

**Somali-Canadian Women: Historical Past of Survival and Facing Everyday
Challenges of Resettlement**

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ABSTRACT

Using a qualitative life history methodology, this study explores the migration and integration experiences of Somali-Canadian women/mothers who resettled in Toronto and Ottawa. This study focuses on women's narratives at each stage of migration and resettlement. It explores the internal and external barriers that are now contributing to the Somali's prolonged poverty and a life of toxic stress in Canada. In addition, this study identifies external barriers such as geopolitically based economic/social exclusions as well as internal barriers such as fear and isolation that are silent, systemic and are currently working against Somali-Canadians and other Black ethnic groups.

Since 1978 reports from the Horn of Africa depicted a bleak picture of a region in crisis mainly from the areas inhabited by Somali ethnic groups. The contributors of this ongoing crisis have been the long absence of formal governance in that region, the longstanding tribal conflicts in other regions, reports of famine, political Islam, piracy, kidnapping, and mass displacement. According to recent UNHCR reports (2009, 2011, 2012 & 2015), there are now approximately 1.4 million internally displaced Somalis within what was known before 1991 as the Somali Republic and nearly one million Somali refugees who have fled to neighbouring countries.

Because of these longstanding regional issues, many Somali refugees resettled in Canada in the late 1990s and early 2000. Upon arrival searching for social support, the overwhelming majority of Somalis began to resettle in Toronto and other major cities including Ottawa.

In this study, the narratives of survival in these women's stories were analyzed using a multidisciplinary approach including knowledge from social neuroscience. The findings indicate that more than two decades after their initial arrival the majority of Somali-Canadians still live under stressful, poverty ridden and toxic environments with the possibility of transference of

trauma to the next generation. Finally, this study concludes with a recommendation as to how to create an indigenous social work intervention that is acceptable, effective, and meaningful for this ethnic group.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iv
Table of Contents	vi
I. CHAPTER ONE: Introduction	1
Research Focus.....	2
Locating Myself As A Researcher	5
Ethical Considerations	9
Summary	14
II. CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review	16
Section One: Somali People And Their Historical Tragedy	16
The People, Geography And Climate	17
Cold War Interests in The Horn of Africa: The Somali Tragedy	20
Losing Ethnic Survival Methods And Support Systems	22
Tribalism: A Dysfunctional But Unifying And Reliable Support System	25
Islam: Another Unifying Source For Somalis	28
Divided History: The 1884 African Partition	30
Surviving Multiple Colonial Partitions: Ethnic Resiliency	32
Geographical Location And The Cold War: Another Disadvantage For Somalis	35
Ethiopia’s Regional Advantage	38
Regional War, Failed State, Forced Migration, Tribal Division And Social Change	42
Understanding Somalis Historical Trauma, Sources Of Displacement And Losses.....	44
Understanding The Impacts Of Prolonged Conflicts And Displacements	45
Understanding The Impacts Of Torture And Trauma Response	46
Understanding Gender Relations, Cultural Rules And Religious Norms	50

Women’s Roles In Somali History	54
Section Two: Social Theories	56
Feminist Theories	56
Social Work And Practice Based Theories	62
Using Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) In Social Work Practice	65
Understanding the Impacts of Stigma	66
Section Three: Migration Theories	67
Forced migration And Resettlement Issues	71
Resettlement And Integration	71
Summary	73
III. CHAPTER THREE: Research Design And Methods	75
Situating The Study With Social Work Theory And Practice	75
Choosing Life History Method For The Type of Study	78
Criticism Of Life History Methods And Responses	81
Life History Research Method For People Known As “A Nation of Brads”	83
Cultural Changes, Silencing And Gaps In Somali Women’s Stories	86
Ethical Considerations And Practical Challenges Of The Research Process	90
Field Work And Participant Selection	92
Selecting Interview Questions	95
Sampling Techniques And Lessons From The Initial Interviews	100
Participant Profiles And Initial Observations	103
Participants From Former British Somaliland	103
Participants From Former Italian Somaliland	106
Eastern Ethiopia, Former Ogaden Region And Now Killil Five	107
Former French Somaliland: Djibouti	109
Former Northern Frontier District (NFD) Now Northern Kenya	111
Follow-up Interviews And Process	113
Field Observation	114
Data Management, Transcribing and Theme Selection	118

