in terms of the contextually relevant self-defining in-group originality (prototype). Thus, the categorical structure of society via the mediation of social identity and the accompanying process of self-categorization influence behaviour. In this sense, identity then deals with the structure of dominant group while the function of people's identity is connected to the behavioural roles they play in society. On the other hand, social identity/self-categorization may only deal with the structure and the function of identity relates to people's membership in the groups (Hogg, 1995).

Moreover, the explanation of identity within the societal expectation adds possibilities due to the assumption that a circular causal relationship may also exist between self-categorization and the perceived similarity within one's 'in-group.' Conceptions of one's uniqueness or similarity to others, therefore, are among the core self-conceptions most critical for self-definition (Simon, 1995).

Nonetheless, an individual's identity is influenced by three dominant elements. The first is that set of psychological abilities innate to all human beings, and evident in early childhood-consciousness such as memory and the moral (doing and feelings) sense (O'Sullivan, 1996). According to O'Sullivan (1996):

“Together they generate that aspect of identity we call the conscience. It forces us to feel more responsibility for past actions, and so helps to establish identity as something that exists through time. The second set of

qualities making up identity is our genetic inheritance from our particular parents” (p. 50).

The third element is that, for many, the most important components of identity arise from our being born in a particular family, in a particular place, at a particular time in history, and therefore into a particular set of traditions and customs.

The first language we learn is an accident of birth because we have no choice. Our religious identity is something we embrace long before we can grasp its importance. Our sexuality is probably influenced by our genetic makeup, but how we regard it is strongly influenced by social custom. We pick up the manners of our social class, assuming them to be universal laws of good behaviour. We obtain automatic membership in our nation or ethnic group, together with a legacy of accompanying songs, myths, and stories. And all of these things, though external and pre-existing, are absorbed by our fledgling identity, and become as much a part of us as our temperament, our IQ, or our digestion. Some of the most important elements of our identity are external, accidental, and above all, social.

b: Sense of Collectiveness

Self-definitions emerge from incorporated pattern of social assimilation and differentiation within and between relevant groups. Judgments of similarity between oneself and other in-group members as well as within the in-group as a whole, assess meaningful aspects of people’s shared or collective self-definitions

(Brewer & Weber, 1994; Simon & Hamilton, 1994). “The collective self is expressed by highlighting similarities between oneself and other in-group members, whereas the individual self is expressed by highlighting one’s differences from in-group members” (Simon, 1995, p. 106).

The individual self can be viewed as a cognitive representation of oneself, having many distinctive features, but only few or no features in common with one’s cognitive representation of the in-group. Conversely, the collective self can be viewed as a cognitive representation of oneself that has only few or no distinctive features but many features in common with one’s cognitive representation of the in-group (Brewer & Weber, 1994; Simon, 1995). “Level of self-definition would vary with social context and that this variation would be indicated by changes in the accentuation of perceived intra-group similarities relative to differences (or vice versa)” (Simon, 1995, p. 107). Implementation of group strategies such as social competition or social creativity may likely increase to the extent that the collective self takes precedence over the individual self (Ellemers, 1993; Lalonde & Silverman, 1994; Tajfel 1981). Group strategies that go beyond mere psychological reinterpretation of social reality and aim at real social changes, usually demand collective action which gives priority to the attainment of group goals at the cost of a member’s immediate individual self-interests. Accentuation of the collective self is thus a necessary prerequisite as it entails the perception that our commonalties exceed our differences, and therefore

'our' interests are 'my' interests. (Simon, 1995; Ellemers, 1993; Lalonde & Silverman, 1994).

c: Salient Identities

In all societies, writes Moore (1998), "salient social identities tend to be linked to social cleavages that sharpen groups' boundaries (especially among groups to which lower social status is accorded when the groups are hierarchically ordered)" (p. 7). Thus, for example, a salient gender identity may indicate a strong awareness of differentiation and of separateness, which is a precondition for any social action. The clearly defined group membership may, in turn, strengthen the willingness of members of the lower status group to act with, and for, the group to increase social equality. Consequently, the prevalence of salient identities may imply social conflict and heighten the potential for social action, whereas non-salient (or weak) identities may diminish the potential for social action (Moore, 1997). Social identities are based on people's tendency to classify themselves and others into diverse social categories (like class, race, ethnic, origin, religion, gender, and age groups). Classifications tend to create the distinction between "us" and 'them' or 'in-group' and 'out-group' (Ellemers, 1991; Tajfel, 1981). Each person belongs to several groups at the same time, and can identify oneself with more than one group. These identities are organized into hierarchies on the basis and stability of their centrality and salience over time (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Rosenberg, 1979; Stryker, 1991). Thus, these stable hierarchies incorporate the

components of multiple identities into a singular, consequential whole (Burke, 1991; Stryker, 1991; Stryker & Serpe, 1994).

In pluralistic and/or highly politicized societies, the salience of social differentiation tends to be higher, increasing people's awareness of such differentiation (Devine, 1992; Marshal, Ross, Newby, & Vogler, 1988; Sidanius & Duffy, 1999). This awareness is reflected in the hierarchical order of social identities, so that the identities that are related to clearly differentiated groups or social categories tend to become more central to individuals in that society. The social, psychological, cognitive, and affective aspects of the links between individuals and collectivities influence the political attitudes and behaviours of the members as well as the socioeconomic and organizational preconditions of individual or social actions (Moore, 1997 & 1998). Within this frame of reference, identity, therefore, represents the behavioural consequence of social assignment and the awareness of being a particular person. The design and construction of identity in this instance, remains in the production of situational meanings, cultural rules, and social processes that allow for the presenting and coding of a person's 'self' identity (Moore, 1998).

#### c: The Influence of Memory for Salient Identity

Identifying our commonality at the level of shared memories, that motivates and provide a point of reflection, not only guarantees flexibility, but also sets a standard of openness in how members respond to each other in any given

moment (Ravven, 1997). In order to maintain our common identity we need not commit ourselves to any predetermined limits for what we ought to believe, as a result of having these memories. What members of a group share is a starting point rather than an endpoint. Recent philosophical and psychological research has shown that memories are not static but continually reconstructed and transformed; they are interpretive acts. Although the facts don't change, early memories are reintegrated into a changing system of meaning as new information, and new ways of interpreting. Furthermore, Ravven (1997) states that:

we all have direct evidence that whenever we recall a given object, or face, or scene, we do not get an exact reproduction but rather an interpretation, a newly reconstructed version of the original. Our cultural and personal memories, truly open to the endless forms of our personal development and history of our group (p. 431).

### III: Cultural and Social Components of Identity Formation

#### a: Cultural Components

Culture is a complex phenomenon, its meaning goes beyond art, song, and dance to include everything that is connected with a people's way of life. It is seen in their work and recreation, in their worship and courtship, in their ways of investigating nature and utilizing its possibilities, as well as in their ways of viewing themselves and interpreting their place in nature. It is also seen in the manner in which they house and clothe themselves; their method of conducting

war and peace; their systems of statecraft, of education, of rewards and punishment; the way they regulate personal relations generally; and the ideas underlying these institutions and practices (Olusegun, 1995). Although culture is a complex phenomenon, according to Olusegun (1995):

its constitutive elements are of two broad types. First, there are those which have no essential being on questions of either human well-being or truth or falsehood. These include procedures, customs and usages such as: language, style of apparel or address, dance, music, recreation, and style of courtship. The second group of cultural elements, includes philosophy, science, and religion, the story is different. In these areas, it is not desirable, even if possible, to ignore developments in other cultures” (p. 13).

As such, these areas which are not crucial to self-definition. Indeed, Olusegun (1995) has observed those “areas of human experience in which the effects of cultural differences could conceivably be eliminated through the peaceful give and take of dialogue among cultures” (p. 10).

This is because culture has to do with the life of feelings, inner experiences, subjective perceptions, which find no space within the utilitarian world of social and economic relations. In fact, culture encompasses those “passive susceptibilities” which are always in danger of being overshadowed by “outward circumstances” and an emphasis on the life of action (Gluck, 1993). Philosophers and critics have attempted to articulate the realm of the individual and subjective

experience in the realm of the modern world. Here, however, the emphasis has been on the fleeting, contingent, and irrational aspects of experiences which lie beyond the enterprise of the science claims of universality. The theorized characteristics of human existence and culture that shapes one's identity must be understood on multiple and complexly interwoven levels. All, to some degree influence and frame 'self' identity. Traditional identity has been externally shaped by the authority of custom, religion, family, and society. Therefore, cultural identity is an organized endeavour. The modern self within the cultural context is an internally maintained, self-referential enterprise existing, more or less, in autonomy from others. The 'self' thereupon exists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives which take place in the context of multiple choices filtered through abstract systems. "Life style, or external actions organized in a coherent and self-referential way, can, indeed, be the ground for identity" (Gluck, 1993, p. 216).

According to Gadacz (1994), "formation, development and preservation of self-identity, self-actualization, and relationship-building, at best problematic, is accomplished via the emergence of an internally referential system of knowledge and power, and is sustained by institutional reflexivity" (p. 94). Gadacz's internal referential system refers to the internal/inherent source(s) that guides an individual's lifestyle, helps to build his or her personality structure, and makes possible his or her participation in personal and intimate social relations, over

which the person gradually learns to exercise jurisdiction and conscious control. “Internal referents are distinguished from external referents, that is, kinship, generation and family relations, locale, normative precepts, habits, customs and rituals that in previous times were the inertial forces holding society together, fixing a person’s place within it and forging that person’s self-identity” (Gluck, 1993, p. 94). “Without the influence of society, a person’s identity would be like Hobbes’ description of natural society: solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short (and, one might add, speechless). The social elements in identity are means whereby someone’s natural gifts and disposition enter the world” (O’Sullivan, 1996, p. 51).

In contrast, false identity consists not only of the digested influences of class, nation, locality, sex, and so on, but also of the moral consciousness (social standard) that we feel to exist at the centre of our being. For one school of theorists, notably Marxism, liberation consists precisely of freeing oneself from this situational consciousness. This is a world in which identities are created by situations. Identities are mere roles or masks we use to deal with other people. The consumer selects his/ her new identity from the vast range of moral possibilities that the modern world has available. As O’Sullivan (1996) states, “the new identities constructed by selecting a fact of someone’s given identity, and elevating it to the whole. Identity becomes a matter of choice or conscious decision. Invented identities, which reconstruct the personality in line with some

ideal, produce a one-dimensional man. Such identities are highly precarious” (pp. 53-54). The invented identity is both parasitic and adverse to the ‘real’ thing. New identities attack and seek to replace their counterparts among existing identities. For example, the gay or feminist identity will define itself by opposition to the traditional sexual identities of male and female. It will decry these as socially constructed, claiming them false and oppressive as endeared in the jargon of “heterosexism”. Significantly, identity is not just how we feel about ourselves. To be truly satisfying, “our identity needs to be recognized by others. Yet imagining how difficult it must be for some of the groups now in existence to be treated by the rest of society as possessing true identities” (O’Sullivan, 1996, p. 55).

a: 1. Ethnicity

Identity is a powerful tool for personal and political mobilization, because it is a projection of utmost importance to each of us personally. That is why ethnic identity is the function of the mother-tongue as spoken by significant others, to introduce the child to the world as lived and shaped by the idiom of the ethnic group; it is primarily what one is born or raised into. It is therefore different from an association motivated by shared interests: it is crucially non-functional, or at least, never to be reduced to a functional dimension because one is born from it. Members of an ethnic group see themselves as an extended family; that is, they stay together not because they find each other useful, but because they belong to

each other and are crucially constituted through one another (du Toit, 1997). A family or an ethnic group fulfills a very basic or elemental need, namely that of creating an 'I' and an 'identity,' as well as creating a world for the 'I,' simultaneously and necessarily part of the creation of the 'I' itself. The ethnic group functions well when it functions as an extension of the primary care-takers of the child, reflecting back to ethnic group identity formation, empowering the child through an extended sense of self, embedding the child in a meaningful, coherent narrative line of past, present and future, and giving the child also a sense of purpose and situatedness in life. The power to either empower or oppress is great.

However, if personal identity has been shown to be unstable, fragmented, contingent, and an open-ended process, the effect is true to group identity or ethnicity. In the same way that integrity, stability, and duration of sameness through time have to be imagined for the individual, they have to be imagined for the group of extended kinship as well. Sameness and wholeness of identity, enduring through time, for persons and groups, has to be actively constructed.

Ethnic identity is a resource of readily available (to the initiate), relatively enduring ways of making sense of life, by living it in a specific way. As such one can also say that ethnic identity is a specific body of cliches, or chants: familiar works with a reputation for being powerful formulations of the meaning people have found in or bestowed upon their lives in the past.

On the other hand, ethnicity is a tradition of meaning, rich with symbol, ritual, metaphor, anecdote, and narrative. A cultural community is built or based upon normative stories, often called the classics, belonging to that specific tradition (du Toit, 1997). In ancient times most gods were tribal, and Africans often claim that their culture and religion cannot be separated. Ethnicity is a distinct part of the social system made up of a connected set of institutions, structures, and practices concerned with the orderly maintenance of society and the regulation of relationships amongst members. "In this sense, ethnic politics involves maintaining cohesion in society, decision-making, resolving conflict, allocating resources and maintaining order" (Simpson 1993, p. 8).

Personal identity as narrative, dialogical, performative, and negotiated or interrelated, sheds light on the way in which group and especially ethnic identities are to be understood. This narrative, performative mode of identity also provides us with the basis for the evaluation of cultural or ethnic claims made in multicultural communities.

Ethnic identity refers to an individual's sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the degree to which his or her thinking, feeling, and behaviour are due to ethnic-group membership (Rotheram-Borus & Phinney, 1987). Several different ethnically related constructs have been assessed as indicators of identity such as social expectations, ethnic labels, reference group choices, attitudes, and values (Rotheram-Borus & Phinney, 1987). The complexity of establishing definitions of

each component is apparent when the constructs are examined individually (Rotheram-Borus, & Lightfoot, 1998). Self-labelling as a member of an ethnic group has multiple connotations. Self-labels typically indicate a willingness to be perceived and treated as a member of an ethnic group (Cross, 1987), with adoption of the political beliefs and psychological attributes associated with membership in that group (Rotheram-Borus, & Lightfoot, 1998). Similarly, definitions are complicated by the political and geographical differences that exist in the use of ethnic group labels. Ethnic identity also includes attitudes. Ethnically related attitudes include ethnic pride, separatist feelings, and the degree of stereotypical opinions that individuals have regarding their own and other ethnic groups.

The adherence to these values has been seen as an index of the acculturation process in the development of ethnic identity (Buhler & Massaridk, 1968). Traditional ethnic group values have been described along four dimensions: (1) group as compared to an individual orientation, (2) hierarchical as compared to egalitarian relationships, (3) expressiveness as compared to emotional restraint, and (4) passive as compared to an active approaches to problem solving (Rotheram-Borus & Lightfoot, 1998).

#### a: 2. Race

What is race? "Race is a particular, historically- and culturally-located form of human categorization, involving visual determinants marked on the body through the interplay of perceptual practices and bodily appearance. Race has not

had one meaning or a single essential criterion, but its meanings have always been mediated through visual appearance, however complicated” (Alcoff, 1997, p. 69). The criteria determining racial identity have included ancestry, experience, outside perception, internal perception, coded visibility, habits, and practices. All these and more are variously invoked for both individual and groups (Cook, 1994). The criteria which are primarily operative vary by culture, neighbourhood, and historical moment, so that some people place ancestry as all-determining, while others make subjective identification the key (Alcoff, 1997).

Racial identity, as Cook (1994) suggests, “is more than a peripheral demographic characteristic or a cultural characteristic of the individuals involved. Rather, race is viewed as a sense of identification with a collective group based on the perception that a common racial heritage is shared” (p. 132). Furthermore, racial identity relates to how one feels, thinks, and behaves in relation to oneself, others within one’s identified racial group, and to others not belonging to the identified racial group (Helms, 1990). For those who experience racial oppression on a continuous basis, race can be an extremely salient part of their identity, because they are constantly reminded of their marginal status.

In contrast, those who harvest societal privileges may be less aware of their racial selves. Helms (1994) argues that “racial identity attitudes represent ego statuses, which develop sequentially in a circumflex manner, whereby the statuses share space within a multi-layered circle (symbolizing the ego), and the status(es)

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which occupies the greatest percentage of the ego has the most wide ranging influence over the person's manner of functioning" (p. 8). Nonetheless, racial identity development is still considered to be an evolutionary process. However; an individual may design and construct or begin the process of shaping identity in any of the ego statuses, and may revert back and forth between the statuses (Cook, 1994). The definition of identity emphasizes continuity between past biographical experiences and future aspirations, which is related to the individual's construal of self in the present; changes in identity are predicated on both what was and what is hoped to be for the individual (Weinreich, 1991). According to Weinreich (1991), "one's identity is defined as the totality of one's self-construal, in which how one constructs oneself in the present expresses the continuity between how one constructs oneself as one was in the past and how one constructs oneself as one aspires to be in the future" (p. 10). Such a definition highlights the fact that one's ethnic identity is a facet of one's total identity, just as one's gender identity and occupational identity are, and so on.

Identities are meaning attributed to the self as object (Burke & Tully 1977). The identity process, on the other hand, is a feedback process of comparing one's specified identity in a situation with one's desired identity or identity standard. "Behavioral adjustments are made so that one's perceived identity matches and confers one's identity standard" (Stets, 1995, p. 132).

An individual within the identity-achieved status has undergone an exploration process prior to meaningful commitments that reflect a “matching” of personal interests, values, and attributes, with opportunities offered by the wider society; a person in the moratorium status is currently exploring opportunities available within society for meaningful expression of vocational, ideological, and interpersonal interests (Kroger, 1995). The foreclosed individual has been described as one undertaking such commitments prior to exploration; this person has generally interjected parental values or those of significant others without any considered evaluation (Weinreich, 1991). The diffuse individual has been defined according to lack of commitment to identity-related roles; this person appears uninterested in attempting to find meaningful social outlets that express personal values (Kroger, 1995; Stets, 1995; Weinreich, 1991).

In fact, when analyzing assimilation and acculturation levels, conformity represents dependency on White society for definition and approval, mostly with negative attitudes toward one’s own racial/cultural group. As a result, marked feelings of confusion and conflict about the meaning and significance of one’s race or culture becomes incompatible with the dominant group. Furthermore, such an understanding of ‘self’, according to Cook (1994), “signifies active rejection of the dominant White culture in order to idealize one’s own racial or cultural group. This kind of internalization marks a positive commitment to one’s own racial group with internally defined racial attributes” (p. 133). Both the White and the

People of Colour identity models describe a range of racial consciousness that an individual might exhibit across their life span and in different life situations.

Within interpersonal interactions, the participant's social conditioning concerning issues of race can become an important aspect of the quality of interaction between races (Helms, 1990).

**b: Social Components**

Social values are also integral to identity. The evolution of an individual's attitude is a process parallel to their choice of adhering or not adhering to mainstream social values and beliefs. The social relevance and meaning of identity has changed as a result of the popular culture industry, recasting it as a resource for individuals to use in everyday life. Identity has changed along the lines suggested by Zurcher (1977,1986), and Gergen (1991): it is more negotiated than institutionally grounded, particularly among younger people, but the shift is consistent with popular cultural emphasis on individual consumption, style, and performance.

'Self' identity, and the definition of the situation are critical concepts for the investigation and analysis of social behaviour (Altheide, 2000). "Self or the sense of a total and exclusive persona: identity that part of the self by which we are known to others; and the definition of the situation if people define things as real, they are real in their consequences (and multiple versions, traced in part by Merton (1995) to Epictetus, A.D.110)" (Altheide, 2000, p. 1). Symbolic

Interactionist approaches to the definition of the situation tend to focus on the time, place, and manner of action, although some works clarify the origins of definitions, their enactment in interaction, and the consequences (Foote 1951, via Altheide, 2000). As McHugh (1968), noted three decades ago, "In symbolic interaction a definition occurs by having taken the role of the other or by adopting a group standpoint" (p. 12). From this standpoint, identity is a social production and is not considered individual property. What one thinks of oneself may be relevant, but the claim of identity requires the concurrence of others.'

All human sciences concerned with the role of meaning in human behavior implicitly or explicitly deal with identity and definitions of situations. "The main function of context is to provide a way of organizing information beforehand, therefore making it more memorable. It is not what things objectively and actually are, but what they are for us and in our way of looking at them that makes us happy or unhappy" (Merton, 1995, p. 383). Social stability and change are reorganized, explained, and resisted through symbolic communication. "Much of our theory asserts that we exist as social beings in the midst of process. We do not 'have' or own an 'identity,' but rather, identity emerges and is acknowledged in situations; we live in the identity process" (Altheide, 2000 p. 4). Identity tells us "who" the actor is and who conducts or demonstrates the action to the audience. To be known as a certain kind of individual with various qualities crystallizes the essence of identity (how we are known to others). This process, involving the

three forms of communication and the human capacity to treat the self as an object, essentially amounts to this: We “are” what they expect if we communicate in accordance to situation (Altheide, 2000). The significance of the definition of the situation for social behavior has implications for understanding power and justice in social life (Moore, 1998). Thus, social definitions are key to the identity process, and these are reflected in the meanings people bring to situations as well as in those that emerge. Societal assumptions provide a backdrop for expectations of appropriateness, as well as essential scripts to present and then assess.

Individuals acting in specific situations see appropriate words and deeds reflected in symbolic communication from others (the mirror) (Cook, 1994). “What is critical for social consequence, of course, is the source and nature of this interactive construction and affirmation that individuals are given identities through symbolic meanings conveyed by particular others” (Altheide, 2000, p. 5).

Social groups provide their members with an identification that defines their social identity. Assuming that people strive to maintain or enhance a positive self-concept and that the self-concept is defined in terms of group affiliations, people are expected to view the in-group in a more favourable light than out-groups. The underlying psychological process leading to prejudice is, therefore, group identification (Verkuyten, & Hagendoorn, 1998; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). “Collective identity and intergroup behavior is distinguished from personal identity and interpersonal behavior, and the focus is primarily on behavior

determined by membership of social groups or categories” (Verkuyten & Hagendoorn, 1998, p. 100). This self-categorization offers a more general concept of intra and intergroup processes (i.e., the macro and the micro levels relationship) and stresses the cognitive processes involved. It also starts from the bond between collective and personal identity. These are seen not so much as qualitatively different forms of identity, rather, as different levels of self-categorization. The relevance of the distinction between personal and social identity lies in its consequences for perception, evaluating and behavior. Several studies have shown that group perceptions and judgments differ depending on whether personal or social identity is activated. In the activation of social identity, “people come to perceive themselves more as the interchangeable exemplars of a social category than as unique personalities defined by their individual differences from others” (Verkuyten, & Hagendoorn, 1998, p. 110).