Data Management	119
The Transcription Process	121
Theme Selection Process	125
Emerging Themes	127
1st Stage Of Migration: Pre-Migration Fear And Anticipation	128
2nd Stage Of Migration: Escape, Survival And Transit	129
3rd Stage Of Migration: Prolonged Fear, Gender Base Violence and Emotional Stress	129
4th Stage Of Migration: Re-Settlement and Reintegration Challenges	129
Surprises and Insight	130
Summary	132
IV. CHAPTER FOUR: Women’s Stories Of Forced Migration And Resettlement	135
Data Analysis	135
Traumatic Stories Presented Within Narratives Of Forced Migration	136
Refugee Analysis And Participant’s Perspectives	136
The Fear And Anticipation Stage: Loss Of Home And Place	137
The Meaning Of Home	144
Dealing With Multiple Forced Migrations and Prolonged Fear	148
The Impacts Of Internal Governmental Oppression, Fear, And Loss Of Place	150
Second Stage Migration And Prolonged Emotional Stress	153
Re-experiencing Initial Stages Of Migration Multiple Times	158
Living Through The Dangers of Border Crossings For Women And Children	163
Third Stage Of Migration: The Introduction To Prolonged Toxic Stresses	165
Dealing With Xenophobia In Temporary Settlement Areas	167
Fourth Stage of Migration: Toxic Stress, Integration Barriers And Trauma	169
Living With Negative Media And Dealing With Existing Community Issues	171
Dealing With Oppressive Systems And Stigma	172

The Struggle For The Second Generation: Cultural Identity, Belonging and Loss Of Self	174
What Does Not Kill You Makes You Stronger	177
Summary	179
V. CHAPTER FIVE: Neurobiological Analysis	180
Refugees, Trauma And Clinical Social Work	180
Understanding Trauma and Brain Functions	181
Understanding Social Isolation: The Struggle For Belonging And Its Impact On The Social Brain	189
Understanding The Function Of Exclusionist Systems, The Social Brain And Somali Resilience	191
Understanding Mothering For Somali-Canadian Women: The Challenges	197
Using Social Neuroscience For Social Work Clinical Intervention	199
Persistent Trauma: It's Implication For Intergenerational Transference	200
Summary	207
VI. CHAPTER SIX: Bridging	209
Neurobiological Knowledge of Trauma For Clinical Social Work Practice	209
Social Neuroscience Knowledge For Social Work Practice	223
Working Toward Strengthening Individuals, Families and Communities	229
Eliminating Toxic Environments: Policy Changes, Advocacy and Changing the Narrative of Internal Hate	230
Advocacy for Funding Policy Changes	232
Community Conversation: Talking About The Internal Barrier To Integration	233
Current Health Care System And The Generational Gap	234
Overcoming The Suffering Of Religious And Cultural Silencing	235
Contribution To Neuroscience, Social Work Knowledge And Future Research	236
Summary	239

VII. CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion	240
Connecting Personal And Professional Experiences With Research	240
Escaping From Emotional Prison: Trauma, Memory And Recovery	241
Second Generation: Dealing With Culture And Attachment Issues	243
Additional Losses: Changes In The Cultural/Traditional Way Of Somali Social Life	244
Loss Of Identity And Isolation For Second-Generation Somali Immigrants	245
Social Work Practice: Understanding Needs Cultural Consideration	247
Study Limitations	250
Further Research	252
Recommendations	253
Summary	255
 VIII: References	 257
 IX: Appendices	 275
Appendix A: Demographic Data	275
Appendix B: The 1884 Colonial Scramble For Africa	276
Appendix C: Somali Tribal land	277
Appendix D: Stages Of Migration	278

I. CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Before the Syrian refugee crisis erupted in 2014, the world refugee crisis was focused on African refugees from countries such as Somalia, Sudan, and Congo to name a few (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2002-2014, 2015). Even though the world's attention is diverted to Syrian refugees and their border crossing to Europe, Somali refugees' crisis in Africa remain to be the biggest concerns particularly to the neighbouring countries. My study explores Somali-Canadian women/mothers' journeys from the Horn of Africa's region and their current resettlement/integration challenges. Reports of Somali refugee crisis particularly in the area of former Italian colony depicted a bleak picture since 1991 (Abdi, 2007; Fergusson, 2013). The contributors of the crisis in this area and other Somali regions are explained as long term absence of formal or strong governance in the country known internationally as the Somali Republic, longstanding tribal wars, famine, the Ethiopian and Somali war (1977-78), the expansion of political Islam, piracy, kidnapping, and mass displacement. These situations turn Somalis in the region into becoming the largest African refugees from 1977-2014¹. According to UNHCR reports (2009, 2011, 2012 and 2015), there are still approximately 1.4 million Somalis internally displaced within Somalia and 560,000 Somali refugees living in refugee camps in neighbouring countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti (UNHCR, 2011, 2012 & 2015). These three neighbouring countries have their own Somali population who come under crisis from time to time, which I will discuss in Chapter Two.

Due to persistent and regional crises and displacement issues, many Somali refugees began to resettle in Canada in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Lawrence Heights Community

¹ I use this timeline to indicate they no longer hold that status as there are more Syrian refugees in refugee camps.

Health Centre, 2001). Both official statistics from the 2006 & 2011 Canadian census place the Somali population between 31,380 (Statistics Canada, 2006) and 37,785 (Statistics Canada, 2006); however, data from ethno-specific agencies indicate that this number may be much higher (Bokore, 2009, 2012; Jibril, 2011; Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre, 2001). The two Canadian cities chosen for this study Toronto and Ottawa have highly praised multicultural reputations and are seen by the Somali as possible places for resettling their families. As a result both cities became the resettlement destinations for Somali-Canadian women/mothers in the past two decades (Agnew 2009; Jibril, 2011; Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre, 2001).

Research Focus

My research will focus on the migration experiences of Somali-Canadian women/mothers who arrived in Canada between 1990-2008 (See Appendix A: Demographic Data). This study particularly explores women's narratives of war, forced migration and resettlement barriers. I paid attention to their struggle with resettlement barriers including family role reversal, Canadian immigration policy, recent cultural/religious changes and structural racism. In this study, I present my discovery on issues I see are working against them as internal (impact of trauma, cultural and religious changes) and external systemic barriers that are forcing them to live in toxic/stressful environments that may alter the second generation's chance for successful integration.

In this study, I built on my own personal and professional experiences working with women whose traumas have been triggered by resettlement barriers creating a potential for inter-generational transference and its socio-political implications for future generation and the larger society. Using literature reviews from various disciplines including history, feminist studies social neuroscience and social work (Brave Heart, 1999; Brave Heart, et al., 2011; Cozolino,

2010; Evans-Campbell, 2008; LeDoux, 2002; Siegel, 2007, 2011; Matto, 2014; Schwerdtfeger & Goff, 2007), I also explore knowledge that can be learned from past studies of the process of trauma and stories of resilient families to instil hope and benefit others.

Since all participants were mothers, I based my analysis on the Somali gender-based culture and emphasized how these mothers view their lives and the importance of their children's well-being as it relates to theirs. To explore further the resettlement barriers for this community I also review other literatures (Danso, 2002; Dei et al., 1997; Galabuzi, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2006; Folson, 2004; Hyman, 2011; Reitz, 1988, 2001, 2009) giving a detailed description of the exclusionist systems Somali-Canadian women/mothers encounter during resettlement.

I began my exploration searching for ways to create future community and collective healing for Somali women. It is a process that I believe starts by first creating a space for self understanding and exploring of the sources of barriers at both the micro, macro and mezzo levels. This includes looking at the impacts the above-mentioned exclusionist systems have on the individual social brain (Cozolino, 2010; Davidson & McEwen, 2012; Farmer, 2009; LeDoux; 1996, 2002; Matto et al., 2014; Siegel, 2007, 2011; Wilkinson, 2010). It is an area I will be discussing in the last two chapters using the new knowledge gained from social neuroscience. I included social neuroscience in my analysis because I believe the new advances and the expansion in the study of the social brain will contribute positively to clinical social work practice. It will give social work intervention new and transformative ways of dealing with behavioural issues that happen due to brain changes from prolonged trauma. In chapter five and six I also include the healing approaches I learned from social neuroscience and the process of Neuroplasticity (Cozolino, 2010; Davidson & McEwen, 2012; Siegel 2007, 2011).

My interest in this study based on women/mother's experience stems from my personal experience as a lone mother of four children and my concern for their future here in Canada. For women survivors of war, children are often the only hope they have left after losing everything important to them. It is a view that was once explained by a quote I once read which was written by John F. Kennedy (The 35th United States President) which states that, "Children are the world's most valuable resource and its best hope for the future" (Kennedy, 1963). This quote is also aligned with the Somali culture and their view on ethnic survival, which is based on having strong children as the ultimate success of the family and extension of the tribe. My participants are all mothers sharing their past and present experiences, and this cultural view about the future and the importance of children is part of the stories that I collected during multiple interviews in this life history research.

Being an African born woman researching other African women with similar backgrounds, I chose to use a Black feminist theoretical framework to explore their life stories, not only the painful events of the women's past and present experiences but their inspirational examples of survival through multiple forced migrations, gender-based violence and resettlement barriers. In this study I met strong Somali-Canadian women like my participant Filson who despite her lack of basic education managed to survive multiple forced migrations and resettle successfully in Canada. Filson managed to start and expand her own successful business while Dalmar and Jamaad who experienced those events at a very young age survived both the multiple forced migrations and resettlement barriers by becoming successful professional women. These women are not unique; there are many others in the community who are managing their lives despite the multiple barriers they are facing each day.

I agree with Cole and Knowles (2001) that stories are the “central epistemological construct illuminating the intersection of human experience and social context” (p.5) and chose to use life history research method for the data collection. Documenting each woman’s experiences not only gives information about the refugee crisis at each stage of forced migration but it also gives useful information about the resettlement processes. Using life history research, I managed to document the hidden stories of war, forced migration and resettlement. The use of the women’s own voices contributes to the preservation of the memories of Somali-Canadian women/mothers experiences. One of my goals is to preserve stories of this prolonged and gendered war at the Horn of Africa that may otherwise be forgotten.