This process of depersonalization does not mean a loss of identity, rather, a change from the personal to the collective level of identity. When a given identity is salient, people will think and act in terms of those beliefs and standards that define the salient identity. Hence, as identities change, beliefs and standards change, and consequently, perceptions and judgments also change. It is, therefore, expected that individual beliefs and standards will determine prejudice when personal identity is salient, whereas group beliefs and standards will determine

prejudice when group or social identity is salient (Verkuyten & Hagendoorn, 1998).

Personal autonomy in this context would be regarded as the ability to narrate one's life, and to create meaning thereof. "This possibility should however not be understood as an existential choice for self-determination against all odds" (Sartre 1966, p. 56). It is a possibility that is not to be realized in situations of extreme deprivation, as the nature of identity is a relational, dialogical phenomenon (du Toit, 1997). Furthermore, identity is the open-ended product of social relations and socio-economic landscapes. It is therefore always intertwined with relations of power and systems of distribution of scarce resources. Identity is dependent upon social recognition: I can only take up the position of an "I" if 'you' allow me to turn 'I' into a 'you'.

Identity is thus not something that may be read off someone or simply attributed to them; it is rather something that has to be re-negotiated time and again, and which therefore resides in the fabric of dialogical relations. Furthermore, identity has to do with access to power, where power is viewed as the relative ability to shape one's world and one's selfhood, by endowing him/her with meaning as negotiated between oneself and other selves in the world. To be an 'I' in this sense means then to be able to tell stories in which 'I' propose and project possibilities for my future existence which are not merely fantasy.

### b: 1. Group

Group identity is necessarily embedded in the context of inter-group realities. That is, identification with an in-group is defined, in part, by the inter-group situation (Jackson, & Smith, 1999). Self-categorization theory (Turner, 1987; Hogg, 1992, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987) defines social identities as “cognitive groupings of oneself and some class of stimuli as the same in contrast to some other class of stimuli” (p. 44). Thus, categorization is determined by ‘comparative relations.’ Hogg (1992) suggests that measures of social identity need to consider “the specific nature of the group and its social history of relations with other groups” (p. 98) and that “a proper understanding of social attraction must be grounded in a discussion of inter-group relations” (p. 103).

Group cohesion is defined as “an individual’s desire to identify with and be an accepted member of the group” (Evans & Jarvis, 1986, p. 204), and “a group property with individual manifestations of feelings of belongingness or attraction to the group” (Lieberman, Yalom & Miles, 1973, p. 337). Belief in interdependency as a dimension of social identity is “by definition, norms and values regulate the behavior of group members as they pursue common goals” (Jackson & Smith, 1999, p. 45).

On the other hand, reference group identification is defined in terms of perceived interdependency or common fate; that is, self-identity and self-interests are based on group membership (Jackson & Smith, 1999). According to self-

categorization theory, social identity entails levels of depersonalization, that is, “a shift towards the perception of self as an interchangeable exemplar of some social category and away from the perception of self as a unique person” (Turner, 1987, p. 50). According to Brewer’s (1993) optimal distinctiveness theory: “Social identities are categorizations of the self into more inclusive social units that depersonalize the self-concept and satisfy the need for inclusions” (p 3).

Social identity theory continues to grow as an important and powerful perspective in understanding many real-world problems. These include—why children conform to peer pressure, why groups sometimes make faulty decisions, and determines how inter-group hatred develops and is maintained. Jackson and Smith (1999) explain that: “taking into consideration different dimensions of social identity may deepen our understanding of why and when such events take place, which may ultimately facilitate our ability to predict and prevent harmful outcomes of social identity, and promote positive ones” (p. 122-135).

#### b: 2. Political issues

This perspective focuses on values which underline rights, and including a framework that interprets conflicts between individuals and communities in terms of the value of identity-related differences derived from membership in or association with different cultures, religions, genders, and other groups (Avigail, 1994). Culture, religion, language, and gender are among the central differences that distinguish and help to determine the identities of people. Significant identity-

related characteristics will mostly depend on the sort of political significance the characteristics have within the community. "The point is that the centrality and shape of identity, including the health of identity, depend upon how social and political institutions treat differences between people" (Avigail, 1994, p. 9). Our identity is partly shaped by recognition or absence of, or the misrecognition of others. Politics that celebrate difference attempt to protect identity-related differences, or at least those differences that are most central to the identities of people within the society. That is to say, "arrangements are often set in place in order to recognize and protect identity-related difference."

Alternatively, singling out the culture or language of specific groups for special constitutional protection is a more direct means of protecting identity-related differences. Obviously, differences between groups may be determined by differences between individuals (Avigail, 1994).

Protecting individual difference mean allowing individuals the opportunity to voice their opinions, to choose their beliefs and generally to be the authors of their own lives and identities as long as their choices do not cause harm to others. A politic that values individual differences may set parameters to community decision-making by employing rights as devices to protect the interest which are crucial to the preservation of individual identity" (Avigail, 1994, p. 11).

The politics of recognition might include one's skin color, or one's sexual preference, age, and beliefs (Lotter, 1998). Most of the contemporary philosophical debates about personal identity are focused on what it is that makes a person one and the same person, at different times. What differentiates one person from another is significant for understanding the politics of identity. According to Lotter (1998), "my identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame—within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose" (p. 179).

Individuals may see identity as defined partly by some moral or spiritual commitment (e.g., Catholic, anarchist), or they may define it partly by reference to the nation or tradition to which they belong (e.g., American, German, and/or African). What they are saying by defining their identities in this way is that they are strongly attached to a spiritual view or cultural background. This provides the frame within which they can determine where they stand on questions of what is good, or worthwhile, or admirable, or of value (Lotter, 1998; Taylor 1989). Lotter (1998) defines his personal identity "as the understanding characteristics as a human being; being true to myself and my own particular way of doing" (p. 183). His definition of personal identity justifies his version of liberalism and allows a government to pursue the collective goals of a dominant culture.

In this sense, identity could put restrictions on individuals, which may result in the infringement of the individual's fundamental human rights, specifically, on moral, spiritual, and ethnic values linked to specific social groups which ignores other possible components of personal identity. Personal identity defines the means, the standard, and the resources of how the self is interpreted and configured in a unique and unrepeatable way (Lotter, 1998; Taylor 1989). Personal identity is, then, a configuration of diverse components ranging from perceptions, feelings, and interpretations of a person's body, abilities, skills, ethnic origin, and moral values.

Lotter (1998) further states that, "besides a person's body, talents, abilities and skills, the values that a person are committed to also play a very important role in the constitution of his or her identity. These values can be about moral, political, religious or cultural issues" (p. 194). A person might strongly identify with the values of a particular community, such as the scenic beauty, plant and animal life of a particular district, the spirit of a city and the ideal that it symbolizes, as well as the geographic area and common experiences that people within a state's borders share with one another (Lotter, 1998, Walzed, 1992, Taylor, 1989). Origin, in a metaphorical sense, is often one of the decisive elements of personal identity (i.e., family origin and language). Language is fundamental as an instrument for the stories or literature, history, folklore, and media that are written and related, but it is also a medium of expressing one's

deepest feelings, thoughts, wishes, and longings, towards which a person develops a deep attachment. Thus, “ethnicity, regardless of whether it is judged to be good or bad is a permanent feature of human life” (Walzed, 1992, p. 171). It includes the history, cultural traditions, prescribed norms and values, and heritage of a group of people, not necessarily based on race, but rather on ethnicity. Lotter (1998) indicates that, “the reason for its strong hold is that it unifies several components of personal identity mostly those with strong emotional commitments involved into a more or less coherent whole” (p. 194). A constantly changing component of a person’s identity is his or her age group, or developmental stage and its accompanying activities.

According to Curtis (1991), “Personality is a word that is frequently used to mean the relatively enduring dispositions of an individual. The ‘self,’ on the other hand, derived from a word meaning ‘the same,’ requires recognition, that is, awareness of sameness” (p. viii). From the psychoanalytic perspective offered by Kohut (1977), the term self generally refers to relatively enduring aspects of an individual’s intrapsychic organization that provides the capacity to initiate action and to attain a sense of coherence, self-esteem, and consistency (Blusten, 1996). Other theorists, particularly from the sociological, social constructionist, and social psychological perspectives, have observed that the self is anchored in a social context in which individuals derive a sense of self from their own subjective experiences, their social roles, and from various constraining and liberating social

conditions (Blustein, 1996; Cushman, 1990; DeCraemer, 1983; Gergen, 1991; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Blustein (1996) states that, "whereas concepts of the self have emerged from philosophy, social psychology, personality theory, and psychoanalytic theory, and identity generally has been examined from a more circumscribed framework" (p. 435).

The concept of identity has often been employed in a more expansive fashion, capturing a wider range of interpersonal experiences that reflect internalized social and cultural influences (Blustein, 1994; Vondracek, Lerner & Schulenberg, 1986). Kohut (1977) defines the self as the initiating centre of one's personality that provides structure and cohesion to one's experience. Rather than defining the self as an autonomous construct, Kohut proposed that the self cannot exist without the emotional supplies provided by significant others (known as "self-object" experiences) (Blustein, 1996). By providing individuals with affirmation and strength via empathetic attunement, positive self-object experiences allow individuals to attain a level of self-cohesion that fosters resilience, self-esteem, access to their own talents and values, and a sense of goal directedness. Gergen (1991) explains, "the self is constructed and reconstructed in multiple contexts of relationship which make possible the concept of the self. We appear to stand alone, but we are manifestations of relatedness" (p. 170). The independent self which is characteristic of Western societies (i.e., in reference to psychological, social, political behavioral attributes), construes the self as being

separate from others (Gergen, 1991). In contrast, the interdependent self, which is more common among non-Western societies, defines the self as being interconnected to others within the social context (Blustein, 1996; Cushman, 1990; DeCraemer, 1983; Gergen, 1991; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

In Western societies, the self is viewed as rigid and stable, but in non-Western societies, the self is viewed as flexible and varied (Blustein, 1996). For DeCraemer (1983), these cultures “not only recognize, but emphasize the contextual, relational nature of person-hood, its inseparability from social solidarity, its body-and-psyche, as well as self-and-other holism, and its ‘inner,’ emotive, symbolic, and ritual aspects” (p. 32). The development and maintenance of an individual’s self and identity is increasingly understood as occurring within a relational matrix in which one’s early family history and current relationships furnish the necessary emotional supplies for healthy developmental progress (Kohut, 1977; Josselson, 1992; Mitchell, 1993). Recent literature on self and identity points to the inherent difficulty in understanding an individual’s intrapsychic organization and interpersonal experience without an explicit focus on the cultural context (Cushman, 1991; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Nevertheless, according to Nehme (1995):

the concept of identity is hard to define and difficult to measure.

Individuals do not respond passively to external contingencies. They

respond to their environment as they construe it, for example, not to

“reality” as such, but to the pictures in their heads that they have constructed to represent reality” (p. 5).

If the individual perceives something as real, it becomes real in its consequences because the individual, after all, is a social and political actor. Almost all individuals in all societies are afraid of something: death, sickness, injury, poverty, discrimination and/or oppression (Nehme, 1995). The social and religious beliefs and values that provide individuals of most societies a sense of security from those fears has been a source of insecurity. “In a community-group, habits, historical experiences and preferences are transmitted by the processes of communication that are the basis of the coherence of social religious or ethnic groups, and even the personalities of individuals” (Deutsch, 1953, p. 61). The process of communication within a group reinforces the value system and reproduces patterns of political and social behavior (Nehme, 1995).

The universal sameness that is so important for the “liberal” self requires a careful containment and taxonomy of difference. Where rights require sameness, difference must be either trivialized or contained in the “Other” across a firm and clearly visible border (Alcoff, 1997). Race is irrelevant, but all is race. “Visible difference is the path to classification and therefore knowledge, and yet visible difference threatens the security of claims to know by challenging universal applicability and invoking the specter of relativism” (Alcoff, 1997, p. 67).

The object [of discourse] does not await in limbo the order that will free it and enable it to become embodied in a visible and prolix objectivity; it does not preexist itself, held back by some obstacle at the first edges of light. I exist under the positive conditions of a complex group of relations (Cross, 1987, p. 13).

There is a visual registry operating in social relation which is socially constructed, historically evolving, and culturally multicolored but nonetheless powerfully determinant over individual experiences and choices. And for that reason, it also powerfully mediates subjectivity.

#### IV: Conclusion

In this reviewed literature, identity remains a complex and a situational phenomenon. In other words, the interpretation of 'self' or one's identity in general seems to be dependent on the degree of how strongly one connects, relates, feel balanced, and is able to transcend in the community. These components help the person to acknowledge the process, where one is involved in designing, constructing, and finally, claiming the identity. Thus the development, or the transition, and the transformation of 'self' within the process leads to a broader and specific definition of one's identity. This activity in fact is a process of knowing and restructuring. At the same time, the process help evaluate the individual's relationship between 'self' and the others, 'self' and society, and 'self' and the world.

It is important to realize that the notion of identity avoids two extreme theoretical positions: it does not presuppose that one steps into the world a full-blown personal self and only then starts choosing an identity as if from a supermarket shelf. Nor does it presuppose that identity is simply bestowed by fate, and that one can merely respond either by being faithful or unfaithful to that destined identity (du Toit, 1997).

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### Philosophical Foundation

The philosophical foundation of this study was based on the phenomenological perspective. Historically, the phenomenological perspective, according to Giorgi (1999), “began as a philosophy initiated by Edmund Husserl and it is characterised by its emphasis on consciousness” (p. 75). The perspective is a form of recollective and reflective inquiry, intended to cultivate knowledge as expressed from lived-experiences. Furthermore, according to Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) phenomenology, “is the study of the world as it appears to individuals when they place themselves in a state of consciousness that reflects an effort to be free of everyday biases and beliefs” (p. 600). In other words, the perspective has the potential to stretch itself far beyond the traditional inquiries. As a result, it acknowledges the experience of self within which the individual senses, perceives, imagines, chooses, values, and acts within his/her consciousness, and becomes the source of their knowledge.

Within this frame of reference phenomenological human science research is explicit because it attempts to articulate the structures of meaning embedded in lived-experience. “Everything that is spoken about is spoken in terms of how objects or events appear to the consciousness of the beholder, which is the literal definition of ‘phenomenon’ for phenomenology” (Giorgi, 1999, p. 78). Moreover, the perspective permits the researcher to intimately connect with the phenomena

being studied and this process facilitates the knowing of oneself. Thus, the seeds of knowledge not only germinate in these fertile lived-experiences, but also allow knowledge to surface as being personally and socially significant.

Phenomenology values a strictly qualitative approach to the problem of learning; insists that comprehending the perspective of the learner is critical; acknowledges that there are varied ways in which human persons can perceive or understand a situation and claims to be descriptive in orientation. (Giorgi, 1999; Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). It seeks to obtain the typical essence or structure of a range of experiences in order to try to better understand the variations of these experiences (Giorgi, 1999).

Philosophically, the essence of phenomenology can be understood as “the process whereby whatever is given is investigated to reveal its structure or principle of organization” (Giorgi, 1999, p. 69). It sets the possibilities to build on the essence of various lived experiences, to stumble upon the variation of these experiences, and to learn through differentiation of the experiences. An essence is the most stable meaning for a context. It is the articulation, based on intuition, of a fundamental meaning without which a phenomenon could not present itself as it is (Giorgi, 1999). This then suggests that it is fundamental in accessing, exploring and describing the essential features and relationships of the objects or events (the phenomena) that are present in the process without negating the possibility for variation. That is why free imaginative variation is a natural method for

discovering essences. As the name implies, the method means that one can freely change aspects or parts of a phenomenon or object, and see if the phenomenon remains identifiable within the changed part or not (Giorgi, 1999).

Thus, “we might say that phenomenology is the philosophy of the personal, the individual, which we pursue against the background of an understanding of the evasive character of the logos of other, the whole, the communal, or the social” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 7). Hence, it is a philosophy that is based upon intuition, on how objects present themselves to consciousness (so “how” and “what” are both fully considered), and it proceeds to uncover the essences of such in a descriptive and creative manner (Giorgi, 1999; Krieger, 1991; Van Manen, 1990).

### Conceptual Reference

According to Krieger (1991), “when we discuss others, we are always talking about ourselves. Our images of “them” are images of “us.” Our theories of how “they” act and what “they” are like, are, first of all, theories of ourselves: who we are, how we act, and what we are like. This self-reflective-nature of our statements is something we can never avoid” (p. 5). As a result, phenomenological inquiry differentiates experiences or conscious acts along essential lines.

Therefore phenomenological research as Giorgi (1999) states, “wants to know what the essence of learning is. That is, when does learning, as opposed to some other phenomenon, occur? What are the conditions under which it happens? What are facilitators or obstacles to learning process?” (p. 78). Within this context,

one may say that an important condition for learning is dialogue or a process of conversation and exchange in all encountered situations or experiences. Through dialogue or conversation (i.e., interview), two people could not only associate, connect, or differentiate in order to learn about their encounters, but also transmit and/or transcend the acquired knowledge to future encounters. It is essential that this experience be guided in order to reflect on adequate understanding of the participant that is in accordance with their worldview. Encounters perhaps are structurally controlled through a range of variations. Nonetheless, the use of the method depends upon the ability of the researcher to co-research and demonstrate his/her willingness to be open to possibilities. Whatever is given factually becomes an example of a possible instance of the phenomenon, and by multiplying possibilities (the range of meanings within the data) one becomes aware of those features that cannot be removed thus rendering what is essential for the object to be given to consciousness (Stefan, 1999; Kvale, 1996). For phenomenology, what is sought for any range of experience is the structure "identity-variation". One begins with imagined variations, by means of which one can arrive at an identity, and then arms oneself with a defined identity (Giorgi, 1999; Krieger, 1991; Kvale, 1996; Stefan, 1999; Van Manen, 1990). Exploratory interviewing helps people to tell the stories of their experiences and through the process of telling the encounters, knowledge is conceived. In a sense, verbal

conversation requires language and language is the primary source of knowledge (Giorgi, 1999; Krieger, 1991).

“Knowledge as language is rich in the interview process. It is the very medium and tool of the interview. Language constitutes reality in its own way [yet] the focus on language shifts attention away from the notion of an object reality and from individual subject knowledge is interrelational” (Stefan, 1999, p. 30).

The interview is “literally an inter view, an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a common theme” (Kvale, 1996, p. 44). The knowledge gained in an interview is inter-relational (Kvale, 1996, Stefan, 1999). “The knowledge is neither inside the person nor outside in the world; it exists in the relationship between the individual and his or her world” (Stefan, 1999, p. 30). Nonetheless, the world that exists inside or outside is independent of one’s own experience and how it is linguistically expressed. For this reason one may encounter difficulty in comprehending the world; because the experiences are independent. As a result of relationship with others, these difficulties do not take into account the fact that the world exists both inside and outside experience(s).

Hence the intent of phenomenological study in most instances is to describe the lived-experiences of a few participants (up to ten) (Porter, 1999, Morse, 1994, Standelowski, 1995) and does not generalize the description to the whole population outside of the demographic characteristics. Within this instance, the

general goal of phenomenological study describes the unique and common features of an experience shared within the demographic. According to Van-Manen, (1990): “The essence or nature of an experience has been adequately described in language if the description reawakens or shows us the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner” (p. 10). Therefore, this suggests that phenomenological description is less concerned with societal shaping than it is in elaborating the individual meanings that are embedded in everyday lived-experience. The phenomenological study aims at a faithful description of the lived-experience and the researcher is able to provide an integral description of the essences by bracketing his/her biases, and the frame of reference (Horn, 1998).

What is clear about phenomenological research is that of its dependence on the discipline, interdisciplinary, and/or even transdisciplinary nature of qualitative inquiry. As Horn (1998) states:

most often the inquiries are framed within disciplinary contexts; the nature of qualitative inquiry spills over these boundaries when studying the meanings; or elaborating descriptions of essential qualities of lived-experiences; or interpreting the multiple natures of worlds brought forth by human actors; or uncovering the relations of power within a frame of reference (p. 606).

of how individuals create and sustain meaning in their everyday lives (Horn, 1998).

Heuristic research is another building block of phenomenological inquiry. It permits the researcher to discover their lived-experiences within the phenomena, reflects upon these experiences, and brings information about the phenomena to the world. The word heuristic comes from the Greek word "heuriskein," which means to discover or find (Tyson, 1992). The focus of the heuristic study is on advancing the understanding of the complex, changing, and diverse realities those educators face. It explains the conceptual tools to understand, assess, and develop relevant and appropriate heuristics in relation to a given problem (Giorgi, 1999; Krieger, 1991; Tyson, 1992). A heuristic is a problem-solving strategy that organizes experience, guides the research, and allows researchers to refer to their lived-experiences. With heuristics, people simplify problems by abstracting essential details and then using the simplified problem as a guide or model for solving the full problem (Tyson, 1992). Heuristics simplify the infinite range of variables, prioritize information, and speed up the trial-and-error search entailed in problem solving (Tyson, 1992). It enables researchers to uncover patterns in experience and to integrate diverse and seemingly unrelated information. Hence, in heuristics, the organizing of information reformulates the original problem in order to make it solvable. My research utilizes the heuristic strategy and

principles, as it is a tool that provides access to the cross-cultural significance of lived-experiences.

### Method

My research methodological design for this study followed a qualitative, descriptive, heuristic approach. I followed the first five stages suggested by Moustakas (1990) for heuristic research in order to connect with the process of the research. It allowed me to engage with participants and to analyze their experience, in order to clarify information for the community of human service professionals.

The first phase of the five stages of heuristic research was understanding that the topic under investigation was personally and socially significant, intellectually and emotionally. This suggested that it was important to invest in the topic and to undertake a process of self-discovery, by means of determining what was of intense interest to the researcher, and to gauge the questions that arise from this search. "Embracing the subjective in this way clears the path for personal knowing, tapping into the nuance and variation of experience, crawling inside the self and eventually making contact with the tacit dimension, the basis for all possible knowledge" (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985, p. 44). Once the research question has become solidified, it becomes the researcher's task to define and clarify the terms that explicate the subject (Moustakas, 1990).

Phase two involves immersion with the question. At this stage “anything connected with the question becomes raw material for immersion, for staying with, and for maintaining a sustained focus and concentration” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28), with the topic. Generally speaking, heuristic inquiry is more of a way of being than it is a method. By staying with the topic and wandering through the nuances that present themselves, the researcher is able to say what is being experienced without necessarily being able to discern all the constituents. The researcher must remain persistent, constantly self-searching and reflecting, in order to better see the themes that are relevant, and to be able to account for how slight shift may reveal further components of the inquiry (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985).

The third phase requires incubation, in which one withdraws from intense focus on the question and allows “the inner tacit dimension to reach its fullest possibilities” (Moustakas, p. 29). It is during this phase that new understanding and knowledge are clarified and expanded “on levels outside the immediate awareness” (Moustakas, p. 29).