Locating Myself As A Researcher

I was born in Ethiopia, leaving home for the first time in the early 1980’s during the ‘red terror’ (*kay shibir* in Amharic), when the ruling military attacked its own people (Bascom, 1998; Fukui & Markakis 1994). I started my refugee life in Djibouti then moved on to former British Somaliland, to former Italian Somaliland and then Italy before finally arriving in Canada on July 26, 1988 with my four children and nothing else. Forced migration, refugee life, war, gender-based violence and resettlement barriers have shaped my personal lived experience. My story is not unique; it is a story and experiences I share with many other Somali Canadians mothers, including the participants that I selected for this study.

My main motivation for doing this research is to have a better understanding of what happened to my family and what is happening to my community as a result of this never-ending regional conflict, displacement and the expanding Canadian resettlement barriers based on exclusionist systems such as race, religion and the current geopolitical inclusion which comes from the recent global economic relations. The later part is a most recent phenomenon in the

immigrant and refugee integration process especially for non-European new comers. It is a change that puts African born immigrants and refugees at a deeper position at the bottom of the social/economic ladder when the few jobs for all minorities are silently defined. My other motivation comes from my work as a clinical social worker practicing within an anti-oppression feminist framework in the community and health care system and witnessing the impacts of those barriers on excluded ethnic groups, impacts that may be carried over to the next generations. It is a motivation that comes for a need to shed a light into these existing systems, search for transformative ways of social work clinical practice and to contribute to refugee/resettlement knowledge. Hours spent in participant homes listening to their narratives as well as observing their living conditions have confirmed my concerns. My community observation included attending events or places where Somalis frequent including mosques and markets.

My motivation is driven by the above-mentioned personal concerns including the preservation of memory and professional obligation such as finding a new way of healing those who experienced multiple traumas. I believe social work intervention must be culturally accommodating for each community we are serving. Therefore, community intervention-related knowledge must be one that is designed by the people for the people. It starts with listening to their stories and their thoughts on what will work for them. These stories of the past (forced migration) and present (resettlement) encourages social work practitioners, researchers and educators like me to rethink refugee resettlement. What that may look like will be discussed in chapter six.

In this study, I also present cultural and religious barriers that create internal restriction which I will later discuss in Chapter Five & Six and coming from self-isolation or other isolating

systems that need to be considered when creating intervention programs, education or research. For example, for Somalis, the practice of “*hisaut*” or modesty requires that women show a high level of modesty and shame regarding sex-related topics. Therefore, any discussion of reproductive health, sexuality or rape in public and in research such as this is prohibited. As a result, I present the women’s stories in their own voices without directly disclosing their experiences with this type of violence. Instead, my participants talk about these experiences in detail as if they were speaking about someone else’s experiences. This shows how modesty or “*hisaut*” fosters a sense of humiliation and disgrace among victims of sexual assault for this community, which is one of their reasons for avoiding the disclosure of this traumatic event in their lives. I realized during my data collection that although many cultural changes happen during this conflict and displacement, one constant is the shaming of women’s bodies including the emotional and physical imperfections after gender-based violence. The women I interviewed for this study, regardless of their original region or tribe, still follow those restrictions that encouraged women especially those of marriage age to hide their experiences of violence. They still guard their own and their children’s virtue to avoid stigma and shame and to prevent barriers to finding life partners through marriage.

For this study, I first focussed on self understanding, through combined knowledge of our past colonial history² told orally through generations and later written by non-Somali and Somali historians. Second I explored the impacts of historical trauma and its current challenges from the women’s stories and their overall impacts on the brain. Finally taking the community healing approach based on existing cultural based methods such as oral storytelling, education sharing

² Somalis are divided by borders and colonial cultures that will be discussed in Chapter Two

and life skills learning that are still passed on through these methods. My study uses past knowledge to understand present issues; this is achieved by documenting major historical events while exploring the daily struggles for survival and community resiliency. This method of healing worked for me at a personal and professional level. I also believe, and verified it by asking the women I interviewed, that other peoples' stories are important for promoting healing even when some details are not disclosed in those stories. For Somalis, this is part of the oral tradition of sharing survival skills. I believe having a space or a chance for community gathering for Somali-Canadian mothers based on their ethnicity not on individual tribes as it currently practiced will change the narratives of hate and help with the exploration of community strengths. The second generation Somalis-Canadians, now in their twenties, have the opportunity, and away from their parents' tribal and divisive beliefs, to build a common ethnicity and shared nationality and bypass the tribal struggle their parents are suffering from.

I am also aware that this study is just a starting point for looking at survivors of wars and exploring transformative methods of community development that is inclusive to all Somali-Canadians. My hope is that from these stories and intervention methods, a new community engagement process will develop creating new and transformative ways of doing clinical social work intervention. In chapter six I will discuss areas of what these transformative ways will look like contributing to social work practice. In this study, as explained by Collins (2000), Goodley et al., (2004), Harding (1987 & 1991) and Kleinman (2007), I prioritize women's experiences by putting their knowledge and understanding of events at the centre of each discussion and suggestions for intervention.

Ethical Considerations

During the data collection processes, I started by first hearing the participants' stories relating them to my own life story. However, despite some of our similarities such as our common historical background and experiences, I came to understand quickly that there are differences determining how we feel or have dealt with events in our past and present lives. This journey of commonality and differences began when I later started analysing women's war and survival stories. I started to see the challenge that unfolds when making sense of other people's experiences even when those experiences are sometimes similar to my own journey of forced migration and resettlement. As stories are told in context and sometimes used by those with negative intentions I began to think about the ethical dilemma of writing my participants' private stories into permanency.

Bathmaker and Harnett (2010) explained this challenge as the difficulty of researching others who have no power to change their stories due to existing barriers based on lack of literacy and raises the ethical implications for those of us who are writing about them. I was particularly drawn to this quote from Tony Adams (2008) who asks researchers: "Who has the ability to tell and who can listen to or, more pertinently here, read a story?" (Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010, p. 15). This quote reminded me of my own responsibility and the needed self-awareness when writing about my participants' lives. Women who went through some of the experiences I personally share may not be able to respond to what I write about them due to literacy issues or educational backgrounds. Bathmaker and Harnett (2010) describe this issue as "representational reasonability" (p. 15).

This focus and self reflection also made me recognize the gender-based challenges and difficulties I will be facing while disseminating my findings from the women's testimonials of

war, forced migration, resettlement and healing in a community where men are the self-appointed holders of community history.³ Ethical considerations for these women who bravely agreed to share their stories with me started with the consent forms. With the awareness of gendered pressures of telling tribal based events, I included a self-determination clause (the right for the person to drop out of the research at any time) and a confidentiality clause. I understood the importance of safe keeping of the data, the confidentiality for the participants' identities and the changing nature of their stories. Stories change based on how the story is told at the time, the meaning making process and the context (Measor & Sikes, 1992, p. 212). Giving participants the freedom to change their story or disagree with what has been recorded earlier was a necessary ethical step I followed throughout this study. At each stage of my journey, I was constantly reminded of the words of the Polish poet/writer of the Second World War era Czeslaw Milosz in his Nobel Prize speech, December 8, 1980,

Those who are alive receive a mandate from those who are silent forever. They can fulfil their duties only by trying to reconstruct precisely things as they were, and by wrestling the past from fictions and legends (Singh & Skerrett, 1996, p.3).

Following that speech about a witness's responsibility in conveying the story of events as they happen, my intention in this study is to offer insights into the immigration and resettlement experiences of Somali-Canadian women/mothers. This historical documentation through storied accounts of past and present experiences draws on knowledge from various disciplines including

³ Growing up, I had only heard about one heroic woman who was known for her power and evil deeds. Her name was Queen "Araweelo" who came to power around 15 AD and she has a gendered story. The story of her rise to power and her accomplishments are often controversial based on how the story is being told and who tells it. Queen Araweelo's story is either used to silence women, pointing to women's inability for leadership and general wickedness of the 'lesser' gender or to show women's survival skills and bravery when facing challenges and their resiliency. The later part of her story is often told by women.

social neuroscience and its benefits to social work in understanding and planning an intervention for community healing.

Following life history method and oral interviews (Goodson & Sikes, 2001), I collected stories of twelve Somali-Canadian women/mothers from different Somali inhabited regions of the Horn of Africa talking about their journey in what Marianne Horsdal (2012) calls “temporal sequence with beginning and ending of each step of their journey” (p. 11). Therefore I followed this sequence of dividing stories in sections from an initial stage of fear and anxiety to the last stage of resettlement and dealing with external exclusionist and internal isolationist systems. The participants’ stories show their temporality including changes over time based on political, religious and culture changes occurring within Somali communities.

I am also aware of the changing nature of memories of events and how stories are told in context, as described by Charlotte Linde (1993),

The properties of temporal discontinuity and structural and interpretive openness mean that a life story necessarily changes constantly - by the addition of stories about new events, by the loss of certain old stories, and by the reinterpretation of old stories to express new evaluations (p.31).