Once one has allowed the incubation of the question, a natural flow occurs into the fourth phase of illumination. During this phase, there is a “breakthrough into conscious awareness of qualities into themes inherent in the question” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 30). It is at this point that the time is ripe for data collection. We acquire data during a heuristic nature of the exchange, “When we know a

thing from our own experience, its meaning can be recognized in others, without the typical accountings and explanations” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 51).

The fifth phase is that of explication. Here, one is able to bring into conscious awareness the many levels and meanings unique to the question being asked. It is at this phase that the “major components of the phenomenon, in detail [are] now ready to [be] put together into a whole experience” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). This approach allows for flexibility and change as the process unfolds.

#### Personal Assumption

Qualitative inquiry within the heuristics frame of reference provides an essential bridge between information and knowledge and the human enterprise of self-discovery, as well as cultural integration. Further to this, this process acknowledges the human need to know by exploring and describing the development of knowledge within the context of lived-experience (Horn, 1998). In addition, Stefan, (1999) suggested that “Qualitative research involves the researcher in the process and does not consider this bias as error”(p. 33).

This research contained several assumptions:

1. Themes generated from the study were useful in understanding the Ethiopian immigrants’ source of motivation to design, redesign, and construct their identity in order to successfully access their potential in their new community.

2. Ethiopian immigrants were experts in their own patterns of lived experience.
3. The new community has a profound effect on Ethiopian immigrants' reconstruction of identity.
4. Clarify essential factors existed in the communities that helped Ethiopian immigrants design and construct new identity.
5. The resulting information from this research will influence further research to serve immigrants better.
6. The participants' statements of experiences were described accurately.
7. Those who came to Canada with painful physical and psychological experiences may have managed to reconstruct their identity, while other Ethiopian immigrants who did not have these experiences may have problems.
8. A qualitative research methodology was the most appropriate approach to uncover the subtleties of these experiences.

### Data Collection

The data collection took the form of in-depth interviews that were both dialogical and spontaneous, so that the exchange of experience and information followed naturally between participants and researcher. This approach was used because, according to Moustakas (1990), "at the heart of heuristics lies an emphasis on disclosing the self as a way of facilitating disclosure from others—a

response to the tacit dimension within one's self sparks a similar call from others" (p. 37). For this to be possible, the time for the interview remained flexible in order to allow the full expansion and expression of the participants' awareness of the experience.

The participants for this study consisted of both male and female Ethiopian immigrants who were over the age of forty, were the victims of torture prior to coming to Canada, and who overcame the challenges of constructing a new identity (social and political identity [i.e., citizenship], and personal [i.e., education, economic success, marriage, etc.]). This study explored and verified this assumption through the lens of the participant experiences.

The selection of participants for this study was based on the criteria of heuristic research—I am also an immigrant with similar experiences. According to Moustakas (1990), "in heuristic research the investigator must have a direct personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated" (p. 34). It was my intention to include my experience of this phenomenon in the investigation in order to draw out an understanding of the Ethiopian immigrant population.

Ten participants who fit the research criteria were selected from the resident Ethiopian population in Greater Victoria and Greater Vancouver (those who went through painful experiences both in Ethiopia and in refugee camps). Since I am well known within these Ethiopian communities, access to population was not difficult. The participants were approached through advertisement, distribution of

notices, and through word of mouth. Data was then collected through tape-recorded interviews, which were transcribed in English. All participants were interviewed in a location that was mutually convenient. Interviews were conducted once rapport had been established with the interviewer. Each interview took approximately one and a half hours, with follow-up interviews consisting of one half hour.

Questions which were explored in the interviews

1. What were your tribal background and the roles that shaped your identity in Ethiopia? Has your identity and role changed since coming to Canada? Has anything happened to change your identity? Have these experiences changed how you feel about yourself today?
2. What are the differences between how you “imagine” yourself in Ethiopia and how you imagine yourself now in Canada? What do you think, based on your experience, accounts for that difference?
3. What did you do to reconstruct your identity?
4. Does either community (Canadian or Ethio-Canadian) have any influence in constructing your new identity? How? Does it help to facilitate a positive identity?
5. How does opposition or resistance to the dominant community factor into your new identity or self-concept?

6. To what extent did either community (Canadian or Ethio-Canadian) encourage or discourage you to design and construct your new identity?
7. What were the challenges you or your children encountered/assumed that they will encounter within the school system and or the community?
8. What would you suggest to educators about children of refugees?

#### Interview Format

In keeping with the heuristic methodology, these questions were used as a general guideline within an open dialogue between participants and researcher. The purpose of the interviews was to uncover the experiences of the participants and to interpret and describe the phenomena. The approach to the interviews required a careful listening and questioning approach in order to distinguish between personal interaction and knowledge construction (i.e., meaning making, within the context of their environments) (Kvale, 1996). The interview style follows the participants' particular tribal tradition (when they told their stories) with empathy, genuineness, and acceptance. I acted as the facilitator of the participants' experience and, in essence, was the instrument of the method (Kvale, 1996; Stefan, 1999).

The interview format for this study was framed within Stefan's (1999), perspective. Stefan suggests that the everyday lived-world of the interviewee and his or her relation to the interview topic, is as crucial as the interpretation of the participants' lived-world, that is, the search for meaning of the central theses.

Furthermore, Stefan (1999), states, “precision in description and stringency in meaning interpretation correspond in qualitative interviews to exactness in quantitative measurements” (p. 36). The precision of description revealed relevant material from which interpretations are drawn. As the interviewer, I sought to unfold specific descriptions of situations and actions in the lived world of the participant (Kvale, 1996).

Moreover, it was important that I remain naïve, but mindful of my own assumptions and attempts to obtain descriptions from participants, free of interviewer bias. According to Stefan (1999), “it is the interviewer’s responsibility to contain the interview within the topic area and yet to remain non-directive. The researcher must maintain watchfulness for ambiguity in a participant’s statements.”

The process may elicit change in the participant’s descriptions of the experience and his or her sense of the themes inherent in his or her lived world. In the interview, tension exists, between having knowledge of the research topic and sensitivity to the information, while trying to remain ‘unassumed.’ “The interviewer and the subject act in relation to each other and reciprocally influence each other” (Kvale, 1996, p. 35). I remained mindful of the dynamics within the interaction during the interview and later in the analysis (Stefan, 1999). Ideally, the outcome of the interview was a positive experience for the interviewee. The interviewee was given the opportunity to tell his/her story to an empathetic,

sensitive listener, who was seeking to understand their experience, and, in seeking this understanding, was able to elicit a positive response from the storyteller.

Different questions were asked throughout the interviews in order to facilitate the participants' experience and to allow the fullness of their experience to manifest. For example, introductory questions, such as "Can you tell me more about...?", or "Could you describe for me...?" were utilized. I also used: non-verbal encouragements, such as nodding or a pausing; probing questions such as "Could you say more about..?"; specifying questions, such as "What did you do when..?"; direct questions such as "Have you ever..?"; indirect questions such as "How do you believe others view this ..?" To keep the participant on track of the theme of the interview; I would say, "I would like to go back to your previous statement about...". Silence occurred, also, for reflection and to make associations and connections to the questions.

Interpretative questions were used as the major component of the interview in order to elicit clarity and to validate the participant's experience as well as to satisfy the test for validity in the study. Interpretative questions such as "You then mean that...?", or speculative forms such as, "Do you see any connection between...?" (Stefan, 1999, p. 37-38; Kvale, 1996, p. 133-135) were also included for cross-referencing meaning, and to clarify misunderstandings.

## Data Analysis

Immediately after each interview notes were made on thought, themes, and senses that arose for me during the interview. Each participant was asked if there were any personal documents that he/she would like to contribute to the data, such as pictures, diaries, journals, and poetry or art, which might offer additional depth and meaning to the experiences that were explored (Stefan, 1999).

I then followed the second and third stages of immersion and incubation with each participant's information. At this point I listened to the tapes while reading the verbatim transcripts, noting pertinent themes and patterns that emerged in the moment, and extracted quotations and descriptions. During this exercise, I also recorded various paralinguistic and behavioural cues remembered from the initial interviews.

Each interview was read several times, during which time comments, themes, and patterns were noted in the margins. The themes and patterns reflected the information associated with the interview questions. The transcripts were then colour-coded by drawing coloured lines through each page of the transcript, with each participant having a different colour. Each interview statement that had a notation of theme, pattern, or comment was recorded with the page number from which it was taken. The interview transcripts were then cut into sections, separating each statement that was noted as having a theme, pattern, or comment.

Colour-coding and page numbers on each strip of paper were used as a way of tracking the participants and the larger context of the statement.

Once all the relevant statements were separated from the main dialogue, the strips of paper were sorted according to themes and patterns. It was necessary to return to the original interviews to comprehend the full context of a statement and to assess whether or not anything had been missed in the initial stage of extracting themes (Stefan, 1999). The colour-coding was a way of keeping track of which participants fall into which categories.

Once the information had been dissected, I reconstructed the information of each participant into individual portraits of their experiences. I allowed the participants to read this reconstruction of their information, asking them for feedback on the accuracy of my understanding. Once again, this was a check for validity. The next stage was to develop the main themes that had evolved from data collection using each person's statement as verification.

At various levels the "Ad Hoc Meaning Generation," suggested by Kvale (1996), including the 12 ways of making meaning in a free interplay of techniques, was used. These include: "1) noting patterns and themes, 2) seeing plausibility, 3) clustering; 4) making metaphors; 5) counting; 6) making contrasts/comparisons, 7) partitioning variables, 8) subsuming particulars under the general, 9) factoring, 10) noting relations between variables, 11) finding intervening variables, 12) making conceptual/theoretical coherence" (Kvale, p. 201).

As a final check for validity, the abstracted sections were given to each participant to review, and to note which sections applied to them. I then took this information back to the original documents, which retained the colour-coded information, in order to track which participant belonged to which category. The final check was comparing the research findings with the participants' view of themselves in the abstractions. Then, corrections were made according to participant feedback.

### Validity

The broad concept of validity “pertains to the degree that a method investigates what it has intended to investigate, to the extent to which our observations indeed reflect the phenomena or variables of interest to us” (Kvale, 1996, p. 238). From a postpositivist perspective, the statements of facts are not the focus; the interpretation of meaning is the criterion for the validity of a study. In this regard, to validate is to check the findings not only at the end as a final product of control, but throughout the research process. In this study, checking of validity was used in the initial stages, during the theoretical derivations, and in the formulation of the research question: Does this study benefit knowledge and the human situation?

Checking for validity was especially important during the data collection stage, which was the interview stage in this study. I was diligent in questioning and gauging the level of perception of the participants in order to be sure of

understanding their meaning. Transcriptions were also checked in order to validate the verbatim accounts of the participants' expressions.

During the analyzing stage, validity was checked by asking whether the questions asked in the interview text were valid. In reviewing the final report, the researcher asked, "Is this a valid account of the main findings in the study?" The final check for validity was in obtaining the research participants' review of their transcripts, and the final synthesis of the data for verification of the meaning of their statements (Kvale, 1996; Poland, 1995 Stefan, 1999).

## Chapter 4

### Results

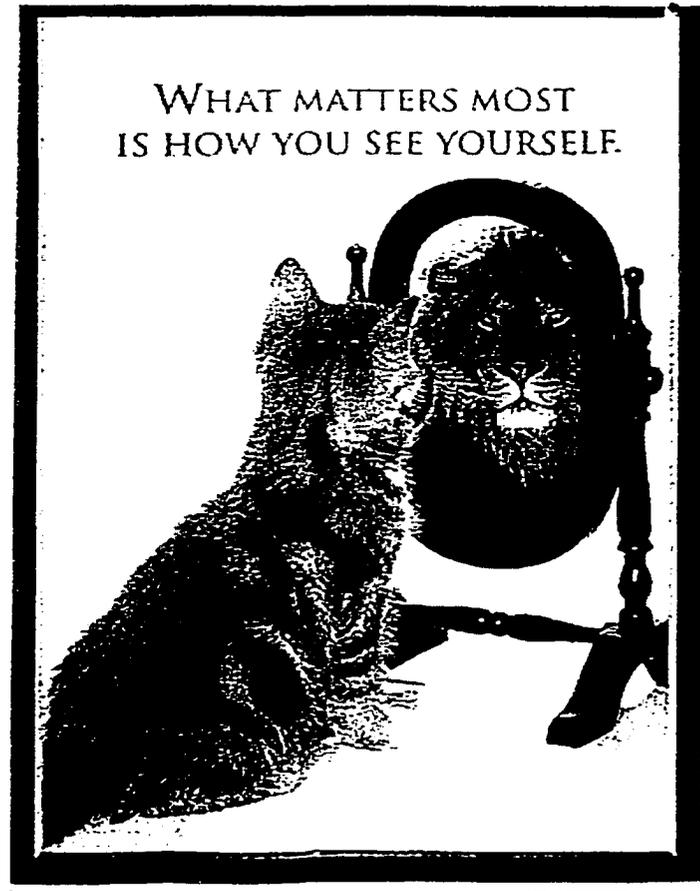


Figure 5

Artist and author is unknown; it was given to me by one of the participants in this research.

#### Introduction And Process

The following information describes the processes and experiences of reading through the transcripts, as well as how the meanings of the data emerged.

First, as I read through the transcribed data, I began to feel overwhelmed by the apparent political and social oppression that many of my participants experienced as a result of their tribal identity. Consequently, I began to question my own knowledge, ability, and skill in understanding Ethiopian tribal history. At times, I felt deeply saddened by the trials each participant had faced, and at other times, this sadness manifested itself as the face of rage, roaring against the evident injustices. I reacted emotionally and verbally (screamed), in anger and disbelief.

Nonetheless, I was careful not to fall back into the crack of Ethiopian tribal politics by reminding myself that these feelings are part of the process for the purpose of gaining knowledge. I also noted that participants in this research were from ten different tribes situated in Ethiopia. This helped me to become sensitive and open to their stories. Upon completion of reading all participants' interviews, my sense of rage subsided. I began to gain a comprehensive understanding of each interview in the context of the whole.

Second, I read again and highlighted (underlined) phrases and words descriptive of the web of factors that influenced their sense of current and original identity. In reading further, I began to open memories of my own social and political oppression, seeing vividly what it was like to be emotionally and physically rejected by a segment of society and political institution, as well as to be tortured. As a result, I have gained a sense of compassion and sensitivity for the participants of this study.

Third—this was the time where I put all highlighted meta-themes into one document. Pieces that were prominent were put in paragraph form for each participant. During this part of the process, in revealing the essence of the participants' descriptions, I discovered 386 meta-themes. From these themes emerged themes that incorporate all 386 sources of experiences as Ethiopian immigrants (refer to Appendix A). The selected themes provided a broad range of common and unique relationships to the research questions. I then arranged the extracted segments into paragraphs that reflected the essence of each of the meta-themes.

Fourth, these segments were read carefully and repeatedly until a full comprehension of the web of factors (tribe, culture, family, community) was gained. Through this process, I began to look within myself and gained a deeper understanding of myself in relation to Canadian society. In reflecting upon my process as an Ethiopian and immigrant, the patterns of assimilation and adaptation described by the participants made sense to me (overcoming the struggle as well as the moment of glory and tests of success). My behavioural attributes were conditioned by political torture, and my actions and therefore my interactions, were carefully designed to avoid stigma and other negative experiences. Similarly, these participants behaved and reacted to assimilation in reference to their historical tribal oppression and marginalization.

Finally, in order to fit the segments of the data into categories, five themes were charted: common roots of identity; exposure to others; commitment; barriers; and success. Then reference was made to the heuristic method, chosen to verify the process and to understand the meaning of these lived-experiences.

### Results

Through interviews with ten adult Ethiopian refugees (five men, five women), 386 sources of identity building blocks were elicited in order to design reconstruct, and claim an identity in Canada. Although the elicited sources were a reflection of participants' lived experiences, the tribal sources were not reported as it was determined that these would not change the overall result or contribute to new knowledge. In other words, what was commonly articulated is only in reference to a process of reconstructing original identity in order to adapt, assimilate, and achieve full potential (the selected participants define themselves as successful). Thus, the distinct tribal source of identity did not appear to change their experience in Canada.

The 386 sources of identities were organized into five major themes or categories. In this chapter, these themes or categories are first described. Second, methods used to validate the themes or categories are reported. Finally, a framework of identity reconstruction is presented, based on common experiences of Ethiopian refugees.

### Description of Themes (categories)

This section provides each of the five themes by presenting a brief description of the categories (themes) and examples of the interview data that corresponds with each theme. Themes are presented in random order (i.e., common roots of identity, exposure to others, commitment, barriers, and success), as there was no intention to arrange the order of significance. All of the sources extracted address each participant's means that they used to reconstruct their identity, and the intensity of their community role. The term identity in this study was used to understand the process of successful assimilation and adaptation within the Ethiopian refugee community. Thus, change of identity simply means that the participants have been successful in their new environment, either by maintaining their common roots of identity, accepting the new, and/or able to walk in both Ethiopian and Canadian ways of being.

### Common Roots of Identity

Although participants had identified Africa as their roots within the context of Ethiopian culture, tribal tradition, language and belief system, their relationship, interdependency, and connectedness to their community were most significant to their feelings of success and identity. Participants felt that the original identity they brought with them was important not only to maintain social links and networks amongst fellow country people, but also to help distinguish and separate

Ethiopians' conduct and behaviours from other immigrant populations in Canada.

The following are examples of participants' description of common roots:

I am a very strong believer in my culture. I believe in having a value, culture and beliefs helps people morally and gives them strength in life.

So I believe in my culture. I worship the rituals and everything my ancestors did. If I could today I would practice but unfortunately I can't. But in my heart, I will always think about it. It will always remain in your heart.

My family, my community, my tribe and my religion, Islam, are part of me who I am. Especially my mother, and my father. They did a lot. As an Ethiopian I share everything, traditional, customs, and do's and don'ts and those things, you know. All of us in Ethiopia somehow connected, I believe in that. Yeah, the general culture is what shaped my identity and who I am today.

The main reason why I opened this place here in Vancouver, and naming it Ethio Cafe, is to teach Canadians and others what I know about Ethiopia. As you can see here, all the decoration and everything reflects who we are and where we come from and I'm really proud of being Ethiopian. I don't believe in regionalized identities. It doesn't

matter what the political and social situation in Ethiopia, I rather identify myself and maintain my identity as an Ethiopian.

All these different tribes, makes Ethiopia, the number of the languages that are spoken, and the different cultures from one region to another.

We have to live together and make one nation. For me, tribal division and everything has no room for my identity. I believe and I'm proud of the fact that we have different culture but one nation.

I just know myself as Ethiopian. I am just happy that I'm Ethiopian. In some ways, we have a rich culture, a rich history, more than Canada, as you know, and all the things our forefathers did makes me very proud of being Ethiopian. What shape my life are being Ethiopian, Oromo, and Orthodox; that are what shape who I am today. The spirituality is more significant in my life than tribal links. Importantly, my parents have an influence on my life. They gave me everything. All the love. You know, Ethiopians do anything for their children. So I had that privilege. Full love, full trust. So even now when I think of anything, I think of my family and what they expect from me. So that's what shape my life and made me what I am today.

I consider myself for a very long time to be Ethiopian but I also consider myself an Eritrean because I am from both backgrounds. I maintain more or less my parents language than most Ethiopians. I speak my mothers and fathers language and I follow most of the traditions.

I can perfectly relate to these participants' sources of identity. What was interesting to notice within the participants' descriptions is that, despite tribal differences, we articulate our individual sense of identity only within the frame of a web that may be defined collectively. If one closely looks at each participant's description, it is not difficult to recognize that all were stating the same source in different words (family, community, tribe, spirituality, culture, tradition, etc.). None of the participants has isolated themselves from collectives in order to distinguish who they are and how they feel about themselves. I personally understand that the majority of Ethiopian immigrants living in Canada identify commonly in the same way as do these participants. One reason is that the individual definitions of success and failure are associated with the strength of, or in-depth knowledge of, one's sources of identity (all the above), and the degree of connectedness and interdependency. This is because there is no such thing as individual success (individual gain) outside of the frame of the web that defines the person identity.

### Exposure To Others

This theme addresses the participants' awareness and sensitivity to the others (i.e., other cultures, tribal traditions, and social environments) in order to utilize the resources necessary to reconstruct appropriate identity, in order to adapt and integrate or to develop coping strategies, and face challenges that may be seen as barriers to their success. Although, as most participants described their experiences with the "others" as being limited within the geographic boundaries of Ethiopian, referring only to the broader tribal and regional tradition, their lack of familiarity with Western society often makes them feel resistant to change and limited in their ability or willingness to reconstruct their identity.

Those participants whose tribal background was considered to be of minor consideration and who experienced oppression and discrimination by the dominant tribe, stated that they coped well with discrimination and the experience of racism in the Western world. On the other hand, those who were not exposed to others (i.e., cultures, tribes, and social environments), and were rooted in the dominant tribe in Ethiopia, found adaptation and assimilation in Western society difficult and at times intolerable. Furthermore, they described feeling humiliated, and internalized discrimination and racism because they had expected the West to know about their history and heroic background, by making Ethiopia free from European invasion. The following are examples of such categorization:

I knew that there was a difference between me and those other tribes, my neighbours and the whole country. The other tribes think my tribe is some sort of lower than, looks down upon them. The only difference is there is a hierarchy in politics. The one who is in power is the one who keeps down the others, look down at the other, being part of the majority. So Ethiopia has always been ruled by the minority government. There was no democracy and my culture is oppressed that's what I came to realize. So when I came here in Canada, this freedom, education, and access to resources, opened a whole new avenue for me to actually find out why that was the way it was in my country and became a turning point for me to actually find out who I am.

I have been in Sudan for a while. I have been in Egypt for a while, I have been in Syria and Lebanon, I try to get a lot of new culture from these worlds and this makes me a little bit different. I want to be different. I feel, over the years, since I left my country, my identity has changed. This is because I look and search for better I.

I grew up like everybody, you know. I went to a school where which 80% of the students were Eritreans, while the rest were from small

tribal areas in Ethiopia, people like me who now in today's concept amhara, so when you really consider it, we never had that separate identity. That was from grade 1 to grade 8. When I went to high school there were fewer tribes who are new to me. I started to see a large mix of tribes when I went to university. Then you see there is omoros, there's Tigray, and there's Eritrean who dominate the others.

Movement is very important. Some people move from city to city just for the sake of moving. But they do the same thing, learn and adapt. When you move, you know why you moved and where you are and what you should be doing it is to be different. I'm successful businessman because I believe in myself and have been exposed to many places and cultures.

I really was very careful how I decided my identity should be within Canadian culture but deep in my heart I am who I was back in my country.

I have to make a decision and I have to accept whatever the outcome is, if I fail because decision is not correct, I have to learn from it. If I have the ability to change and make a decision, I know I will succeed

I have to make a decision and accept the result, and I have to expect both positive and negative outcomes, no surprise that is if I get what I don't expect. There are some differences that I can't control. I have to live with the situation here.