To emphasize these changes at the micro and macro level, I look at major events in their home regions that are impacting their stories and how they are telling stories that include major events that may have an impact on their emotional and physical health. The Somali-Canadian women I interviewed for this study come from various backgrounds and experience different resettlement barriers based, in part, on the level of past traumas and existing support systems. For instance, while escaping war some were exposed to multiple forms of violence, including torture, rape and the witnessing of mass murders. As well, many who were born during the war

went through religious changes and strict rules imposed by Islamic extremists including gender-based oppression. In addition, some of them spent years in African refugee camps experiencing prolonged physical and emotional trauma. Others were raised in refugee camps, and some were born in the camps, with no opportunities for education.

I was noting these community differences including the different experiences between me and my participants despite similar backgrounds in experiencing trauma; it raised the need for vigilance of ethical considerations (Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010; Norquay, 1993). For example, my previous family status and having been a well-known journalist at the time of my forced migrations and escape gave me additional protections that lessened the hardships of the time. Before doing these interviews, I could not imagine what it was like for those who did not have my protective factors which included education, language ability and (at that time) a relatively well-known name⁴. These interviews and multiple follow-up conversations with my participants also gave me an opportunity and a tremendous responsibility for bringing out issues that are silenced and problems that are buried under the surface.

While working on the later Chapters (5&6), I also become aware of how my status as an academic and my process of meaning making can change the story I tell (Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010). Gluck and Patai (1991) argue that, "... Both personal and collective agendas can short-circuit the listening process developed while scanning oral histories" (p. 12). Reading this sentence reminded me during my transcription stage to listen to each woman's story multiple times. These authors write that storytelling gives the individual the opportunity to tell his/her own story while allowing the researcher to "preserve a living interchange for present and future use" (p.11). These quotes gave me the courage to share the painful situations and events of my

⁴ I use the phrase word "at the time" as over two decades later name recognition has changed.

community with the hope for a better future. I was aware throughout the study that the interchange between my own experiences and theirs needed to be carefully balanced. During my research and writing process, to ensure this balance, I continue to adhere to the ethical standards set by York University's Research Ethics Protocol. In addition, the use of feminist ethical frameworks has enabled me to be continually aware of power relations.

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters starting with this introductory chapter. Chapter Two is divided into two sections: the literature reviews in Section One provide a greater understanding of the impact of colonialism in the Horn of Africa including pre and post migration barriers. Section Two provides the theoretical frameworks of the study including how Black feminism provides the epistemological and theoretical grounding. Chapter Three describes the methodological procedures including the process of data collection and the ethical issues in conducting life history research (entering the field, confidentiality, safety and knowledge production). Chapter Four is the analysis chapter using the women's own voices to document their experiences; these will contribute to future studies and the preservation of memories of female survivors currently living in Diaspora communities such as Canada, whose narratives of war, forced migration and resettlement might otherwise be forgotten (Kadar, 2005). Chapter Five uses emerging themes from Chapter Four and knowledge gained from social neuroscience literature to explore trauma, brain process, and its implications for future generations and healing. Chapter Six picks up explanations from Chapter Five linking social work practice and social neuroscience as well as the contribution of this study to social work knowledge. Chapter Seven is the conclusion of the study and summarises my own journey.

Summary

In this introductory chapter I outlined my research focus on Somali women/mothers who have experienced the trauma of war and forced migration and are currently dealing with resettlement barriers. Throughout my research process, I use my own story, the stories of the women I interviewed and the literatures informing the methodology, analysis, discussion and social work practice. My study is intended to contextualise women's experiences of forced migration and resettlement while promoting the healing process of a traumatized and fractured community and preserving the historical documentation of women's experiences of wars. During my field work and over the course of this study, I realized that Somali Canadian mothers, despite the multiple and often overwhelmingly and deeply entrenched barriers they still encounter on daily basis, are also showing incredible resilience and strength. I am hoping that this research will initiate transformative ways of doing social work clinical practice, of developing safe and accessible community programs and of creating a knowledge data source for future researchers. I am confident that this study will become a memory bank for researchers looking at the personal narratives of survivors that humanize and contextualize some of the worst tragedies and triumphs of Somali history based on women's perspective. My hope is that this research will contribute to the further understanding on how and why social work intervention is important in the lives of refugee women and their children.

The long historical trauma in the following chapter is intended to enrich the historical knowledge of the younger generation and those born in Diaspora. This generation is dealing with the possibility of losing their actual history, culture, way of life and identity in the currently circulating tribal media. Ultimately, my aim in collecting women's stories is to expand refugee research by looking at the functions of trauma and trauma transference as well as the creation of

new interventions. These personal narratives will also contribute to the further exploration of individual and community resiliency factors that are promoting healing and contributing to the successful integration process of refugees.