There is a collectivity in our culture where the child or individual has to maintain that collectivity, where as in this culture, it is more individualistic. The kids can do whatever they want and they don't care about their families and their community.

I think we have a different identity. Like Canadians more proud to be Canadian but individualism is more respected than collectivism in Canada, as opposed to Ethiopians, who eat together, sleep together, all those things that reflect the respect for collectives. You know, that's part of our tradition. Like in North America, if you go for lunch with a friend, you have to pay your own part. Back home, if you go for lunch, one person will pay. If you do the same thing here, people, white Canadian, may think either you are rich or foolish.

If I was back home, and things are much better for me, in terms of life. But I choose to come to Canada, because if you don't know anything of another place, you dream always that things could be easier

You know, the language itself; the religion itself makes you to keep your tribe comparing with other tribes. For example, I cannot say that I am the same at Oromo or Guragea or Amharas, we are completely different. We are a different culture, more or less similar but there is always difference in terms of language and the way you grow up and the marriage system.

Nothing has changed, to be honest. But the integrate into the society the way you are, like, when I went to England to do my first degree, I have to try to fit into the society. And I have to fit into the weather and all that. I started putting on jeans and things like that, but in my personal life, nothing has changed. Deep inside, nothing has changed.

I am still part of my culture. I am still who I was. I will always be who I am. So nothing will change. I wouldn't change anything of my culture but I will try to integrate into the society. I respect everyone's identity. Everyone's culture. I try to keep my own as well.

The most significant factor that may have affected Ethiopians' ability to assimilate would be not knowing their differences from 'others.' It is such exposure that helps to recognize tribal livelihood or the status of majority/minority, superiority/inferiority, or the oppressed and oppressor, as a line of belonging within Ethiopia. Outside Ethiopia, such experience helps one to realize ethnic, racial, and cultural distinction from 'others.' For example, when I came to Canada, I was told some of my behaviours were considered inappropriate (e.g., no direct eye contact, sharing a plate, and insisting to pay for meals in restaurants for all of my friends). As a result, I learn to reconstruct my behaviours and actions in order to avoid being labelled and possibly rejected by my new community. In Ethiopia, I was exposed to a multi-tribal school environment and community, which required me to change my tribal behaviours and actions in order to survive. Like the participants in this study, most Ethiopians who came overseas encounter different challenges to reconstruct their core identity so that they may assimilate and have the opportunity to become successful. However, assimilating into a new culture does evolve without contradicting one's own cultural, tribal, and spiritual values.

### Commitment

Commitment for all participants was an important factor pertaining to their ability to assimilate in, and adapt to the Canadian social environment. Because they were committed to achieve, they minimized the hardship they experienced by

simply converting negative encounters into lessons that were important to their survival. Participants articulated that, if one abstains from focusing on the negative, the better they could cope and appreciate the positive. Commitment to survive is what brought all of us to this part of the world, and this commitment stimulates the process of learning, which creates different patterns (abstracted, chaotic, and challenging experiences). We use these as a reference in order to change and exchange meaning for our experiences. The following are examples of such commitment:

As you know, Ethiopians who have achieved in Canada share the same things; that is, they are stubborn and determined people. We are naturally stubborn; we are determined. We have that determination. There is no impossible. That's what I believe about myself. If there is a will, there is a possibility. When I escape from Ethiopia as a blind man, I took very risky journey because I too had that determination walking in the forest, sleeping on the mat, to be free. My disability never stops me from my commitment and determination. Because I truly believe that there is no impossible. Everything is possible.

This experience actually has changed me in two ways. The first part, coming from very oppressed people, nation, really helped me who I am

today. I left my family when I was a nine year old, from the village, became a refugee in my own country. I was abused because I was from the village and don't speak the town language, Amharic, whatever. That made me who I am. I say, I'll never give up until I reach the point, as far up on the social ladder. I am trying to do that. I came to Canada with no education, formal training. I started from English and Second language. I pushed. I worked eight hours a day, full time school. Up to this point I had been going to school for 11 years, whether you believe it or not and it's not an easy trip. But hopefully, I'll rest a bit and live and normal life. The other part, that's the strength I got from the culture, the oppression, the whole thing I left. The one thing that drive me to be is, my people are still under the same condition when I left. Even under the worse conditions.

I'm very happy. I'm very glad. This very simple, and very small, but I'm doing fine. And I'm looking for better, more and more. This experience has changed me how I feel, and who I am because I have manage to achieving what I can achieve. I am at least feeling successful to some degree. You cannot imagine for the last 30 years what is sitting inside me. I'm trying to make my life different, to be familiar or to adapt with this system.

I know that Canadian standard is only for the Canadian society still our people do not think to support one another. Because they do not believe in themselves, I cannot believe this. We can make it. I talked to the people who are familiar with my culture, my language, and my desire to achieve. So, this becomes a starting point for me. I realize that the gap between the white people and us is very wide but we have to also realize unless we try to narrow and or even close the gap, it will be very difficult to survive.

Within the process of learning, I was trying to know what exactly shape my identity but when I realize where I come from I became proud of my root. After I finish my school, I worked for about two years, came back here and looked around, I couldn't find other jobs and I see a lot of other Ethiopian fellows losing it, like going into wrong ways, I believe that's what I thought. I believe in community and like you said family. If there is no strong community we can shape up. I thought to myself by putting something like this would bring us together and share ideas. And that's the main idea was to bring everybody come together and if I can I will teach what I know. I'm happy to bring all the Ethiopians come together and exchange ideas

and to teach my culture to other people, to Canadians. The one's that achieved maybe have given me more sense of identity. So that affirms my activities.

You know that you're proud, honest and, um, never feel fear and always forward and all those things you know I have acquired from my family, that everything's possible, there's no impossible. I think that's what identifies as an Ethiopian. Determination.

I don't think there's any from Ethiopia nor any Canadian as such you know but everything is laid down as a Canadian rule, like you can go to school, you can achieve and those things are laid down by Canadian, I mean I have done those, so...

Of course, you will have ups and downs. To try and integrate into the society, some of the time, you see something that you have never experienced so you will have cultural shock and things like that could happen. But that doesn't change who you are. And that won't change me. Of course, I will have some problems and I will come across some barriers, like that but I will try not to allow that problem to influence my culture, my identity and who I was. And I will try not to escape that

and to fit into that society in a very positive way. When I say positive, I don't want to isolate myself from the society. I don't want to look different in any society but also I don't want to lose my own background, so I will try to balance both and fit into the society. I pray every morning, every evening. And I depend on prayers so much. If I am stressed about something, I pray and all of a sudden my stress has gone and I feel so positive about things so because I have that in my mind.

And that I would say that we are more family oriented and they are more individualistic. And we care more about each other and we share more. We share what we have. We prefer to eat together and we prefer to spend our time together and to do things together and the western people, they have to have their own time, they have to have their own space, they have to have their own things. They prefer to do things on their own.

So I would say that about Ethiopian people, even, no matter where they live, it doesn't matter how long they live outside their country, they are still family oriented. They still care about their family.

I imagine myself alone but I don't want to feel sorry forever but I would imagine myself here, as someone who is here for one purpose. To do something in her life and to have a future and to go home and do something for her own and for her society. Yeah. That is how I imagine myself. I don't even feel sorry for myself. I don't think, you are here, you are lonely, you are away from home, you are going to be away from home forever, no. I imagine myself as someone who wants to succeed in her life. And someone who is to help her relative, her society, to one day go back home and do something good for my them. I may be physically here, but emotionally, I am still back home.

This is because in our culture, Ethiopian culture, we are so determined and stubborn that nothing could discourage us from achieving what we want.

We try and think the positive and good goal; always, we think this way. And somebody is not successful; we help that person to be successful. I grow up that way. And I want to keep that value.

In Ethiopia, people who have been tortured because of their political belief or has been imprisoned, it doesn't make them a victim. Once

they have finished, they want to do better, because that's what they learn from it. It's a life test.

That's the way we grew up. And really that's the right thing. If you think, what did I do wrong and what can I do better, that's the way we think. We always think, I got this, I have spent this much time doing that, I have to be better in my future. We think that way always. And everyone pushes to do better. So that punishment becomes a lesson for the future.

Ethiopians' commitment is something they can never give up. For example, in my own experience, translated in to the Canadian context, I would never have reached where I am at today. I would have been traumatized for life. Yet as an Ethiopian, I have the natural instinct to survive and am open to the reconstruction of my patterns in behaviours or actions in order to achieve my full potential, and in order to take care of my family. As the participants stated, it is common for most Ethiopians to be determined and think that there is nothing impossible.

### Barriers

This theme addressed barriers that participants in this study have faced and continue to face. Barriers such as language, cultural assimilation, discrimination, prejudice, and, more importantly, racism and social isolation, were reflected on different levels. What was interesting in this category was that the degree of

experience had depended upon the level of understanding to the previous three theme categories (common roots of identity, exposure to others, and commitment). On the other hand, the level of personal experience as manifested in this segment of the data expose Ethiopians to psychological, emotional, social, and economic isolation as described in the following segments of response:

The Ethiopian racism is similar to the South African apartheid. When you have one minority group controlling the whole resources, you have to find ways or other means to actually make you not belong to there. You have no right. Just remind you that you can't have what they have. So it is officially recognized racism, which is actually perpetrated by politicians and governments. In Canada, we have, even though there is subtle racism in the community, or within the establishment, there is an organization that is dedicated to helping you to actually prevent these things and educate people not to you know, support this kind of ideology. Whereas back there, they're encouraged in different ways.

The negative one, based on, again, what is going on here, if you lived here in Vancouver, all of the Ethiopians when something first happens, it shows some bad experience. Somehow, it comes and it goes. And they keep that thing in their mind, so after that, some of them, they change, some they don't.

There was encounter every time, I wanted first to go to university and I wasn't approved, then I challenged the exam, I passed. Then after you went to university, to get one thing you have to fight for everything probably where another person like me might not have to face but those are very good because those are if you challenge there's always things to challenge so there's a driving force. I think that made me probably successful.

I came here as a professional as an Electrical Engineer. They told me "oh, we are looking for Engineers. We need you," something like that, but when I came here, it was different. But this disappointment did not stop me. I know I came here with lots of hopes. I decided to go back to school to improve my language and work any kind of job. Can you believe it? I worked in a restaurant. It doesn't matter, as cook assistant and dishwasher. Same of our people don't have the ability to change and adapt. It's very important to adapt. We have to revolutionize our life here in Canada; you have to take everything into consideration

I talk to people, starting from my own community (Eritrea or Ethiopian) because we have something in common. Believe it or not,

we share the country there. We share the pain. We share the happiness... and stuff like that.” So, why not share ideas, education, and secrets for success? I’m trying to make myself part of the group. I guess in Vancouver, we have thirty people self-employed, they can make a big contribution to our community.

I was always, been never been discriminated or maybe I might be from the ruling class, I don’t know, maybe I might be when I was light, but I don’t know. I think um, or I had a mixture of friends who were very fortunate, in today’s sense who were Tigray or Eritreans, who were doing very well, so I don’t think that was an issue for me

You know by marriage, or by something if you overlap you can climb the ladder, but not necessarily being an Amhara, maybe you might be proud but I don’t think you have that much success in social strata, you know, but again, but when you see the Ethiopian population and the majority employer was the military and in the military you have the majority Oromo and in the business you have the Guragis who are industrious and the Amhara being proud and just a farmer.

I have never been discriminated and race never been an issue and I don't think even an inch on my life has come and if it ever happen I would challenge it. The Ethiopian community I would say minus, it's a negative.

I love enjoyment, but I don't like sadness, I mean in terms of unhappy situations I help, but I don't like to get involved as much in their political things, because I identify myself as an Ethiopian so I discredit a lot of old small, petty, I call them, acronyms, or different political groups.

Within the process of learning, I was trying to know what exactly shape my identity but when I realize where I come from I became proud of my root. After I finish my school, I worked for about two years, came back here and looked around, I couldn't find other jobs and I see a lot of other Ethiopian fellows losing it, like going into wrong ways, I believe that's what I thought. I believe in community and like you said family. If there is no strong community we can shape up. I thought to myself by putting something like this would bring us together and share ideas. And that's the main idea was to bring everybody come together and if I can I will teach what I know. I'm

happy to bring all the Ethiopians come together and exchange ideas and to teach my culture to other people, to Canadians. This is just a place where all Ethiopian's can come and access resources.

There was nothing done for Ethiopians through the community, no contacts, nobody knows, we don't even know the exact number of Ethiopians that live in Vancouver. I actually bridged the gap of relationship among Ethiopians.

First, there was no involvement between the Canadians, after what we achieved, bringing the people together, and the name became recognized. Now they start seeing what's going on and one person will try and tell another person

Ethiopians are more, not only Ethiopians, mostly Africans and some Asians are more like family oriented people. We have these extended families. We care about each other. We don't have this age limitation or something like that but when you talk about the western, like even when your own child becomes around 18 years old or something, they have to leave the home and they to start their own life.

I feel homesick. I miss that get together, eating together and the harmony, the love, the care. Even if you come from a poor family, you need that true love, that getting together, that sharing. I miss that. I really miss so much. I find myself alone here.

Where you are is different from where you were—the environment, the society, the weather, the culture, everything has a huge influence on your everyday life. So, with life you have to strive, you have to struggle, so even if I feel lonely here, sometimes I don't even remember because you are so busy in life. So, I don't know.

Okay, it's because of the culture. And we have never had that integration with others, like other African countries or any other Asian countries because of colonization. They had that other influence. So we kept our culture. We are proud of ourselves. We always think, we are the gods chosen people. Yeah. And we have been mentioned in the bible. It's not because we look down on others or we don't like other people, I think, to be honest, Ethiopians are more harmonious than any other nations. What they don't like is when someone to approach them in an arrogant way. When they trust you, they would do anything for you. And then they see someone trying to do something like put you

down, they wouldn't accept that, they couldn't swallow that cause they have their own pride. Because of that cultural background, that rich cultural history, yeah, I would say that Ethiopians are so different from...

It's so hard for Ethiopians to change ourselves. Many African people when they come here, it is very easy for them to integrate because they have influence from the western country. They are colonized before us. It's a new culture, it's a new experiences, it's a new life, so this lifetime to be completely different person, so we prefer to be, who we are.

It's not about colour. It's about that culture, that rich culture. We have our own food, our own religion, our own breads, our own everything, our own calendar, and our own alphabet. We are so proud. But it doesn't mean that we are arrogant people. We accept people and appreciate people.

One thing is language. Language is a very big barrier for all of us. Because you know, in Ethiopian, the only language that we speak is Amharic and then we have our own mother tongue, like mine, which is

Oromo. But we don't, even after we join the university, we don't use English for any communication, so language is a main barrier for most Ethiopians. The other thing, like me, I always, when I go to something, I always have the negative and the positive side to things. Yeah. But if you approach things only having this has to be this, you will be disappointed. Make sure you have goals. Lets say, I apply for a job and I will propose; I may or may not be accepted. And if I just go blindly, I have to be accepted for this job, I will be disappointed, I would be discouraged to apply for any other job.

You know that back home, I would say that you know everyone who is living in the whole city because we have that communication. When you see someone on the street, you know who they are, you greet. You try and even when someone comes to live in your neighbourhood, you go to ask who they are, you try to help them in many ways to settle down and we go out of our way to make them feel at home and get used to the country, but here, you just find an apartment or a house. You don't know who is living next to you. It's not only me, even the people themselves, you don't know each other. That's a classic example of individuality.

Well, that's the way things work here and you have to accept it the way it is. That's part of the integration.

As you know with Ethiopians, whether men or women, we are very shy. Even if you know anything, we try to keep quiet and we don't take the initiative to go and ask someone or ask questions or to open up. So that, especially the western people, they think that when you are really quiet and really shy, that you don't know anything. But you know but because we are so shy, we don't say things. And what I would suggest to anyone or any lecturer is that they should not take that as a weakness. They have to accept that they have a different background, they came from a different culture. They should talk and go to that person and find out who they are and know their knowledge. They should open up first to them and make sure for them to give them the courage to talk and that sort of thing.

I think the Northern American tradition is based on self-reliance and people are more individualistic. African people rely on their community and their parents, grandparents. We are completely different. It is a culture shock to come here and learn another culture. North American's don't understand what kind of background we have.

It is very difficult sometimes. But I just hear sometimes, some families of refugees, that they can break away easily here because back home, mostly men have the power. They are the head of the family and breadwinner too. But here the husband and the wife have the right to work and find a job. So women have more rights in Canada, so eventually, they learn their rights and try to become more either aggressive or protective for themselves. So when the husband asks them to do something for him, she might refuse and sometimes, the husband and wife can fight because the kids are growing differently. Some of the parents of the kids want them to go by the family but here the kids have the rights, like when they are 18 they can go on their own outside but within our culture, this is completely unacceptable. So it's very hard. There are more individual rights here than collective rights

People only care about themselves. Like, if you have a grandfather, you might visit him on Christmas day or something. But back home, I have a grandfather and he will live with us until he dies. But this is a cultural difference.

Really, it concerns me. I am not a conservative person. I am more liberal and I respect the women's rights but sometimes I am more concerned about my children. I want my children to grow the way I

grew up, if possible, but its' really hard cause they are living here. Sometimes, I say to myself, why don't I go back home and raise my kids

Because the kids are more influenced by the outside situation. They are growing with new technologies. They are learning things from TV. They are learning things from school. Even the school is telling them of their rights. If you can ask a 6-or 7-year old boy or girl, they will tell you they can phone 911. They know a lot of things, which I didn't know when I was 20. It's very difficult to raise kids when you are an immigrant here. It's very difficult and stressful.

If I was in Africa at this time, I might be in professional work. I might be more satisfied with my daily work. But here, I am not satisfied with my daily work. A lot of things can happen. I think if you see an immigrant educated feel more stressed than those uneducated who come to Canada. They enjoy the life here because they don't expect too much. They go to work, they get money, they are happy but when you are an educated immigrant, the doors are always closed. It's not easy. Even Canada is a multicultural country but I think that Canada has a long way to work to give chance to immigrants. So, I have no choice.

That's why I live here. If I had a choice, if I saved enough money, I would go tomorrow. And that's my feelings. And most immigrants feel that because it's a very bureaucratic system, lots of discrimination. It's not open, the discrimination is not open, but it's very systematic, it's structural.

The more educated you are, the harder it is to break through the barriers in Canada, because you understand the...system. That's why. You get angry at the system. The more you get educated, the more you get disappointed with this country. Because you know the system, you know how things go and its very frustrating. It's not what you know; it's whom you know, in this country.

It's very hard for myself. I conclude that it's very hard for a minority to penetrate the ladder, to be on the top. Maybe for my children. Maybe they might have a better life, maybe. But it's a very long way.

You just have to accept the fact that there is discrimination. There is always a barrier. I know myself, because I know myself, I don't put down myself. I will not let down myself. I will take any opportunity that is available in this country.

An average person in our country, have four or five children, it's normal to have four or five children. I have 17 brothers and sisters. If the mother wants to go to the market, the neighbours will look after the kids. Everybody is in charge of the kids. But here, you can't go anywhere. This is money minded people you know. Everything, every step you walk, you have to pay money. You can't get free service in this country. There is no sense of community.

But here, if you tell a Canadian, I have a problem, even sometimes they think, why do you have a problem, why do you have to have four children. Sometime they ask nonsense questions. So its' really hard. When you are from the same community and the same background, it helps.

I identify myself as a second-class citizen. I don't say I am a proud Canadian because I don't fit into the system. Most people judge you by your colour because I am black, they don't come and talk straightforward to me. I know myself, that. I am not regarded as a white citizen. I don't feel angry for that. I accept it because we are different people. That's the way life here is.

Because we haven't been colonized or brainwashed or know their concept. Sometimes, it's good to be colonized. You can understand who these people are. But we have never been colonized. We think that all white people are like good you know. That's how we treat them when they come to Africa. But those who have been colonized know them very well than us. Knows more about White culture than me.

It's very hard when you have a different culture. Well, you know, you have to abide by the rules. That's one thing because of these people, side by side, but sometimes the culture does not allow you. Sometimes you invite people, the neighbours don't like. Sometimes, you let the kids play outside, the neighbours don't like. Sometimes some buildings don't allow children. Very strange. So it's very hard.

I think discrimination, number one. Discrimination because I have never expected Canada to be like that. I know about America but I never expected Canada to be like this. But when I first came, I was in London, Ontario, Toronto, Winnipeg, it's more multicultural. You have more access there. And you are more accepted by the white people in Toronto in the big city. But when you come to a place like Victoria, it's

very hard. It's more conservative. I think the big problem, for me is discrimination. There is no equal opportunity. People say that there is equal opportunity and this is the land of opportunity but I don't like that. It's not true.

Back home, it was not common for me to work in the evenings late. It is not common for ladies but here I work late after midnight and that changed here.

Here there is too much freedom. If they want to stay in the streets, that's their identity, that's their choice. They don't care about their families or their neighbours or their future most of the time. Not all of them, but some of them, they think that way. That's their choice. Back home you have to care about your identity. If your family background is okay, you have to keep it that way. But here a good family, one of the kids doesn't think about that family or his future. That's a big change for me.

When I was in Ethiopia, I had a good work, I had a good job, and a good family and I always thought I grew up with a good education and good life. When I came here I couldn't do that right away. My identity

was really low in the first place but I am getting better and I am trying my best. Now I am okay. I was thinking like that. I am in a better position.

As I imagined myself in Ethiopian compared to how I imagine myself today, is that I am much less a person here in Canada than I was in Ethiopia. I have lost my social and economic interdependency. And I have to struggle in this society to be a better person. And I have to start from scratch.

In the first place, I have to explain about my country and myself and what's my culture, its' good or bad. Most of the time, people think, when they see our colours, they think we have low knowledge and don't think like them. I want to show that' s not right. We can think, we do as good as them, even better than them. I am trying to communicate with them and keep my English level high. I am trying to go to school and I did. I am in school and I try to explain about my country and about myself by using the language properly. And I am doing that

I saw a lot of discrimination and racism and mostly I don't take it personal. Some people, they don't like black people, it's part of their

personality. They don't want to communicate with me, that's the person. I don't take it. If that person is like that, if he or she is like that I don't want to push them or want myself to be irritated or anything. I don't internalize it.

Especially finding jobs here. They see the paper, they don't know about me. They don't know about my ability, just they read only the paper and that's not right. I can write. I don't have any idea about that stuff. They don't test me, they want to see the paper, and they want to see the words only, hear the words only. They don't believe the work that I did. They don't see that. That's the big thing. The other stuff is, for kids, especially they don't force the kids to do good stuff. They don't force them to be a good person for themselves. For example, for me, the teacher is like parents but when they leave them, when do something wrong, they don't do anything. They say, oh, you did this, you have detention, and you can stay a half an hour after school. It doesn't make any change for them. Nothing. They sit there, that's it. They have to force them to do something. For example, if they don't do their assignment, it's better to do something more. For example, they should suggest to do something more, like one more page assignment.