Overall, I am hoping that my community will start to re-examine its past and present social life within the Somali-Canadian communities⁵ and that the study will contribute to a broader understanding of the impact of war and resettlement needs, to the shaping of new and collaborative strategies that promote collective community healing, and to advocacy for policy changes to alleviate this prolonged community struggle with poverty. In the last three chapters I will be discussing this in detail and how it will contribute to the resettlement needs of those who might be dealing with race, religious and geopolitical based barriers.

⁵ I use the word 'communities' to indicate the various Somali tribal groups.

II. CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Section One: Somali People And Their Historical Tragedy

I always believed that I need to know the past in order to understand the present and plan for the future. For this study I also review social theories and sensitizing frameworks presenting them in three sections. The first section focuses on literature addressing the sources of past and present historical events including pre and post-colonial era. The other two sections of this chapter include a literature review of social theories that inform the resettlement process of Somali-Canadian Women.

In the first section I have chosen literature written by both non-Somali and Somali historians such as Cassanelli (1982 & 2011), Kapteijns (1994, 1999 & 2008), Lewis (1961, 1988 & 2002) and Touval (1963), and the diaries of one of the early explorers to the Horn of Africa, Richard Burton (1856). To get a deeper understanding of this tragic history of land and its people, I also use studies and literatures by Somali academics including Bulhan (1985 & 2008), Samatar (1982 & 1991) and another Somali historian also named Samatar (1994). In the second section of this chapter, I explore the social theories that inform this study.

The challenge for new researchers of Somali studies now is that the existing literatures are often limited by the historical researchers' point of view. Current interpretation and conceptual frameworks about the people, the land and history are all informed by these views making it difficult to write about people who until recently did not have their own alphabet or written historical documentation. For example, researchers like Cassanelli (1982 & 2011) and Lewis (1961, 1988 & 2002) describe their work as an abstract description of Somali way of life and behaviour. What is missing in these descriptions are their own personal biases, limitations

due to their limited access to certain Somali regions and the colonial situation at the time of their study.

The second section of this chapter also reviews social and human needs theories that explain the Somali-Canadian women's narratives in the analysis chapter. These theories helped me understand Somali responses to conflict defining certain resistance based behaviours and actions against colonial and other oppressive systems that are discussed in chapters four, five and six.

The People, Geography And Climate

It is impossible to understand this prolonged regional crisis without first understanding its geographical location, its scarce natural resources and the interests of external powers. Somalis are considered a homogeneous people who share one language (Somali) and one religion (Islam). They inhabit most of the land in the Horn of Africa region. This spans an area that is approximately 1,036,000 square kilometres of the Horn. Their land begins at the north entrance of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, continues east to the Indian Ocean, south to the Tana River located in Kenya, and west up to Awash River (formerly Hawash River) which is close to the current capital city of Ethiopia (Lewis, 1961, 1988, 2002; Touval, 1963).

Historians Lewis (1961, 1988 & 2002) and Touval (1963) wrote about the economical and social aspect of living in the five divided regions⁶ with the extreme dry climate and the lasting impact on the area inhabitants. Lewis, who was a social anthropologist and one of the most quoted historians in Somali studies, described these regions as a semi-desert arid land with uneven distribution of annual rainfall of less than four inches (Lewis, 1961). This arid landscape

⁶ The land and its people were divided by colonials into five regions

barely supports the pastoralist nomads in each region, and even its northern mountainous regions in what is now Somaliland and Puntland do not benefit the people. During rainy season, the water from the river valleys drains straight into the Gulf of Aden leaving the land dry after the season ends. The only two rivers passing through the Western and southern Somali regions, the Shebelle and Juba Rivers, begin in eastern Ethiopia and benefit only those living in Southern Somaliland or former Italian Somaliland providing water for the majority of the agricultural production in that area. Due to the lack of development in the Eastern Ethiopian region until recently, these two rivers contributed only disasters for the people living in the Ethiopian region (now known as Killil Five) during seasonal flooding. Some historians' say that these two rivers do not live up to their potential, as the Shebelle River loses most of its water in the swamps around Mogadishu leaving the Juba River as the main source for full agricultural production (Touval, 1963, p.6). The remaining Somali ethnic groups in the other parts of the region are dependent on seasonal rains with highly variable regional rainfall often creating famine and displacement (Cassanelli, 1982, p. 40). Loss of live stock and famine are two things I remember happening periodically to my pastoralist family members (close tribal relations) who often come to the city seeking help from my mother.

This unpredictability of seasonal rains and limited water supplies still creates a precarious life with traumatic outcomes for Somali pastoralist nomads. Historically these nomads were also controlled by colonial border restrictions that were imposed on them after the 1884 'land grab' (see Appendix B) which will be discussed later. Border restrictions, due to these colonial based regional divisions, forced pastoralist nomads to experience constant famine, loss of livestock, water scarcity and imposed barriers on the few water holes they used to share through internal agreements. Water as a source of life for pastoralists in dry lands is an important

life line for Somalis who fall under the control and oppression of the colonials. Cassanelli (1982), quoting a well-known Somali poet Salaan Arabay's description of a Somali survival method wrote that "of every two problems that are discussed, between Somalis the first must be on the subject of subsistence" (p. 9). To this day the discussion of survival is one of the first conversations Somalis share when they meet. It became part of the culture contributing to their resilience and their tradition of sharing information orally.