If they don't do it, they have to read two pages. They don't do that. I don't see that.

Very frustrating really. Because my kids, they are in grade ten the knowledge that they know, is not really a great thing for me. It's really low.

I am in the middle of big social challenges. I am unable to break through, to prove my skills to access employment. The other thing is that my children are not given the opportunity to exercise their cognitive ability because, one, the teachers are not teaching seriously and there's a minimal expectation. And that bothers me.

The children have no respect for their families. It's always me. Not the family. Kids always, they say, it's mine, it's mine. It's for me. Not for my family, not for my brother, not for my sister. I want it, it's mine.

Don't touch it. It's what they always say. That's not a family relationship. That's not a good social life. For them, it's only individual, it's personal. In the future, marriage is not really good because of that.

In these times, marriage does not exist. After one or two years, they

separate. Because they don't know about social life and they don't know about family relationship. Always, they think about themselves.

Most Ethiopians experience different barrier levels. Some experience discrimination and racism at a societal level; others experience discrimination and racism at an interpersonal level; others experience assimilation and adaptation problems due to language barriers or contradictory cultural values. The vast majority encounter barriers as a result of failure to meet their families' expectation back home. However, these participants see barriers as a motivating factor that challenge the unpredictable obstacles. My own barriers are not unique from those of the participants. I have struggled to access the labour force, to prove my worthiness, and assimilate to the social structure. Thus, the web of factors pertaining to barriers was addressed in this section but the interpretations of the barriers were different from one group of participants to the other. What was said in this part of the data is that while discrimination, racism, prejudice, and stereotypes were significant barriers for a few participants, the majority of participants stated that their experience of these barriers to be more significant while in Ethiopia. This result clearly reflects the degree of diversity in perceiving levels of barriers, and how to approach overcoming them in order to adapt in their new environment.

### Success

This theme which was the embodiment of the initial purpose of the study, it reflects how Ethiopian immigrants were able to overcome barriers, maintain and reconstruct their identities, and how they have achieved success. Furthermore, this category describes tools the participants have, or discovered and/or created, so that those who struggle with assimilation and adaptation into Canadian life may refer to. The following illustrates such patterns of success:

It is very important, my experience, my root of experience that I have had back in Ethiopia, the torture I went through, the psychological, physical torture I went through, become a motivating factor for me to envision myself far beyond those oppressions or violent experiences.

I learn how they, how can I live in this country, even to integrate myself, so I can pick up something and live another life. One thing that I have learned is that these people are far reaching. They are, the moment I have learned is how they reach, or a strike or disasters happen in Africa, all of a sudden they get together and send it. This kind of charity, this kind of good deed that they do makes me think that they care about and I ask, why can't we care for ourselves, learn from these people. One is education. Second is um, hard work and smarts and third is a good family structure.

I imagined myself getting an education and I was lucky to get that chance and go to school and learn what I really wanted to learn. The Canadian community is positive for all the things what I'm doing, as a businessman.

There were a lot people who encouraged me who were happy to see that there was something about Ethiopia in a coffee shop or in a restaurant, that they can come in, meet a friend and make an appointment and have a coffee instead of going to other community, they come here. There were people, who encouraged and were very happy to see these kinds of things. And also there were some discouragements which doesn't really bother me, because

The first thing I really suggest is that every Ethiopian should really use the opportunity to take those courses. One thing I found was that a lot of Ethiopians says they like to hear from third party rather than going in and inquiring themselves. And this has been the biggest problem I have faced when I was trying to encourage people. There is nothing impossible. They might have to ask and push but we are always told, because you cannot do it, I didn't do it, you know you tell the other

thing, the negative thing. We are very good in listening the wrong side rather than listening the right side of the stories, so that is one of the major obstacles with Ethiopians I found. A quick get-out situation, because somebody didn't get it doesn't mean you didn't get it. Those are the things I encourage.

First, let us, before we say things, let's know where we coming from. We should know what we're saying. Go to library and refer, read about it, if you want to be politician, learn about politics first, do not say things in what you do not really know, cause it might offend somebody. And what I suggest is you should stop the ethnic division and let's not comment about somebody's ethnic, not making fun of somebody's ethnic to somebody's ethnic.

We should stop speculating without having facts. Let's have facts, then let's speculate in terms of planning action and setting goals and only do workable goals, or set workable goals that you can achieve.

They have to know what are Ethiopians, really, really what kind of people are they. What kind of cultures they have. They have to know that. Not only our problems. They have to know our culture, our

history. We have real advanced knowledge. They have to know our culture. They have to know before they say, you are black, you come from Africa and you don't know anything. They have to know that this question is not right.

For example, when I was separating from my husband, the Canadian community I was in, the Cridge Centre helped me a lot. They supported me a lot. They gave me what can I do, my choices and what opportunity I had and that was a big help for me.

And when I lost my brother last June, all the Ethiopian community, they came and they were with me and they supported me and they gave me comfort and everyone was there. And I got support from the Ethiopian and Canadian community.

Both Canadian and Ethiopian community has support me as long when I was open to them to be part of my life and their activities.

My suggestion to Canadians is simple, treat people like human. You cannot judge a book by its cover. There are a lot of good black people, there are a lot of good white people, and there are a lot of bad white

people. But always, if one black makes a crime, they always wrote things, when a white person makes a crime; it is not a big deal. So I want people to judge people based on their character.

If you are selfish and you think only money, you will lose the sense of community. So that's the problem. People think here that they don't need anyone cause they can get money. But money cannot bring happiness. You can get money but money cannot bring happiness or community. The community is where you tell your happiness or your problems.

It makes me tough. Actually, I think that my life has been the same thing. I always struggle. I always, maybe the last 20 years, I have been in a tough situation, every year. I have to pass lots of different difficulties. I have been in prison. I have escaped my country twice. I have been imprisoned for a crime that I have not committed. So I have faced many times, this discrimination or some other barriers, but...

In our culture, the more we tolerate negative life events, the more we pass the life's tests, to be a member of the community and to become a better person in the family.

It is good actually, to pass a lot of tests. The test itself after all the obstacles, will be sweet because if somebody had been raised and fed by spoon, you know, if you get things very easily, if you are rich, without working hard or if you get success without a lot of hardship, you won't understand your own life. But if you pass a lot of difficulties, and you achieved what you want, at that time you understand how you get all these things.

These people have never been tortured. They have never had the bad life. Here, you know, you have the access to have bread and food and a shirt. That's right. Back home, it's not a right. You have to earn it to be in a better life, you have to work hard. Here, it's okay, if you work hard, if you don't work hard, you will get shelter and food. Sometimes, people get lazy because they can have welfare and lie down all day.

But we don't get into a victim role. You know, torture, I don't understand when some people say that if somebody is tortured, he will be like that for the rest of his life. If this can happen, I would not be in this position, you know. It depends on how you accept things. If you are afraid of things all the time, you will be afraid. But if you say, oh, this is a bad thing, pass it, forget about it. Just move on. But here a lot

of discussion about these things, about violence, about abuse, about torture. You know, they read about a lot of topics which is unnecessary in my opinion. It doesn't translate to our experience.

How about us? The reason why we become strong is because we got disciplined got punished. I was punished several times in my life. Very harshly. But I still love my family. If they didn't discipline me, at this time, I might be on the street. So there is an interpretation of abuse in Africa is completely different. As you know, it also takes the whole community to raise a child back home but here is a different story.

When you plan something, it may or may not work. You have both sides, the negative and the positive so that way you won't be disappointed. You won't be discouraged. That is my personal advice and that is what I would suggest to any Ethiopian when they come to this country. When things don't turn out their own way, they should not be discouraged. They should not be disappointed.

They don't feel like victims. They have to tell themselves, I am strong, I have passed that pain, I am here and I am heading for a good life. I should be stronger for a good life and move forward.

It is a very success in their life and some people take it very seriously and put themselves into depression and become miserable. You should not. You should get past that stage because you are here. You know, go ahead.

Always I try to approach things in a positive and open mind. Yeah. And given that, also, I have that behind me, a saying, hey, if you go there blindly, you will lose your culture, you will lose your identity. So what I would do is, even if there is a problem, even if there is a big difference between my culture and this culture, I will always go to where, or do whatever with an open mind and expecting things. So positively.

I try to learn things. Like, I always approach things with an open mind. I wouldn't be shocked or I wouldn't go to disaster. Some people like really get shocked and they take it really seriously and when you go to something with an open mind, it doesn't really make it that big shock. It doesn't have that much influence on you if you approach it with an open mind.

The participants in this study are successful Ethiopians. As indicated, success for Ethiopians is having the opportunities to achieve their full potential. These may include access to education, business ventures, in conjunction with a supportive family and community. However, the process they go through to achieve this success is not common, as it depends on the tribal backgrounds and the degree of commitment. Nonetheless, community, family, and spirituality were influential for them to reconstruct their identity and feel their sense of success.

Themes, that emerged in this study were taken from segments of the participants' experiences. What has developed from these themes is how the participants' identity is perceived, what influences the perceptions, when and how identity changes have to take place, and what the barriers were in filtering and sifting their identity in order to assimilate and adapt to the Canadian social environment. As well, as defined by success and the role of the community, tribal background may have influenced the meaning of each participant's experience but the process of experiencing success and barriers were the same. I myself can relate at different levels of thought and function, to the process of their experiences, because their journeys are similar.

What is learned from these experiences is that Canadians need to be more aware of the complex nature of culture, ethnic, race, and process of assimilation and adaptation, not only for Ethiopians but also for other immigrants.

## Chapter 5

### Analysis

#### Introduction

The inquiry pertaining to Ethiopian immigrants' reconstruction of identity, the level of successful assimilation in Canada, as well as their degree of personal success appears to be fulfilled. The findings posed here are comparable to explanations of identity patterns (individual, cultural, social, and political) found in the literature. Throughout the data collection, the way participants described their experiences and made meaning of the construction of their identity was very different from one another. This is because none of the participants were from the same tribe and, as a result, each participant's experiences and meanings either in Ethiopia or Canada were different. Nonetheless, the general sense of identities, roles, and influences of community found in this study did validate the explanation and definitions of the literature (associated factors for self-definition as well as influences on social and cultural identity). In this particular analysis, the tribal traditional structures were distinguished in order to examine the most important concepts of identities and roles. The extracted meanings have confirmed sources of identity as being congruent to the adopted theory of this research. Bekerie's (1997) Locational theory supports the Ethiopian immigrants' reliance on their original (root location) traditions, and roles as a means to remain congruent with their social, environmental, and spiritual identity. Furthermore, the theory also

supports awareness of identity as being a determinant to assimilation, adaptation, and achievement of one's full potential in a new social environment. This is because their roots (location), exposure to diversity, and creativeness not only determine their skills of accepting or rejecting their new social, cultural, and economic values, but also allow them to select (filter) values and beliefs that are desirable in order to become a member of the community in their new country.

In this chapter the meanings of the data and the evaluation of the literature are presented. The question of what role community plays in the Ethiopian immigrants' successful reconstruction of identity is very important for two reasons: First, the results would invite academics to redesign, if necessary, their teaching approach and strategies in order to empower Ethiopian and/or immigrant students to become successful. Second, helping professionals would have the opportunity to understand the complexity of assimilation such as changes in values, beliefs, barriers, coping strategies, and actions that must take in order to be successful. In addition, the findings may be useful to Ethiopian immigrants to help mentor and encourage positive patterns of adaptation by sharing their success stories with other immigrants, and ways in which they overcame obstacles.

The results found in this research were framed within five major themes. These themes are: common roots of identity, exposure to others, commitment, barriers, and success, each of which address a broad range of identity issues as it relate to their sense of success.

### Common Roots Of Identity

Although participants have referred differently to their overall culture and tribal origins as their root of identity, the description in which they define identity provides commonality and was framed in under this theme. This is because all described developing their sense of identity from the same foundation but in different ways. For example, all participants at one point mentioned that culture, tradition, spirituality, family tribe, language, community, and history were their fundamental roots of identity. These factors, however, do not imply that all have identical structures of identity formation; rather the value associated with the above list merely affirms one's identity. As articulated with the following participants, tribal connection was the most common root to all participants.

In a lot of African culture, it is not only a physical existence that belongs to the tribe but also your spirit as well. You are forever born. Like you have in common with the rest of society that is born. To the unborn, the born, to the living. It's a connection between the present, the past and the future. Once you are born into that you are there forever. It's not just one physical aspect that once you die you are no longer in the community. People will be paying homage to you. They will be making annual sacrifices so that you will remain in their thoughts and the thoughts of future generations.

Physical and spiritual connection contains an eternal element of one's existence:

How we see ourselves. In most cases in Africa, as you have already alluded to, the tribe plays a significant part, so whether you like it or not, your allegiance to the tribes holds more importance, than allegiance to the nation state. So, you can still be the ruler of the country, for example, Kenya but you still have strong links, your base of power should always be where you originally are from. And in that sense, it is your tribe. Actually if you look at the micro level of the tribe, you have class and subclass, and that also play an important role in the general level you belong to the tribe. But as you come down more to the core of your existence, you go down to the family group, you'd be putting more and more allegiance to that particular part. For example, it is no secret, all Africans give a lot of authority especially major, weakened states in Africa, like the military which are very important. You give those key positions to not only members of the tribe but also those in your sub class. These are the only people you can trust.

Interminable trust is developed through tribal unity, resulting in personal allegiance to the group:

The Ethiopian history is based on royal families, okay? If you talk about history, you talk about people. And everyone in the country, you have a history. If you are ten years, you have ten years history. But if you talk about history, only about royal people, people in power it doesn't reflect the whole people. I have never had any value for Ethiopian history because it

doesn't reflect the whole nation. I believe that if the government, is truly for the people, and make everyone equal, Ethiopia would be a first world today. Anything I learned in school, that I learned growing up, when I look at it, it doesn't make sense to me. I don't believe it.

A hierarchal system of power subjugated the tribes considered to be lower on the ladder; claims of historical development were rebutted by participants' awareness of non-representativeness:

If any tribe has any power, the language develops, institutions, so if anything happens for any government that comes after. It's a different era and a different system, so for the oppressed people, no change, more suffering.

Tribal power suppresses equality for whole nation:

It doesn't matter whether it's during the royal time or the military time, again those who have advantage of the education or the power, will always tend to dominate indirectly or directly.

Awareness of tribal power penetrating:

The Oromian is very close to my heart. There is a full trust there. I would never think that they would betray me. I would never think that they would lead me in the wrong direction. Whereas the other community, they give information but, you have to work for it. The Oromo community always

comes straight to my heart whereas the Canadian community is just a confirmation of acceptance and respect.

Direct community interest in individual members' aspiration, a desire to extract capabilities and talents, whereas the participants' experience in the Canadian realm of success is one of evoking initiative, perseverance, it is jumping through hoops.

Individual tribes are what provided the safety and security of its members in Africa, as well as their values, beliefs, and roles that are portrayed within a tribe's diversity, creativity, and sense of pride. This is what distinguishes one group from the other, in terms of unique language, customs, social status, political alliances, and/or experience of oppression. This identity was commonly rooted within the family, community, and the overall content of what makes a tribe. This influence, therefore, can be inferred as Locational theory. Locational theory supports a knowledge that is governed by the nature of our location (tribe) (Bekerie, 1997). In other words, the tribal social environment is the major influence for individual members to link their own behavioural and cognitive characteristics to the makeup of the group, in order to claim identity. Therefore, the tribal social structure dictates the role and meaning of the individual's identity. Such understanding of who they are helped most participants to filter and reconstruct a new identity in order to achieve their full potential.

### Exposure To Others

This theme was constructed in order to describe the diverse nature of participants' experience, in relation to their identity reconstruction, to adopt and/or assimilate into different social environments (tribal, cultural, religious, national, and international), and the ways in which they became aware of the patterns of negotiation to successfully integrate, or to block barriers. More importantly, this theme tested the individual participants' understanding of their own differences and skills to associate with others, their awareness of the otherness of others, as well as their ability to transmit through barriers and transform within in order to adapt successfully to their environment. In fact, throughout the data collection, participants were able to articulate their experience both the opportunities and extreme confinement. For example, those who had previous experiences of being exposed to the unknown stated that they had made progressive changes in reference to their previous encounters. As a result, they were able to revise their decisions, make thoughtful choices, to either fit in or to resist the social demands of their environment. On the other hand, those who never had prior exposure found it extremely difficult to adapt to the Canadian environment. They also needed to overcome numerous challenges in Canada before they were able to achieve success and reach their full potential. In other words, while one group experienced culture shock soon after immigrating in Canada, the other group

managed to delay the same experience till they could better understand the social structure. The following passages demonstrate such distinctions:

Within myself, I have always a tendency to look; I have two extremes in life. One extreme is the extreme that I live back home. The minimal extreme, the poverty, no shoes, no food, living, walking, the other extreme is this western world. Achievers are the top line. Most of us live in between. I am in between here. When I try to go up the ladder I look at that vision of those successful people. When I'm sad, when I'm down, I always say, no, look where I came from. There are so many people who don't have food to eat so I look back on where I was 15 years ago. That, looking back on history, gives me the strength, to appreciate what I have and that strengthens me as a person.

Comparison of struggles encountered in Ethiopia to potential struggles participants may face here maintains a sense of appreciation:

It is very important, my experience, my root of experience that I have had back in Ethiopia, the torture I went through, the psychological, physical torture I went through, become a motivating factor for me to envision myself far beyond those oppressions or violent experiences.

The trauma participants experienced was believed to be a life test:

I don't really recall what I was thinking back home because to have proper thinking and proper understanding you have to live in a peaceful

environment, you have to have access to medium. I did not have any of those. I was a poor farmer boy. Then I went to the city and worked as a slave for someone in the city, basically I was a busboy running around. So I was thinking about daily life. Basically was thinking about survival, so if I think of those days, all I remember were my hardship that I went through as a child. I don't know who is responsible for it. I did not have the mechanism to understand it, I was just surviving but now I have the opportunities. This is a real turning point for me. I have access to everything I need to look back in retrospect what went wrong and what has happened and compare my life in Canada. Canada has everything I need. I am now in the position to think and to be whom I want to. That is two different things.

Living in survival mode prevented opportunities for introspection and personal growth, as well as creating and fulfilling participants' dreams:

Whenever we talk about racism, the two communities are a good example of how much other's attitudes and believes does not affect them personally. Racism to us is something we talk about, we do not feel it. You can see it in Eritreans, you can see it in Ethiopians, we do not understand at all the feeling of racism because I think we are as equally racist as anybody.

Open to seeing the reflection of racism within him/herself, and actions.

The biggest challenge is being in a society more or less who is ignorant of who you are. North America to its own detriment has very little historical knowledge of other societies. There is a big difference between this society and the Italian society because I lived for about a year in Italy and you go on a bus in Rome and all senior citizens will come and sit next to you and automatically pick up a topic on the assumption that you are either Somali, Ethiopia or Eritrean because of the features being similar and he knows your history, he knows your background, he can talk about a lot of stuff and there is no cocoon that he fits you in, he thinks that you are an individual person. Here, a lack of history and a lot of through arts and music and through little literature, this is a society that on an ongoing basis is misinformed about identities and cultures and people. I've lived here 21 years, I have yet to see a positive program done on Africa on any kind of menial presentation. I mean you find yourself a lot of times either defending Ethiopia or defending Eritrea to people because they know you as people looking for handouts, they don't know you as people of history, or people of culture, or people of language. When you sit together and talk, you most probably sound gibberish because they are never exposed to your language and culture.

The struggle is trying to survive the change. For us, that's the struggle. To be able to accept without being judgmental or trying to be so critical of the situation we are in.

Holding a sense of compassion for ignorance.

When we came to Western society, or Western Europe or North America, now we may see ourselves as Kenyan, but how others characterize you here is based on an outside physical manifestation. Like you're black, and that's the group that you belong to. Because the way they make presentation, is that people have certain attributes, and in this case, it is skin colour, skin pigment. It is how you are growing up.

We have our own histories, our own identity that we brought from back home but here they don't know our histories. Even when you are walking down the street, they see you only as a black guy but you know who you are. That's why in most cases, if you come to a new town in a foreign country like this, the first people you will be seeking out is Ethiopians. It may not even your own tribe, but if it's your own tribe, that's a bonus.

This is an example of how previous experience helped magnify meanings in order to critically reflect and react on the otherness of other.

Even social and institutional challenges such as racism, discrimination and language abilities are measured on the degree of exposure.

### Commitment

This theme provides the degree and level of participants' commitment to maintaining their originality and level of determination and ability to reconstruct, in order to achieve their full potential in Canadian society. Furthermore, the theme also links to definitions from review literature of identity with how participants tie their identity to personal, sociopolitical, tribal, and community aspirations. As presented in a previous chapter, all participants have articulated their behaviours and actions as being stubborn, undefeatable, responsible, and hopeful for future possibilities in reference to past experiences. Such mentality has allowed participants to reach out for resources, open to being educated with pride, able to face challenges directly, and capable of converting negative experiences into positive because negatives are considered life tests.

I don't know about other places, in Vancouver, Ethiopians, all Etrians are hard workers, whatever, field they may be and that is a sign of background. Illegal activity, you don't see. People, taxi-drivers, dishwashing or washroom cleaning or stuff like that, these are people that don't back down from doing small jobs to get ahead in life. I think, I'm more or less a reflection of those two communities.

The following statement indicates what one will do to succeed:

In our culture, personal gain is not that important, see, your personal achievement is not the most important thing. But if you achieve, your

whole community benefits, especially in terms of education. Your whole community will be going crazy that day when you graduate because you have achieved a lot. Now the whole community has a member to look up to.

Endurance and completion of goals stimulate sense of accomplishment in the entire community.

For me, education, I don't see it as a means to an end. I see it as an end, in itself. I see the importance of education as being just that, education for expanding your mind not just for getting a cheque.

The new identity has two parts to it. Part one is to assimilate to Canadian society; that is one identity. I don't think in my culture, they encourage too much assimilation because you lose your identity and you forget your background. But don't forget your background and where you come from. That's the message. Canadian, I don't really experience anyone who has encouraged me. I don't find it that helpful yet in terms of personal advising but I can learn from the whole concept, the general society, the media, the information that's out there, by reading, it benefit me a lot.

The following statement suggests renegotiating modes of identity in order to be inclusive of opportunities in both cultures.

Once you come here, you have to transform yourself to reality; how these people manage living, learn from others. You can't live, what life you left back home. People still believe in discrimination, superiority of tribes, oppressing others. Don't be trapped with the past and come and realize the present. And live in a collective and motivated way that is required in Canada.

This statement indicates that being flexible in perception of the meaning of collectivity leads to overcoming barriers.

### Barriers

A barrier as interpreted and experienced by the participants is not only fascinating to witness, but it is thought-provoking to hear how each articulated their encounters, and what criteria they assigned to the meaning of these challenges. Throughout the data collection, participants noted their original tribal identity, as well as their experiences within the Ethiopian socioeconomic and cultural mosaic. This helped to define what constituted barriers. In other words, those participants who were from marginalized tribes and lower socioeconomic classes interpreted barriers as a challenge to improve their skills of negotiation, in order to assimilate and adapt into Canadian society. This was important for them because when they compared their Ethiopian lifestyle to Canadian life, they appreciated their present lifestyle in Canada. On the other hand, those participants who were from a dominant tribal and socio-economic background interpreted

barriers as a wall, which excluded them from assimilating into the dominant culture. As a result, their interaction with others and experience in Canada left them feeling humiliated and dehumanized. What this suggests is that the higher their tribal and socio-economic status, the harder it is to renegotiate identity and assimilate into Canadian society. Renegotiation is used to refer to flexibility of movement and degree of attachment to ethnic (tribal) identity. It addresses the ability to strategize ways to change perceived barriers to manage adaptation.

Most participants described encountering numerous barriers as black immigrants living in a white society, yet each distinguished their experiences in reference to their previous status in Ethiopia. The following are segments of their interpretation as such.

First of all, coming from Africa in a culture that has no relation whatsoever with western culture is a difficult part. When I first came here, my English language was absolutely zero. I had to start from zero and to be where I am today, for the first six years, I went through hell. Living hell. It was very difficult, passing the exams, the English requirement, the speed helped to write exams. It was very difficult. Maybe they thought I was mentally retarded. I always got low grades during the first few years that I was going to school. Back home, I never thought in my language. From day one when I went to school, I was taught a foreign language in Ethiopia. Forced to learn a language that never reflected my culture. But a language has to

reflect your daily living, what you do at home, what your family does. So I did not do that. So I was struggling with the Amharic language just as with the English language so I never was taught how to read properly. when I came to Canada, I was never trained to read fast. Even never trained to read. So I had to read, I had to learn from scratch. So my reading was like grade 2 when I first started. I went for testing. There was no problem. But my problem was for reading speed and how to do the exam. So the exam, the school setting, the whole thing is hell.

The following statement indicates experience of learning the language of the dominant and the culture in both Ethiopia and Canada, facing the barrier of connectedness, as well as rapid acquisition of language, which propels participants into a realm of opportunity.

There is always a difference between the degrees of discrimination, the obstacles that you face is dependent on how well you are going to go up that ladder. I would expect competition where I may run into bias in terms of hiring and discrimination because when I complete with elite Canadian who is educated like me for the same pie, but at this point at the student level, it's pretty good.

This next statement points to a level of discrimination or possibility of experiencing discrimination, which may be a result of mediated perceptions of potential success.

Personally, I don't see myself as a black, unless I look in the mirror. A lot of people that I talk to, honestly, they never question. They see my colour, but they don't ask. They ask where I'm from, of course, with my accent. Self-perception evades being categorized, as well as avoiding and perceiving others' reactions as discriminatory.

North American blacks, those from Caribbean and those are Africans, those from Ethiopia and East African area is quite different from others. We tend to not involve with other African countries and just as far away from Caribbean. And even within us there is always a sense of disunity there. But I have never had a chance to explore how different we are, how apart we are. But I have a feeling there's a gap even between black people in Canada.

A lot of Africans bring with them bring their own values, taboos and whatever you want to call it. So they live within that circumstance and they don't go out, they do that without breaking the law, the cultural laws the taboos. I have the same thing. If I go out and yell in the street and get drunk, I don't think about myself, I think, what will the community say about me, what will my community think about me? I am betraying them. This is the kind of responsibility that I have that make me, force me not to go beyond the normal. But North American blacks, lost their culture,

developed new culture which doesn't fit into the western culture so they lost their identity so they, They have their own culture but a very different culture that has placed them within it. Africans have a group identity and responsibility.

A sense of morals and principles learned in Ethiopia have acted as a foundation for moral conduct; compared with others who may have a sense of displacement from such experiences.

A mentality built from the old king leadership, just to be up, up, up, lift themselves up from African colonial and the social ladder. They always think that they are superior to other African countries. Their mentality is ingrained with each individual Ethiopian. When they come out, they reflect that. It's hard to avoid.

The next statement refers to transmission of a power hierarchy that dominated lower class tribes as they were indicated in their experience of Canada.

The new identity, in Canada, generally, you are always immigrant in the mind of many people. I'm still content with my own culture so most of the time, the friends that I've made in Canada or most people that I've associated with help me who I am in many ways because what I reflect today is not entirely Oromian culture. It is mixed up. It is mixed with Canadian and those are the people that I've encountered with and the

person that I've met and I spend time with, that I live with, contributes in my life. And in terms of education, in terms of ideas, where to do and where to get things, so the influence that the Canadian community, as a whole has on me is tremendous. The same way with the Oromian community. But the difference is the value that I get from the Oromian and that I get from the Canadian community is totally different.

The status of the immigrant allows the possibility of assimilation values from both cultures that are important to a sense of wellbeing.

I learn how they, how can I live in this country, even to integrate myself, so I can pick up something and live another life. One thing that I have learned is that these people are far reaching. They are, the moment I have learned is how they reach, or a strike or disasters happen in Africa, all of a sudden they get together and send it. This kind of charity, this kind of good deed that they do makes me think that they care about and I ask, why can't we care for ourselves, learn from these people.

Perception of charity and collective action and compassion for those in need is perceived as unifying and instills sense of trust, much like tribal affiliations.

As a collective black. Even as you see in federal government papers for employment equity, they don't have any breakdown for Africans of difference origins or even Africans from the Caribbean, they just have the

one spot to fill in and that box is just black. Yeah. For other groups, especially Asians, you have Middle Eastern, there are a couple of different groups, but we are still called African. There are Asia, Japanese. All people of African descent wherever they are from in this world, there is that black box to fill in.

I accept it for what it is. The flip side to that is that is that I am seen as the same as black, by everybody in this society. I see everybody else for who they are so I just categorize them in the same way, just see them as Asian or white. In the same way that they label me, I label them back.

Persistence to being categorized, pride for tribal uniqueness not recognized, resistance is acted upon by treating others in the same way, “an eye for an eye tooth for a tooth.”

when we came to western society, or Western Europe or North America, now we may see ourselves as Kenyan, but how others characterize you here is based on an outside physical manifestation. Like you're black, and that's the group that you belong to. Because the way they make presentation, is that people have certain attributes, and in this case, it is skin colour, skin pigment. It is how you are growing up.

There is a sense of giving into the dominant classification.

I see there because it's more homogenous. You belong to the dominant culture. Even if you belong to the tribe, everyone else sees you as one of them because you can easily talk to people from other cultures. See in the western culture, especially, they place so much emphasis on the race more than any other thing. The race is the easiest collective classification that they have. So for them, back in Kenyan, you just saw yourself, despite your tribal belonging, you saw yourself as African. As one race. But once you came to Canada, you belong a race that has been made to be at the bottom of the totem pole. All of a sudden you become that, part of the disenfranchised community, right along with the natives and blacks.

A sense of being categorized into a group that has a history of discrimination in Canadian content adds social stresses.

It has more to do with how the western society perceives you and how you perceive yourself to be. Now, they say always, the old expression, you got a chip on your shoulder. It's not that you have a chip on your shoulder. But other people have put a chip on your shoulder. You always have to prove yourself. When you are walking on the street, I don't think, this is just what I always thinking of, let's say you are walking Douglas Street, you are the only black guy. You are just walking down Douglas Street, not many fellow country men would recognize you as a Ph.D. student. But more they just see you as a drug dealer, or bugler. That's easier for them. It's just the

image. It's unbelievable. Sometimes, I go to Chapters lot, that area. Just walking around, go to the library, or go home, a lot of times, people come up to me and say, hey, are you selling drugs?

See, immigrants have more obstacles to overcome than people who have been born in the country. A lot of the time, they are discouraged with the language barriers. Second, is the economic question, because a lot of the immigrants come with almost nothing. It becomes survival. They have to work despite the fact that they need more education, but that is of secondary importance. First thing is they have to survive. Education at that point becomes a luxury but then this is the area that I am a lot more worried about is the kids who are born here. Fortunately, on the positive side, they won't have the same language barriers, they won't have that problem. It will be easy for them to integrate. The second aspect too, those are integrated aspects the kids will face. The first one is that the kids will have all the loving at home which is a good environment for them. And then as kids of minorities, when they come to school, they face the problems that adults face at different levels. Hey, you coloured guy and the kids are really shocked. They have all this love at home and then they face all this hate at school especially they don't understand what we understand. That's the first thing. The second thing is part, social economic or characterized as

such. A lot of the, maybe I am stereotyping but this is just from growing up of a lot of Africans, a lot of them are not highly educated themselves. The kids don't have much expectations to attain. Also, the parents, again this is partly because of being immigrant, so they don't have good jobs, so the kids model themselves after the parents. They see them being cooks and dishwashers as a major job to look forward to. The role modeling aspects isn't good.

Languages, economics, education, are all imperative to survival, a paradox of possibility and restricted access to resources.

As articulated above, barriers were perceived and challenged in different contexts at different times. Nonetheless, the actions participants took to reconstruct their identity were influenced by their original tribal values and experiences. What was common to all was the fact that due to their colour, they were identified as black, Negro, and other slaves, and this became hard to tolerate by some Ethiopian immigrants. Furthermore, generalized racism and discrimination may have closed their access to social and institutional structures (i.e., employment, social clubs, education, housing, etc.), as well as affecting their social, psychological, emotional, and professional wellbeing.

### Success

Success was the most difficult theme for all participants to describe. This is because the definition of success is relevant to the original value and beliefs of the

participants. For example, freedom, monetary gain to help one's family, and access to education were frequently used to define measures of success. When participants talked about freedom, they were making a comparison between their experiences in both Ethiopia and Canada. Again, the participants who came from marginalized and oppressed tribes were conditioned to submit and comply to a dominant tribe in order to access the social, economic, political, and educational resources. As a result, they described freedom from being oppressed as success. In fact, these participants believe that if one has the sense of freedom, the potential to achieve anything one desires is unlimited. These participants were also compliant to the social norm of Canada, and considered themselves successful because they were able to reconstruct their identity within the frame of Canadian culture.

In contrast to the above two, participants who saw their education as a success described the process of reconstructing identity in a critical way. These participants addressed the role of community in which they have assimilated, as well as their own movement, as they reconstructed (by adding new behaviours and value of conduct, or by removing their previous values and beliefs) their identity. Furthermore, they provided new insights to deal with challenges in order to access and achieve their full potential. The following are examples of the broad definition of success.

I went to school to make myself better. Intellectually in terms of always to have a better, full life, as they say, the old saying, an unexamined life is not

worth living. I wanted to fulfill that portion. I wanted to live life to the fullest by understanding myself and its environment. That's one and the other, in this society, education is very important for your own survival as well in terms of accessing good jobs. At least there is that dream that the best jobs will be given to those who are most qualified. In terms of people who merit those positions and the only way to get that is through a good education. But that is an abstract, ideal level. As we know, there is more fitting in, quote, unquote, fitting in that crucial role. But at the same time, if you never try, you will never know. So I go to school and try to achieve it as much as I can.

We have always been taught, the key to success as a human being to gain the fullest potential you have to achieve it through education. To be honest with you, even in Ethiopia, education is highly regarded. People, whatever they can do, wherever they can go to get an education, they do. There are a lot of educated people.

In our culture, personal gain is not that important see, your personal achievement is not the most important thing. But if you achieve, your whole community benefits, especially in terms of education. Your whole community will be going crazy that day when you graduate because you

have achieved a lot. Now the whole community has a member to look up to.

For me, education, I don't see it as a means to an end. I see it as an end, in itself. I see the importance of education as being just that, education for expanding your mind not just for getting a cherub.

I just see myself as a person who sees education for its own end. I don't have a chip on my shoulder. It's them who believe that I shouldn't be here. Education is not a privilege; it's a right in my eyes.

I am, as a person very resilient and my experiences are diverse. My preference was to be a journalist, but I am a business graduate, a lot of stuff come easy to me. when we came to Canada, we have nothing, we have the lack of funds. A lot of the stuff what we have made, although it looks small in an amount, it is something made by hard work. The properties that we might own or the businesses that we might be into at the moment is literally from nothing and a lot of people do not take credit for their success because aspiration usually overwhelms the success and we don't look at we have accomplished because when I came in Canada, 1975 January, a couple of friends in Italy, put together whatever funds they have and I had 50 U.S.

dollars in my pocket when I landed at the airport so considering that today, I have my home, I have a business, I'm not debt-ridden, I'm pretty much flexible in the stuff that I can do or I can't do, but that is self-earned. It has not been an easy road, but I don't think, the only part I don't like in my life is the dislocation that our generation had to go through.

First of all, for educators to be aware that there are differences to everyone. Every student they have are no longer white or European or English speaking. So, the teacher has to reflect Canadian which comes from all over the world which most don't have English background or what they are teaching. So to tailor that, they have to rearrange, reorganize their curriculum as to how to reflect, how to accommodate those differences within the society. So those of us who are disadvantaged in terms of culture wise won't fall behind. So we can keep on learning. They have to revisit their way of teaching in a way. That is my message to them.

My design is to do that first. I want to contribute a long term contribution, not short term, therefore, I have to go through a long process. I am very proud of myself, first of all for what I have done, for what I have achieved so far so that makes me feel that what I am doing is right. Having contributed to my cultural.

I am free from those oppression, barriers. I am free to do whatever I can in Canada. If I want to be Prime Minister, hey, there is a way to do it, I will do it. If I want to be a director, I can do it. So there is no feeling, no limit as to what I want to do.

We have to rebuild our lives again from scratch. Rebuilding our lives require, doing what, people believing in this country are doing. So that is going to school and educating themselves in anyway that you want. While you are doing that, you also help your own community. Unless you educate yourself in this culture, you will never share the pie or understand how this economy or the culture functions, or the government works. To get the benefit from that, you have to educate yourself in this institution and when you do that, you can give back to your community and teach the children and come out of this community. So my advice to them is do not forget your background, do not forget your background, do not abandon your culture, but within your culture, try for success and do what everybody in this country dream to do and beyond your capacity. Do what you can to succeed. Such that you help every black, every culture, every immigrant that has come here, particularly from Africa to make them proud of

themselves, all of us give respect within other communities. avoid from being labeled.

The community plays three things. Number one, the general community keeps us in touch with back home. They bring the news to update what's going on. Number two, is to direct these people in a positive way such that they can live in this country peacefully and get recognition within the culture. Number four, teach the people what is good and what is bad, what characters are shared with other cultures. It's very crucial that they do three things. Avoiding conflict, teaching the kids not to do, avoid crime and bad things and teaching with connections from back home. Those are very important things.

Once you come here, you have to transform yourself to reality; how these people manage living, learn from others. You can't live, what life you left back home. people still believe in discrimination, superiority of tribes, oppressing others. don't be trapped with the past and come and realize the present. And live in a collective and motivated way that is required in Canada.

First of all, everything within Canada, there are different communities. Those who have been here a hundred years, 200 years have established their own community. What those communities do is to keep their own culture. They make their history, survive their values, and, when I see that, being without culture, without values, without beliefs is just like living trees without leaves, dry. I didn't want to be that. I don't want to live like that so I have to search for my own community and reconnect again and talk to them and establish community support so that kind of identity makes me realize that. And then there's community within Canadian, Hindu Canadian, Chinese Canadian, all those things makes me think why not, why can't I go to mine. To Roman people. Then I joined them. You can be the best you can be. You are a proud Oromian, you are equal to everyone. Never saying negative things. Only positive, so these attitudes help me, lifting me up. And help me every single day.

Success, therefore, is defined within the frame of changes and challenges which maintained and balanced their identity between both worlds (Canada and Ethiopia). What is needed to be noticed is that meanings of success for participants were different because of their background. At the same time, the demands of reconstructing an identity were only met with the condition of accessing their full potential. Therefore, the result of this study may link to the experiences of immigrants in Canada.

The success of immigrants in the West and, in particular, in Canada, depends on the Ethiopian experience of assimilation (i.e., regardless of their cultural, linguistic, and ethnic differences), and also on their degree of commitment to sustain their identity and spiritual values. For example, looking at the Ethiopian immigrants within the frame of a heuristic model to conceptualize acculturation and ethnic identity, one could easily picture a two-by-two table of the process (Pedersen, Draguns, Lonner & Trimble, 1996). According to Pedersen et al., “assimilation involves the processes of acculturation and becoming “Americanized;” ethnic identity refers to the retention and identification of customs, attitudes, and beliefs of the culture of origin. The interaction of these two variables makes up the basic framework of the model” (p. 140).

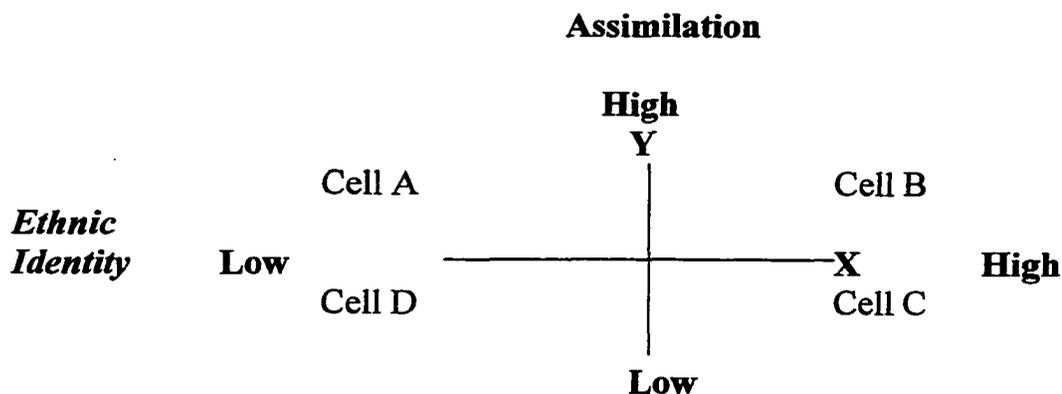


Figure 6. Assimilation and Ethnic Identity: adapted from Pedersen et al.

From the Pedersen et al. model, we can identify and link to four types of success and/or barriers to assimilation: According to Pedersen et al: “Type A, high in assimilation and low in ethnic identity; Type B, high in assimilation and high in ethnic identity; Type C, high in ethnic identity and low in assimilation; and Type D, low in ethnicity and low in assimilation” (p. 140).

The authors’ explanation is that, while immigrants in Type A appear high in assimilation and low in ethnic identity, the pattern describes individuals who have, for all intents and purposes, Americanized themselves. Clothes, language, and culture are more like those of the mainstream, and there is little evidence of an ethnic background, generational status, and length of time in the West (United States or Canada). The one constant factor between the categories, however, is that

of visibility, so that even highly Americanized individuals are often asked why they speak English so well (Pedersen et al.

Type B, which reflects high in assimilation and high in ethnic identity, represents a bicultural adaptation. The individual immigrant feels comfortable in both the dominant and ethnic society and has friends and contacts in a variety of cultures. In this case, successful Ethiopians, intellectuals, and business people fall into this category (Pedersen et al.

Type C, high in ethnic identity and low assimilation, is most characteristic of newly-arrived Ethiopian immigrants, and of old-timers who have had little contact with the dominant society. These individuals will have language difficulties, as well as values, belief systems, and norms brought over from the ancestral homeland (Pedersen et al.

The Type D category, low in assimilation and low in ethnic identity, contains individuals who are alienated from both the dominant and ethnic culture. They reject the ethnic role; yet feel rejected by the dominant culture (Pedersen, et al.

The results of this study clearly show both the movement from cell to cell, and remaining stagnant within one cell. What this suggests is that the experiences of assimilation depend on the immigrants' background of social status or experiences of oppression. For example, barriers posited by other researchers as disempowering may not fit to all Ethiopian immigrants, because the interpretation

of barriers are different for different tribes.

Much of the research that explores changes of cultural or religious attitudes, career goals, and attitudes toward home country by immigrants indicates that many experience changes in attitudes favouring open-mindedness, value of knowledge, and greater freedom in their relationship (Hanassab, 1991).

Hanassab's (1991) findings acknowledge that moving from a familiar culture to a foreign culture involves complex and stressful difficulties. The process of learning to understand the competitive, territorial, and interactive attitudes of the Western society may well be the cause of immigrants' transitional discomfort (Spaulding & Flack, 1976; Pederson, 1996; Stoyhoff, 1997; & Valadeze, 1998). This may be true as a general explanation of the negatives but it could be challenged in view of Ethiopian immigrants who participated in this study. The focus here was only about the immigrants' vulnerability undermining the strength and the positive side of the process. For example, the following seven researched topics about immigrants' negative experiences contradict the meaning and experiences of some Ethiopian immigrants participated in this study.

### Cultural Adjustment

These transitions are often described as stages, phases, or processes reflecting different ways of coping and reconstructing. For example, Furnhand and Bochner (1986) discuss [immigrants'] experiences in four stages: "honeymoon, crisis, recovery, and adjustment" (p. 212). Johnson (1996) highlights the same

experiences in five phases: “Honeymoon, culture shock, initial adjustment, mental isolation, and acceptance or integration” (p. 13). Furthermore, according to Driedyer (1996), [immigrants’] transition processes go through six stages: “contact, acculturation, adaptation, accommodation, integration and assimilation” (p. 49). However, no matter how one describes the process, it is obvious that there are phases of difficulties and adjustments that immigrants go through.

An alternative argument to these stages, phases, or processes is that “. . . immigrants do not need to adjust (e.g., adapt and integrate) to a new culture but instead, need to learn its characteristics (e.g., the social and cultural skills and knowledge) [because] adjusting a person to a new culture is ethnocentric, helping someone to learn a second culture is not” (Pedersen, 1996, p. 213). Klukanov, (1998) also questions the interpretation of adaptation and integration because, he writes, “. . . it is not a personal choice; rather it is societal expectation measured by the immigrants’ ability to conform to the larger society” (p. 3).

### Barriers

The transitional experiences of Ethiopian immigrants are often associated with an individual Ethiopian awareness of the state to which he/she is exposed (Razack, 1999). In other words, the degree to which the stressors manifest the stages or the phases of the transitions may well be a reflection of the colour, ethnicity, beliefs, and historical legacy of the tribal identity. What is generally common is that, in changing his or her environment, the Ethiopian is leaving deep

meaningful ties and moving into the unknown. This transition is confusing and overwhelming. In other words, the Ethiopian refugee is pushed into a situation where he/she is vulnerable and feels isolated and incompetent (Nann & Seebaran, 1978). Thus, Ethiopian refugees continue to face different challenges and each challenge is perceived differently, based on their tribal origin and social status in Ethiopia. (Smith, 1986).

### Racism

Racism seems to be one of the most difficult experiences facing visible minorities and Ethiopian immigrants (Smith, 1986). Stoyhoff, (1996), in developing an adjustment stress scale that assesses the psychological needs of immigrants and also international students, found perceived discrimination to be their main concern, along with alienation. Other studies have found social isolation to be high among immigrants and international students particularly for those from African and Asian countries (Abe & Zane, 1990; Sue & Sue, 1990; Mehta, Ruby, & Letts, 1996). In two studies, perception of prejudice proved to be a significant predictor of adjustment stress for African, Asian and Indian immigrants (Mehta & Farina, 1994). Different levels of perception of prejudice were found among the various groups of immigrants. White immigrants perceived less prejudice than did immigrants who were Black African, South Asian, and East Asian (Mehta, 1995). Lee and Westwood, (1996) also have found similar differences in their study of adjustment differences among immigrants at a mid-

western American university.

Extending the earlier findings, Mehta (1996) investigated whether those groups of immigrants who perceive more prejudice actually were the target of greater prejudice and discrimination. The study claimed that immigrants from Africa, East Asia, and South Asia perceived more prejudice than those from Western countries (Mehta, 1996). According to Lynch (1989), the sources of racism are “ignorance, unpleasant experiences, scapegoat, and ethnic purity” (p. 81). Furthermore, Lee and Westwood (1996) argue “racism is maintained from generation to generation not simply because of economic gain and the preservation of white material privilege, but also by the necessity to maintain a belief in white racial superiority. Educators either inadvertently reinforce or perpetuate racism” (p. 27). One factor that may contribute to the above role is the changing economic conditions of Canada or United States, as the dominant cultures’ economic hardships may bring more stress to the immigrants’ experiences. For example, foreigners in general may be perceived as taking away jobs or privileges of people in Canada; thus, they become targets of discrimination or racism. Hence, the nature of racism experienced by immigrants also changes from time to time (Miles, 1989; Driedyer, 1996). Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997) state that the “. . . effects of racism can literally throw immigrants off-balance. This instability can be frightening as immigrants experience contradictions and begin to realize that their

previous cultural, traditional ways of making sense of the world no longer seem adequate” (p. 48).

### Prejudice

Prejudice is an indicator of racism and has four functions. First, dehumanization, to the point where the immigrants are seen as either being a thing or incapable of anything (Klukanov, 1998). Second, it is assumed that prejudice may be a way to reduce competition and boost one’s standing within one’s own facility (Hall, 1997). Third, such racism allows society to avoid their responsibility to gain some understanding of differences. Fourth, prejudice functions as a way to celebrate the “good’ and show support by opposing the alien (Ho, 1998). While the above indicates the functions of prejudice, there are, according to Hall (1997), five types of prejudice: “blatant, conceit, symbolic, tokenism, and arms-length, all of which affect immigrants” (p. 14).

### Stereotypes

Stereotyping, according to Driedger, (1996) “is a plate made by molding a matrix of a printing surface to be used in casting on metal type face a uniform matrix” (p. 265). Stereotypes involve categorization of immigrants based on ethnicity, colour, gender, and nationality (Graham, 1999). When little is known about a group, there is a tendency to fill in the missing information gap, or as Hall (1997) suggests, “there may be too much information, and so there is a need to simplify” (p. 1). Mehta, and Farina (1994) explain the dimensions of stereotypes

to consist of “content, the traits which make up the stereotypes; uniformity, the degree of agreement of these traits; direction, the favorableness or unfavorableness of these traits; and intensity, the degree of favorable or unfavorableness of responses to these traits” (p. 12). The immigrants’ experience seems to be drawn from these characteristics (Abe & Zane, 1990).

### Discrimination

Discrimination is another problem for immigrants as well as for foreign students. Mehta (1995) stated that “perceived discrimination was the immigrants’ main concern, along with alienation” (p. 4). Interestingly, Mehta, Ruby, and Letts (1996) found that, “[while] discrimination provides a significant predictor for all immigrants’ level of stress; the level of discrimination and stress for white immigrants was less” (p. 7). It is this distinction that pushes visible minorities to internalize racism because they can run but they cannot escape, or they can ignore it but it is always there. To be a person of colour in the West is to be a problem (Leong, 1984). In addition, immigrants’ cultural attributes, such as formal and informal social behaviours and unique characteristics, not only expose them further to stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and social and institutional racism, but also psychologically handicap them by causing loneliness, helplessness, and guilt (Mehta, and Farina, 1994).

### Language Barriers

Language is a common barrier experienced by most immigrants of visible minorities. Learning English as a second language produces stress regardless of nationality, colour, or ethnicity (Pedersen, 1996; Mehta & Farina, 1994). Non-English speaking immigrants, especially those from Africa, experience more difficulty due not only to their lack of English skills, but also because of their culturally limited articulation, or a lack of ability to interpret the customary nonverbal symbols (Sue & Sue, 1990). "Language learners already know, in general, how to negotiate meaning. They have been doing it all their lives. They know as much as [Westerners] do [but] guessing is something which immigrants are apparently unable to do outside their mother tongue" (Swan, 1985, p. 5). Further, Swan and Leong (1984) argue that, "these differences [in guessing] include great reliance on the abstract representation of how to think about the social/cultural world —without experiencing the penalties that often accompany the exercise of critical attitude in other societies" (p. 11). Immigrants may be at a disadvantage but this does not necessarily mean that they are under-prepared, or that increased fluency in English is sufficient to reverse poor economic performance over time (Miles, 1989; Driedyer, 1996).

Institutionally, the communication process is subtle, systematic, and multidimensional and takes place on two levels: the content (topic of conversation), and the relational (feeling and power) (Miles, 1989). Administrators

forget this when they feel trapped in an interracial interaction, when they are being accused of being “culturally insensitive,” or when they hear someone say, “This whole institution is racist.” It is at these moments that authorities may feel vulnerable to the interpretations of immigrants may make. They become conscious of being in an “interracial relationship,” of feeling defensive, uncertain, not wanting to offend, wanting to analyze the content, and needing to get away from the murky, uncomfortable arena of “race relations.” It is no wonder that the immigrants’ English as a second language or interracial interactions are described as walking on eggshells or across a minefield (Driedyer, 1996).

One of the problems in measuring the extent of problems encountered by immigrants is their reluctance to seek out professional help. They typically seek help only after other resources have been exhausted (Klineberg, 1982; Pedersen, 1975). In many cultures, seeking counseling would result in a loss of status, while many traditional means of solving personal problems rely more on fellow nationals for assistance.

Hence the Ethiopian immigrants’ issues and difficult transitional experiences may have just opened an extended debate for scholars from different disciplines. To facilitate this debate and to gain further knowledge about the Ethiopians in British Columbia, this research provides their most commonly used coping strategies to the least commonly used strategies to enhance adaptation and success in Canada. Identifying the Ethiopian immigrants’ successful coping

strategies and/or their ability of reconstructing identity may help bridge the gaps in knowledge about Ethiopian immigrants' level of success. Interestingly, the subjects in this study suggest different interpretations of barriers that hinder assimilation into Canadian society. For example, for some, discrimination was greater in Ethiopia than in Canada.

## Chapter 6

### Discussion

#### Summary of Results

This study explored Ethiopian refugees' successful reconstruction of identity in order to achieve their full potential, as well as a degree of community role, throughout their process of adaptation and assimilation. The study also examined the experiences of ten successful Ethiopian refugees (five women and five men) who reside within the boundaries of Greater Victoria and Greater Vancouver. Through interviewing these participants' sources of identities, feelings of experiences, and patterns of processes were extracted into paragraphs for each interview. Within the elicited paragraph were 386 repetitive phrases that described sources, experience, and process of identity (See Appendix A); and community's influences. These 386 associated factors were framed into five themes (categories) that were found to be expressive of their lived-experiences and the meanings they shared. These themes are: common roots of identity, exposure to others, commitment, barriers, and success.

The preliminary examination of successful reconstruction of identity has been linked to the participants' tribal status within Ethiopia as well as to the level of experience within original social status. Thus, for participants the speed of assimilation and adaptation was influenced by in-group tribal identity. The significance of this finding means participants reformed their identity by

contrasting their individual and collectively ascribed tribal group values and beliefs within the dominant Canadian society. In the process of achieving success, all participants attributed their tribal belonging as a stimulus to their response of successful adaptation and assimilation.

What was interesting was that each participant's measure of success was defined within the context of their tribe, where the transmutation process of the individual was not only honoured by the family and tribe. This also gained them entitlement, by being referred to as a role model to future generations. At the same time, the ways in which participants defined success and community role were different. For example, those who came from marginalized tribes and had suffered life-long oppression, saw being free as their success, versus accessing social, economic, and educational resources. On the other hand, those who came from dominant tribes and had benefited from other tribes, saw success as having economic, intellectual, and social power. The third group defined their success as an ability to help their tribe politically, family economically, community organizationally and socially, here in Canada. I can personally relate to the third group of participants because reconstructing identity to me is understanding the searchlight that exposes meaning; meaning that bridges interconnectedness and interrelationships with fellow Ethiopians and Canadians in order to arrive at success.

As the participants explained, identity always serves as the driving force to the root of the original seed, and whatever change one makes, therefore, is only on the outside. The outside determines the level of comfort or challenges of reconstruction. Thus, the awareness of the outside patterns of social values and beliefs has provided participants skills to develop a successful response to the expectation of their new social environment. However, their experiences of the assimilation process reflected the tribal pride, family bond, and community orientation. Furthermore, each participant's experiences with individuals from other cultures have not only prepared them to expect the unexpected, but also made them more flexible in their process of setting goals, enlisting support, making plans, engaging in action, and attaining success.

While these participants were successful in comparison to recently arrived Ethiopians, their sense of success was not without challenges; challenges that may be different from other immigrants. This may be interpreted as barriers versus opportunities. Challenges such as language, beliefs, tradition (culture), and colour, impacted the participants' process of successful adaptation and assimilation. Some of them experienced racism, discrimination, and different forms of prejudices; yet, they were able to achieve success, as they understood it.

Therefore, this study is very important to all Ethiopian immigrants as well as to human services professionals and academics. Newly immigrated Ethiopian could become informed of the appropriate way to assimilate, adapt, and achieve in

reference to these participants. Human service professionals could also refer to the patterns of Ethiopian immigrants' experience and processes in order to help or provide services appropriately. Academicians may use these results as a foundation to explore more into identity and interpretations of success, not only in Ethiopians in Canada, but also in other immigrants.

### Limitations

There are a number of factors that limited this study. The first limitation is that all participants in this inquiry defined successful reconstruction of identity from the context of their worldviews and definitions of success. Furthermore, their views may not be generalized to either all Ethiopian refugees (immigrants) in British Columbia, or to those throughout Canada. Language was also considered a limitation, due to the fact that those who participated in this study were interviewed in English, and audio segments in Amharic and other tribal language were not included.

The second limitation is that the themes provided only a snapshot of the Ethiopian refugees' experiences during the process of assimilation and adaptation, and how their sense of success was achieved. Thus, what is required is a large-scale research to determine generalizability of the themes.

The third and final limitation is the heuristic model of reporting only allows the lived-experience and meaning to be understood in the way it was articulated. There were no applied tools to observe or document experiences other than

hearing stories as participants' memories of their experiences unfolded. This was due to questions focused only on meanings of lived-experience in relation to current identity, instead of predictions of future.

### Implications For Theory And Research

The outcome of this research confirms that Ethiopian immigrants maintain their original identity while reconstructing desired behaviours in order to assimilate successfully in their new social environment. Most important about this research was, while a previous study (Tebeje, 1989), provided a general sense of how Ethiopian immigrants differ from those of other countries in terms of their values, beliefs, culture, and worldviews, this study contributes new knowledge about the patterns, processes, and experiences associated with Ethiopian refugees who have high degree of success. Although, in the past, researchers such as Tebeje, 1989, have examined adjustment levels of Ethiopians living in Canada, the Canadian public needs more information in order to understand and help Ethiopians integrate into the community, labour force, and education system.

This study explored the lived-experiences of those who are socially, economically, and academically (intellectually) successful individuals, the ways in which they climb to the top of the social and economic ladder, what challenges they have overcome, and the sources of influence used to reconstruct and manage original identity. The five categories that emerged from the data are comparable to Bekerie's (1997) Locational theory and events of description of African society.

Themes such as common roots of identity have indicated the participants' tribal, community, family, and spiritual location, and commitment, and also reflected the degree of attachment and responsibility to their original identity. Furthermore, exposure to others (i.e., experiences outside of one's own tribe or country of origin) not only addressed their levels of flexibility when exposed to diversity (within and outside of the location), but also confirmed their degree of awareness about the broader social, cultural, and environment interconnectedness and interrelationship, which supports cultivating creativity within the equation of the theory. Similarly, barriers as perceived by participants' are comparable to the Locational theory's argument of historical oppression. However, success as defined by participants in this research may be determined as a new phenomenon. Therefore, it has a potential to open doors for future research on different groups of immigrants from different countries in order to expand the definition of success. The implications for academic and professional research are rich for the following reasons: First, the process of change and reconstructing identity is subject to the conditions of the society within which one must assimilate, integrate, and/or adapt in order to fully participate in societies social, economic, political and educational structures. Second, success in relation to identity is dependent upon the perception of the individual living in Western society. Thus, for Ethiopians and maybe for most visible minority immigrants, identity in relation to success may be interpreted as what I would call, polishing one's own statue to be more visible and

capturing the attention of the society in order to access sources of success.

Therefore, the research provides a wide range of topics such as the influences of tribal background on assimilation and flexibility to learn and change phenomena in order to understand more in-depth and gain knowledge

As such, the findings of this research indicated that, while all participants agreed with their sources of identity and commitment, the interpretation of barriers and success varied due to their social, economic, and tribal status which they came with from Ethiopia. In other words, the less status the individual experienced in his/her county of origin, the fewer barriers they encountered, and the higher status and the greater the barriers they faced. Therefore, one may look at other immigrants through the lens of this study to understand similarities or differences on the perception of success.

The results also provide information for professionals, teachers, and human service organizations to better help Ethiopians and immigrants in general. Furthermore, it should expand practitioners' understanding of the ways in which Ethiopians immigrants manage to fluctuate through the cells of assimilation and ethnic identity models. The implications of this study have a potential for curriculum development in education, practice mode for human service professionals, and community development for Ethiopians and Africans alike. The following are examples of implications to teachers and professionals.

### Implications for Teachers

There are significant implications for teachers in this research that would be helpful in developing a teaching approach to facilitate the needs of not only Ethiopian immigrants but also other immigrants in general. This important implication is 'culture.' Culture determines the construction of a learning framework (their ability to learn). In view of the participants, culture has the most profound effect on their assimilation and adaptation process as well as on their reconstruction of identity. Thus, one could conclude that culture has shaped and conditioned their values, beliefs, choices, and has given the greatest richness and differences in their new social environment. The absence of cultural sensitivity and awareness in the development of teaching resources, therefore, not only limits the open relationship between teachers and students, but also blocks participation and understanding.

Conversely, the presence of cultural sensitivity and awareness in the development of a teaching resource involves a broader understanding of the unique and common characteristics of the immigrant learner's culture, and accepts and respects the complex but rich differences. Such a teaching approach would transform students' perceptions, values, and worldviews about self-in-relation and the unique differences between themselves and others. This, consequently, reflects in part the outcome of a comprehensive education, because the approach allows the learning and teaching environment to become a network where and

individual's and a group's stories, sources of ideas, and relationships are shared, connected, related, and appreciated.

Furthermore, teachers could be encouraged to endorse the learners' cultural interrelationships, interdependency, and connectedness to others, and to promote a positive learning outcome. In addition, while this cultural sensitivity and awareness embrace curiosity through increased empathy and understanding, it challenges students to explore, discover and understand who they are, what history brought them to where they are, why they are different from other students in terms of ethnicity, colour, gender, sexuality, belief system, etc. Through participation, interaction, and cooperation, the learning environment may generate curiosity, abstract imagination, and open feedback for both learners and facilitator. As participants confirmed in this study, most immigrant students learn by doing, by "differencing," by relating to those differences, and by further connecting their own experiences to what they see as different. For example, one may interpret cultural sensitivity and awareness as a perspective aimed to help learners engage in observing, exploring, examining, feeling, connecting, and meaning-making of the experiences in order to understand "the otherness of others."

Moreover, this cultural sensitivity and awareness connects and transforms different patterns of learning by promoting both common and unique cultural attributes of various areas of knowledge (tribal, traditional, spiritual, and

environmental) so that strong relationships between learners from different backgrounds can be possible and maintained. Therefore, this cultural sensitivity and awareness gives immigrant learners' the opportunity to dialogue, reflect, and participate, as well as to explore and understand the rationale that makes one culture different from the other. Hence, such a flexible and sensitive teaching curriculum helps immigrant students develop the knowledge, skills, and attitude that are required to adapt and participate in the Canadian educational and socioeconomic arena.

#### Implications for Human Services Professionals Practice

The results of this research hold potential implications for professionals in all human service practices, such as developing culturally sensitive practices and increasing awareness about the diverse nature of immigrant population. This cultural sensitivity and awareness is not about "isms;" instead it is about human relationships, interdependency, differences, and points of connection. When practice is oriented culturally, the model of practice becomes cross-cultural. The term cross-cultural means a place of cultural intersection, where professionals encounter issues of immigrants, and the approaches they use to deal with their clients' problems. A cross-cultural model provides a way for one to understand and examine one's own culture, values, beliefs, and, most of all, identity, in order to respect and accept the unique differences they encounter in their professional practice.

Although cultures are maps of meaning through which the world is made intelligible, it is the participants' experience and understanding of their own culture and its impact on their values, beliefs, and choices which makes for the greatest richness and differences within the professional practice. This is important as culture is the main source of knowledge, passed on from generation to generation. Respecting such dynamics enhances professional competency.

In addition, this study adds a cross-cultural approach that encourages professionals to understand, to be sensitive and alert when encountering immigrants, and to expand communication in their professional practices. Hence, the potential implication as described above provides ingredients to prepare professionals in all human services to be mindful, flexible, and open practitioners. This is not implying, however, that professionals are not trained to effectively serve their clients from diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial background. What it suggests is that awareness of the issues associated with diversity and equity, as well as the role of the professionals in addressing the immigrant-client's challenges, are necessary ingredients in facilitating opportunities for their clients' success.

### Conclusion

This research provided substantive information for professionals in all human services fields, for teachers of any levels of educational settings, and for those in academia, as well as for Ethiopian communities in Canada. The

information presented in this study may enhance the global view of Ethiopian immigrants' sources of identity and web of influences that challenge barriers, and reconstruct an identity that fits the required skills of assimilation and adaptation necessary in new social environments. For example, this research has found that the tribal background is not only influential, but also a determinant of meanings in their experiences (negative or positive), as well as to their definitions of success. As described earlier, there were distinct meanings of experiences and definitional differences of success between those who came from historically oppressed tribes and those who came from the dominant cultural tribe. This knowledge is important, as there was a link between historically privileged immigrants and those who were not. What this suggests is that one group is more flexible to change and challenge. In other words, while one demonstrates the ability to blend the original identity into the new social environment, the other resists, due to the rigidity of their tribal background and heavy reliance on their traditional status and power.

However, because the research was only conducted in a small geographic area of British Columbia, and the selection of participants was restricted to those who speak English only and who were most successful amongst Ethiopians in the selected geographic areas, the findings are limited and may not be generalizable.

Nonetheless, the study has revealed Ethiopian immigrants' challenges, strengths, and the determinants of successful assimilation and adaptation as they

live in Canada. The inquiry used nine questions and ten participants from ten tribes originally from Ethiopia (Amhara, tigriye, Afar, Somali, Oromo, Guragi, Aderi, Eritrea, Welayta, and Felasha). All represented the Ethiopian immigrants' population in the selected geographic areas. Their responses were not uniform, but all shared their feelings about barriers to assimilate and adapt, the challenges they have faced, as well as the strength and contributions they make to the Canadian social fabric. This study could be a starting point for further understanding of Ethiopian immigrants' identity reconstruction process.

The study linked selected theory (i.e., Bekerie's 1997 Locational theory) as a means to understanding the participants' responses. The participants' relationship with their communities and their views of the Canadian social environment have been addressed. Cultural practices, as identified in this study, are important factors for Ethiopian immigrants' success as the overall culture gives meaning to their social environment. They are passionate about their culture, but responsible for their individual actions and reactions.

### Recommendations

1. Ethiopian immigrants would benefit from one united Ethiopian Community Association. Since participants have identified their isolation as a means that prevent them from feeling successful even when they are financially secure, such community association could provide easy access to social connection recourses and encourage Ethiopians participation to

successfully assimilate and adapt in their new environment. This might be done through a community centre, a comfortable environment where families, individuals, and community members relate, share and support one another. The community association could also mediate between Ethiopian immigrants and professionals, consult and advocate on behalf of its members, build a safe bridge between the society and Ethiopian immigrants, and educate its members and the public about the tribal and cultural differences.

2. Further research on factors that prevent Ethiopian immigrants from creating a united community association would be beneficial. Although Ethiopian immigrants are willing to establish a community association, there seem to be obstacles to making this possible.
3. Professionals in human services organizations need to re-evaluate their level of cross-cultural awareness in reference to the participants' responses. They may need to be more sensitive to the immigrants' needs and expectations of their services. Furthermore, the Ethiopian immigrants' unique characteristics (shyness and stubbornness) need to be acknowledged.

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## Appendix A

### Collections of Metathemes

#### INTERVIEW ONE:

##### CULTURE

1. gives values, beliefs, morals, and strength
2. respect for tradition and rituals
3. ingrained history

##### IDENTITY

4. awareness of social status
5. oppression because of power
6. Canadian-associated with freedom, education, access to resources, and opportunity for self-discovery

##### RACISM

7. Cultural vs. immigration
8. overt—one power in control of resources
9. keeps others down
10. Canada—covert
11. avenues of prevention

##### ETHIOPIAN HISTORY

12. based in royal family

13. sense of ostracism from history because it is not based on the experiences of the people
14. sense of mistrust and incomprehension by people because of war

#### PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN CULTURE

15. oppressed
16. refugee in own country
17. ostracized

#### DETERMINATION

18. once immigrated, previous experience gave him the strength and determination to succeed in a foreign land
19. previous oppression became his opening for a fresh start in Canada

#### HOPE

20. for normal life
21. for family still living under "oppressive" rule.

#### EXPERIENCE IN CANADA

22. more of a home
23. opportunity comparative sense with Ethiopia

#### IMMIGRATION COMMUNITY

24. sense of solidarity
25. encouragement of identity
26. support to discover self

27. open communication
28. comparison of where he is in terms of perceived success and achievement level
29. when feeling low perceives his self in terms of where he was and how far he has come
30. overcome obstacles—in past, gives him strength to persevere and move
31. past is a motivating factor
32. Canada—seeing acts of compassion instills trust in dominant culture.  
Learns from us and passes knowledge to community

#### REFLECTION

33. thought process was focused on survival—moment to moment
34. opportunity in the present to reflect on the process of the past
35. opportunity to evolve and become self-actualized because he has (or perceives he has) access to all needs here in Canada.

#### CONNECTION WITH CULTURE (once immigrated)

36. looks and examines other cultures ways of being connected
37. did not want to live in a sense of meaninglessness (which he witnessed back home, and within his perception of other immigrant groups living in Canada)
38. reconnected with own culture through intentional acts—seeking
39. focus on being the best you can be

- 40. equality
- 41. focus on positive

#### ACCEPTANCE OF A DUAL CULTURAL IDENTITY

- 42. sense of complimentarism—values he receives from Canadian culture are different from Oromians
- 43. has a sense of trust in his community—they give information and advice freely
- 44. Canadians give info but have to work for it—once attained, confirms his sense of acceptance within dominant culture

#### SENSE OF POSSIBILITY OF DISCRIMINATION

- 45. based on achieving success within the Canadian system
- 46. belief in overcoming possible discriminatory obstacles
- 47. in relation to Cultures within Africa—sense of disunity and discrimination—these groups are then polarized even further while living in Canada—lack of connection
- 48. discrimination experienced in Ethiopia—affected self-perception
- 49. sense of superiority ingrained while in Ethiopia which transfers once immigrated—reflected in levels of adaptation

#### RESPONSIBILITY TO COMMUNITY

- 50. group identity

51. comparison of North American blacks sense of displacement from both cultures (Canadian/American and ?Africa?)—lack sense of responsibility because of this
52. feels accountable to his cultural community  
feels lack of physical connectedness due to displacement of cultural members
53. goal is to move to a bigger community (transition) where he has possibility for connectedness
54. does not have a hierarchical sense of family structure like he believes Canadians do

#### ACQUISITION OF SECOND LANGUAGE

55. ignorance and lack of understanding cultural differences by Canadians
56. perpetuate difficulties of transition
57. experienced extreme stress, discrimination and negative labeling
58. Message to educators
59. consider differences
60. everyone has a “culture”
61. variation in people accommodate by providing and being accepting of variation in curriculum
62. wants equality
63. avenues to achieve status (opportunities)

**GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS and CONDITIONS OF SUCH**

- 64. focus on long term
- 65. be reflective
- 66. proud
- 67. motivated freedom
- 68. opportunity

**REBUILDING LIVES**

- 69. need to assimilate Canadian culture and modes of living
- 70. need education, understanding of Canada to be able to share in the opportunities
- 71. give what you learn back to your community
- 72. success
- 73. dominoes effect?
- 74. fear

**CONNECTION WITH COUNTRY MEMBERS**

- 75. live peacefully
- 76. touch lives positively teach values of Canadian culture (right and wrong)
- 77. social comparison with others (both cultural members and Canadians)
- 78. adjustment
- 79. transition
- 80. change

81. transformation

MEANING OF SUCCESS

82. helping others

83. achieving dreams

84. selflessness

85. leaving legacy of his success to next generation

86. empowering others

INTERVIEW TWO:

87. expansion of identity

88. acceptance of change

89. hope

90. aspirations

91. possibilities

92. opportunity

93. adaptation

94. revolutionize

95. achievement

96. successful (feels to some degree)

97. learning

98. believes in own abilities

99. exterior portrayal and molding of *part* of one's self in order to fit in to dominant cultures way of being
100. but intrinsically tied by one's heart to homeland
101. acts with intention
102. goal oriented
103. accepting of mistakes (go with the flow) and willingness to learn from them
104. shares commonality with people from culture
105. share understanding of pain—emotional-spiritual
106. dissemination of education, learning, knowledge
107. choice
108. willingness to reconstruct identity
109. communication
110. importance of passing heritage down to the next generation
111. comparison of self, and cultural members to Canadians
112. feels lack of support and encouragement for one another in his community
113. sense of hope
114. competitive
115. accepts challenges
116. better than them attitude
117. a need of separateness
118. responsibility to empower his people

119. feels lack of community (due to tribalism?)

INTERVIEW THREE:

120. connectedness—regarding tribes

121. sharing

122. sense of collective

DISCRIMINATION

123. no discrimination—maybe because of experience in Ethiopia's ruling class

124. have witnessed others become successful

125. pride

126. opportunity

127. comparison

128. education, ability, and family structure

129. accomplishment here

130. community is viewed as a negative (seems to limit him)

131. however, supports community out of ?duty?

132. pursued activities gave sense of identity

133. small social circle important (immediate family)

134. assists others in unpleasant situations

135. honesty

136. doesn't want to feel fear

137. determination

- 138. possibilities
- 139. independence
- 140. overcoming obstacles both from culture and Canada
- 141. the above acts as a motivator
- 142. avoids focusing on negative
- 143. hope
- 144. importance of education

INTERVIEW FOUR:

- 145. byproduct of the time (regarding culture)
- 146. change of self motivated by changing political environment (external factors)
- 147. tribalism (perceived as negative?)
- 148. respect and love for country
- 149. diversity of culture from region t region—no belief in exclusively *pure* culture (all have been influenced by one another)
- 150. connection to others of the same time period—share an understanding of larger trials and tribulations
- 151. unbreakable ties to one another
- 152. hierarchy of domination within Ethiopia
- 153. education, speaking truth
- 154. acceptance

155. pride (both for I/We)
156. comparison with Canadians
157. product of community
158. discrimination within Ethiopia
159. sense of being better than others within the category of being “black”
160. strength of immigrant community to overcome limitations
161. heritage stronger than culture
162. doesn't feel Canadian ?
163. considers “racist”
164. ignorance of Canadian culture
165. Canadians lack education about African cultures
166. surviving change
167. challenge
168. acceptance
169. shedding judgments and criticisms
170. resilient
171. diversity of experiences
172. continuation and pursuit of aspirations
173. limitation in not stopping to ponder ones successes, focusing instead on aspirations
174. resents dislocation that his generation went through

175. pride as an individual ,pride as a community members, holding pride for others accomplishments
176. sense that cultural members undermine or underestimate their experiences
177. look for positive in culture, regardless of what dominant culture says
178. importance of networking among various Ethiopian groups
179. need social reference when in a new experience
180. reconnection with groups is fragile—need open communication
181. pass on experience—need to listen and learn from one another
182. build sense of trust—have realistic expectations
183. pride has a negative side—judging oneself harshly
184. image of a young, immigrant lifestyle—sense of a new culture
185. overcoming issues with one another to experience connections and be able to relate to one another
186. fear of authority figures—the unknown
187. avoidance of them
188. dealing with negative images—effect subsides, but image lasts
189. dealing with past effects
190. onus of responsibility is on community to breed positive attitudes
191. breed self—confidence and self-esteem

#### EDUCATORS

192. need to educate themselves on the realities of the societies

193. need to have a good understanding that pose as barriers for integration of all cultures

#### TEACHING OF HISTORY

194. influenced by ruling class(historical evolution marred)
195. barrier to truth
196. need consensus among group members as to truth
197. sense of needing to bond together on same level, then the opportunity to move forward is possible

#### INTERVIEW FIVE:

198. immigrated to Canada to attain an education
199. education teaches: success, shape identity and perceptions, teaches acceptance of others despite differences, ability to listen to others, listening will make you wiser
200. identifies himself as an Ethiopian and desires to maintain that identity
201. proud to be Ethiopian

#### EXPERIENCE IN ETHIOPIA

202. against tribal identity
203. aspires for Ethiopia to be one united nation
204. experience of being an outsider looking in—changed his perspective of what it means to be an Ethiopian

#### EXPERIENCE IN CANADA

- 205. desired education—got opportunity
- 206. learned what he wanted—individual fulfillment
- 207. education—state of unknowing identity—reevaluating roots and becoming appreciative of them
- 208. no starting point of reference for immigrants, no contacts, and limited access to community
- 209. desires to bridge the gap

#### VALUES/beliefs

- 210. community
- 211. family
- 212. without it state no one to be responsible to
- 213. wants reconnection
- 214. share ideas (empower one another)
- 215. share information and knowledge with both cultural members and Canadians
- 216. need to have access to resources, and begin dialoguing
- 217. stop ethnic division
- 218. be able to discuss and be knowledgeable about perspective
- 219. do not offend others with ignorance
- 220. plan actions and set goals, workable goals

INTERVIEW SIX

221. guilt and shame extend beyond the individual—affects the family and community
222. everyone has a role that shapes identity—obey family
223. sense of responsibility to family—that extends across the country
224. collective and unity
225. has tried to assimilate
226. Ethiopian identity is permanence, unique
227. has modified behaviors to fit into Canadian culture, but has kept those perceived to be acceptable
228. having Ethiopian identity means unity, love respect, morals, fear
229. individualism
230. need culture to build identity
231. transforms you—gives you reference point
232. sense of oneness leaves little room for identity crisis
233. perceives his/herself as unfulfilled—life mission has not been accomplished
234. responsibility to do so
235. Ethiopians are stubborn and determined
236. no sense of impossibility—overcoming obstacles
237. determination

- 238. unique civilization—doesn't want to evaluate and judge other cultures way of being, and vice versa
- 239. can attain respect without losing

#### RACISM

- 240. distinction between racism in Ethiopia and Canada
- 241. Ethiopia—doesn't surpass boundaries of taking away rights, Canada does
- 242. education important
- 243. need to pass down knowledge, give back to community
- 244. giving back reflects back ones identity without fear
- 245. exercise beliefs and culture—pass down to children

#### RACISM WITHIN CANADA

- 246. not being able to assimilate with dominant culture
- 247. need to organize community
- 248. proud of culture now

#### INTERVIEW SEVEN:

#### EXPERIENCE IN CANADA

- 249. loss of identity once immigrated
- 250. categorized into one group—black
- 251. labeled because of physical attributes
- 252. unique identity not considered
- 253. no understanding of Canadians regarding history and identity as Ethiopian

**EXPERIENCE IN ETHIOPIA**

- 254. tribe important
- 255. hold allegiance to it
- 256. people you can trust
- 257. state of change—structure within the concept of the tribe

**ETHIOPIAN IDENTITY IN CANADA**

- 258. collective
- 259. have a code that Ethiopians abide by
- 260. more likely to adapt than maintain identity
- 261. have to constantly prove yourself here
- 262. sense of overcoming obstacles
- 263. seeing the next generation overcome obstacles

**LANGUAGE BARRIERS**

- 264. discouraged
- 265. hampers economic potential
- 266. culture shock

**ASPIRATIONS**

- 267. education to attain a better, full life
- 268. accessing good jobs
- 269. achieve as much as he can
- 270. reach fullest potential

271. witnessing community reap benefits of ones' accomplishments

#### ETHIOPIAN BELIEFS

272. collective

273. connection because of the unity to ideas of past, present, future

274. life is continuous

275. forever born

#### INTERVIEW EIGHT:

276. pride in being Ethiopian

277. rich culture

278. long history

279. family ties and connection gave courage

280. sense of privilege

281. fulfilling expectations of family

282. love, trust

283. all factors (above) have shaped identity

#### IDENTITY CONCEPT IN CANADA

284. have to try to fit in

285. sense of concrete identity, nothing will change it

286. respect other's identity

287. culture shock

288. come across barriers, will overcome

289. sense of positive and negative aspects to both identities, maintain balance

290. have positive and open mind

#### ETHIOPIANS compared with CANADIANS

291. extended families

292. no age limitation or barrier

293. Canadians individualistic

294. Eth. Share, live in harmony, love, and care for one another

295. sense of time different (?)

#### ADAPTATION

296. not being colonized affected ability—never been dominated by another culture

297. living in Canada physically, but tied emotionally back home

298. mindset different sense of isolation here

#### RACISM

299. -acknowledges existence

#### LANGUAGE BARRIERS

300. no exposure to English in Ethiopia

301. severe limitation

302. accept the positive and negative

#### ADVICE

303. don't feel like a victim

- 304. tell oneself to be strong
- 305. have surpassed pain in past—able to overcome now
- 306. have goals
- 307. be open—search for balance
- 308. when things do not happen the way one wants, do not be discouraged

#### FOR EDUCATORS

- 309. Eth. Very shy
- 310. don't take initiative
- 311. do not assume these things are weaknesses
- 312. Canadians should be open first, and approach
- 313. be receptive, open dialogue and gain trust, give opportunity for courage
- 314. learn about Ethiopian culture—to know how to approach them

#### INTERVIEW NINE:

- 315. follows most traditions of culture
- 316. sense of dual identity—both Ethiopian and Eritrean
- 317. both language and religion differences within tribes = comparison

#### NORTH AMERICAN CULTURE vs.

- 318. individualistic
- 319. based on self-reliance
- 320. care only about themselves
- 321. different child rearing practices, and marriage unity

## ETHIOPIANS

- 322. community oriented
- 323. depend on extended family
- 324. men have power (gender differences)
- 325. traditions—wants children to grow up the way he did
- 326. EXPERIENCE IN CANADA
- 327. dream of things being easier here
- 328. not satisfied with work
- 329. education has given knowledge of how system works, sees it as a barrier
- 330. sense of powerlessness?

## RACISM

- 331. discrimination not open, more systematic, structural
- 332. barriers to success
- 333. has made him tough
- 334. Canadians judge him by colour
- 335. do not talk straight forward to him
- 336. surpass difficulties
- 337. take opportunities that come up
- 338. pass life's tests and move on
- 339. understand how you did it—reflect
- 340. don't get into victim role

- 341. sense of being strong because of experiences in Ethiopia
- 342. feels like a second class citizen
- 343. not Canadian because he doesn't fit into the system
- 344. does not understand the Canadian people
- 345. regions within Canada provide more opportunity to integrate—Victoria  
difficult
- 346. disenchanted with Canada

#### ADVICE

- 347. treat people like humans
- 348. do not judge a book by its cover
- 349. understand that there are bad and good people from all cultures
- 350. judge one on individual character—avoid categorizing

#### INTERVIEW TEN:

- 351. respect for community that shapes who he/she is
- 352. collectivity—individuals responsible for maintaining the collective

#### CANADIAN VS ETHIOPIAN way of being

- 353. too much freedom here
- 354. don't care about their families or neighbors, or futures
- 355. children ignorant of family
- 356. individualistic

**IDENTITY BACK HOME**

357. had a good job

358. good education

**ETHIOPIAN CULTURE**

359. determined people

360. stubborn

361. nothing can discourage them from achieving what they want

362. sense of wanting to educate Canadians

363. break the stereotype of the colour black

364. learn the language better, and discuss with Canadian

365. open dialogue—explain about country and ways

366. sense of being less of a person here in Canada

367. have lost social and economic interdependency

368. struggle

369. start from scratch

370. ADAPTATION

371. being open to seeing the good in both cultures and working with them

372. racism

373. witnessed racism

374. doesn't take it personally

375. doesn't internalize it

- 376. past experience of violence in Ethiopia—overcome
- 377. don't see themselves as victims
- 378. want to move on and do better
- 379. punishment becomes lesson for future
- 380. barrier to finding jobs
- 381. education
- 382. no pushing children here
- 383. advice
- 384. know what Ethiopians are
- 385. understand their culture and history
  - question their biases and prejudices—examine and understand where they come from
- 386. see more than their problems

## Appendix B

### Questions which were explored in the interviews

1. What were your tribal background and the roles that shaped your identity in Ethiopia? Has your identity and role changed since coming to Canada? Has anything happened to change your identity? Have these experiences changed how you feel about yourself today?
2. What are the differences between how you “imagine” yourself in Ethiopia and how you imagine yourself now in Canada? What do think, based on your experience, account for that difference?
3. What did you do to reconstruct your identity?
4. Does either community (Canadian or Ethio-Canadian) have any influence in constructing your new identity? How? Does it help to facilitate a positive identity?
5. How does opposition or resistance to the dominant community factor into your new identity or self-concept?
6. To what extent did either community (Canadian or Ethio-Canadian) encourage or discourage you to design and construct your new identity?
7. What were the challenges you or your children encountered/assume that they will encounter within the school system and or the community?
8. What would you suggest to educators about children of refugees?

## Appendix C

### Letter Of Explanation and Invitation To Participate In A Research Study

July 7, 2000

Dear Fellow Ethiopian Immigrants,

My name is Elias Cheboud and I am Ph.D. student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria.

As part of my program of study, and as an Ethiopian immigrant myself, I am interested in conducting a research study entitled: A Heuristic Study On Ethiopian Refugees In British Columbia: Identity And The Role Of Community.

I will doing this research under the guidance and supervision of my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Honoré France, who is a Professor at the Faculty of Education, in the Educational Psychology & Leadership Studies Department. He can be reached at the following number: (250) 721-7858.

#### PURPOSE:

- To describe how Ethiopian refugees design and construct new identity within Canadian society.
- To explore what role, if any, the community plays in helping to develop and define individual self-identity.

- To investigate the participants' reasons why and how they allow their communities to influence and construct their identity

OBJECTIVES:

- To expand educators' level of awareness
- To promote cross-cultural teaching and learning processes.
- To improve the teaching and learning environment.

The study will be conducted by interviewing Ethiopian immigrants:

- Male or female Ethiopian immigrant who is: over 40 years age, immigrated as refugee to Canada between 1978 and 1985.
- Male or female Ethiopian immigrant who speaks the English language.
- Male or female Ethiopian immigrant who is willing to participate freely and/or voluntarily.
- Male or female Ethiopian immigrant who agrees to sign consent forms.

Each person who volunteers for the study will be asked to participate in an interview lasting for 90 minutes. Interview will be audiotaped. All information about participants will be kept confidential and will be coded to protect the identity of each participant. At the end of the study, all audiotapes and transcripts will be burned and destroyed.

No one is under any obligation to participate in this study. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or negative consequences.

If you would like to participate, please inform the person who has given you this letter or call me, Elias Cheboud at (250) 721 -7832. I would be happy to discuss this study with you, and answer any questions that you may have about it.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

Thank you for your interest.

Yours sincerely,

Elias Cheboud, MSW

Graduate Student, Ph.D. Program

Faculty of Education

University of Victoria

## Appendix D

### Advertisement

Volunteers are wanted to participate in a research study focusing on:

A Heuristic Study on Ethiopian Refugees in British Columbia: Identity and the Role of Community

#### PURPOSE:

- To describe how Ethiopian refugees design and construct new identity within Canadian society.
- To explore what role, if any, the community plays in helping to develop and define individual self-identity.
- To investigate the participants' reasons why and how they allow their communities to influence and construct their identity

#### OBJECTIVES:

- To expand educators' level of awareness
- To promote cross-cultural teaching and learning processes.
- To improve the teaching and learning environment.

The researcher is a student in the Ph.D. program at the University of Victoria. He would like to interview Ethiopian immigrants who are over 40 years of age, and who reside in the Greater Victoria and Vancouver area of BC. In total, 10 participants are needed.

Those who volunteer for the study will be asked to participate in an interview, which will be confidential. The interview will last for 90 minutes, and can be held at a location convenient to the participant. All participants will be required to sign a form giving their consent to participate in this study.

If you would like to volunteer to participate in this study, please contact:

Elias Cheboud at (250) 721-7832.

## Appendix E

### Consent Form—Individual Interview

You are being asked to voluntarily participate in a project entitled "The role of community and the construction of identity among Ethiopian refugees in British Columbia: internal and external factors for their success" that is being conducted by a graduate student, Elias Cheboud, as part of the requirements for the Doctoral degree (Ph.D.) at the University of Victoria. If you have any questions or concerns about the project, you may contact either the student at (250)721 –7832 email [elias@uvic.ca](mailto:elias@uvic.ca) or call his graduate supervisor, Dr. HONORE' FRANCE at (250) 721 7858 and/or email [hfrance@uvic.ca](mailto:hfrance@uvic.ca) You may also contact the Associate Vice President Research at the University of Victoria at (250) 472-4362 if you have any concerns about the study that the student and supervisor cannot help you with.

The purpose of this project is:

- To describe how Ethiopian refugees design and construct a new identity within Canadian society.
- To explore what role, if any, the community plays in helping to develop and define individual self-identity.
- To investigate the participants' reasons why and how they allow their communities to influence and construct their identity.

Participating in this study may not have a direct benefit for participants, but their description of the process to design and construct new identities:

- could expand the societal level of awareness
- could promote cross-cultural teaching and learning processes.
- could improve the teaching and learning environment

participants will receive a copy of the research for their reference

If you agree to participate and meet the criteria's,

- Male or female Ethiopian immigrant who is: over 40 years age, immigrated as refugee to Canada between 1978 and 1985.
- Male or female Ethiopian immigrant who speaks the English language.
- Male or female Ethiopian immigrant who is willing to participate freely and/or voluntarily.
- Male or female Ethiopian immigrant who agrees to sign consent forms.

Each person who volunteers for the study will be asked to participate in an interview lasting for 90 minutes. Interview will be audio taped. All information about participants will be kept confidential and will be coded to protect the identity of each participant. At the end of the study, all audiotapes and transcripts will be burned and destroyed.

No one is under any obligation to participate in this study. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation or negative consequences.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and you are free to refuse to participate, to withdraw from it, or to refuse to answer certain questions, without any negative consequences. In the event that you withdraw from the study, your data will be destroyed.

Your anonymity and confidentiality will be protected by changing names into codes and by securing the information (data) in a locked file-cabinet of the research office. No one has access to the key except Elias Cheboud the researcher.

At the conclusion of the study, all of the raw data (the actual audiotapes and the transcriptions) will be destroyed after the conclusion of the study.

The results of this study will be prepared for a partial requirement for degree of Doctorate in Education. In addition, each participant will receive a copy of the dissertation and will be put in the library.

Having understood the above information and been given an opportunity to have my questions answered, I agree to participate in this study:

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Witness \_\_\_\_\_

The copy of this CONSENT FORM will be left with each participant for his or her own future references.



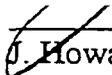
Appendix F

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL**

<u>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</u> <b>Elias Cheboud</b> <b>Graduate Student</b>	<u>DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL</u> <b>Education</b>	<u>SUPERVISOR</u> <b>Dr. H. France</b>	
<u>CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):</u> N/A			
<b>TITLE: A Heuristic Study on Successful Ethiopian Refugees in British Columbia: Identity and the Role of Community</b>			
<u>PROJECT No.</u> <b>098-01</b>	<u>START DATE</u> <b>15 Sep 00</b>	<u>END DATE</u> <b>14 Sep 01</b>	<u>APPROVAL</u> <b>4 April 01</b>

**CERTIFICATION**

This is to certify that the University of Victoria Ethics Review Committee on Research and Other Activities Involving Human Subjects has examined the research proposal and concludes that, in all respects, the proposed research meets appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Subjects.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
J. Howard Brunt,  
Associate Vice-President, Research

**This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the procedures. Extensions/minor amendments may be granted upon receipt of "Request for Continuing Review or Amendment of an Approved Project" form.**

OFFICE OF VICE PRESIDENT RESEARCH  
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Tel: (250) 472-4362  
Fax: (250) 721-8960  
E-mail: ovprrc@uvic.ca

Cheboud, Elias  
098-01