Ethiopia's regional history differs from the Somali history regarding colonialism and the right to land and liberty often creating a prolonged war between the two countries and the people. For example, after some of the Somali regions previously colonized by the British and Italians became independent forming the Somali Republic in 1960, Ethiopians and Somalis were involved in multiple wars. Those wars ended with the fall of the Somali government in 1991 and the change of government in Ethiopia which brought visible development to the Somali regions known as Killil Five. Ethiopian Somalis now enjoy not only the new development projects in their region but the food sources from the fertile farming lands they share with other Ethiopian ethnic groups such as the Oromos and Adares⁷. For example, the land around the city of Harar alone has an abundant rainfall that grows enough agricultural food for the rest of the Somali regions⁸.

Besides the scarcity of water resources for other Somalis at the Horn of Africa, historians agree that in these other regions troubles were never far as they were strategic location with long shore lines, sea ports and shipping lines that increased the focus and attention of foreign powers

⁷ These are people from the old city of Harar – which is my mother's home town and where I spent part of my childhood.

⁸ See the geography and clan relationships in Lewis (1962, Chapter 2) and Cassanelli (1982, Chapter 2).

competing for regional control. This competition was one of the main agendas for the discussion at the 1884 Berlin Conference on African partition and the beginning of the Somali tragedy. I call it tragedy because its people have never managed to have a stable country, economy and a safe place to call home. Ever since they gained the increased attention from world powers' who were after their own regional interest Somalis began to deal with both the positive and the negative effects of those foreign interest. Some of the positive effects for the people include the introduction of Islam and establishment of trade towns such as Zeila, Harar, Barbara and Mogadishu, which were established due to these foreign interests and the people's trading skills. Saadia Touval (1963) discusses in detail how the establishment of these important trading posts in the Somali pre-colonial era and global trading connected the people with the outside world (pp.8-9).

The negative aspect of the Somali interest in the world affairs is that their knowledge or connection did not bring them any benefits or ability to stop the 1884 partition of their land at the Berlin Conference. Since then Somalis have been suffering from the constant interference of foreign powers, including the US and Russia (formerly The Soviet Union), on their lands. The most recent global power struggle and cold war even brought Somalis further tragedies resulting in the collapse of the Somali republic in 1991.

Cold War Interests in the Horn of Africa: The Somali Tragedy

This tragedy is not limited to Somalis in the African continent. It is also known historically that the colonial interest and division of Africa did not benefit any Africans socially, politically or economically as it was established and implemented solely for colonial benefits (Bulhan, 2008; Markakis, 1987; Samatar, 1991; Samatar, 1994). History shows that as capitalism grew and the efficiency of their industries reached its highest production rate, the European

countries could no longer be restricted to consumers at home or have enough supplies for their production lines. They needed the colonies to gain supplies and to move their surplus products (Bariagaber, 2006, p. 46). The historical interest of European the colonizers in the Horn of Africa regions also included the need to access sea passages from Europe to the East Asia (Bariagaber, 2006; Bulhan, 2008; Casanelli, 1982; Markakis, 1987; Lewis, 1961; Samatar, 1994; Samatar, 1982, 1991; Touval, 1963) and assuring their security. According to Assefaw Bariagaber, (2006) this is evident:

In the British and French colonization of Aden and Djibouti, respectively, that is located only a few miles apart across the Bab el Mandeb. Great Britain also encouraged, or at least tolerated, Italian expansion in Eritrea for fear of greater French influence in Ethiopia and the surrounding areas (p. 46).

Somali ethnic groups in the Horn of Africa became the casualties of these historical colonial ambitions and competition which eventually segmented them into four countries: The area now known as the Somali Republic 1960-1991 (ex- Italian & British colony), Kenyan region also known as NFD and was ruled by the British before Kenyan independence, Djibouti (former French Somaliland) and Eastern Ethiopia known as the Ogaden and now Killil Five.

After the two former Italian & British colonies managed to unite in 1960 gaining their partial independence, it became every Somali government's main agenda to focus on freeing other regions that were still colonized, specifically focusing on the two main regions in Kenya and Ethiopia. The conflict with Ethiopia was more intense happening right after independence in 1964 and then again during the major war in 1977-78. This latter war not only changed population movements creating mass displacement but also changed the Somali political, social and economical structure creating a shift in the super power cold war interest of the region. I

remember as a child in 1964 in Jigigia (the capital city of Killil Five) seeing bodies of Somali terrorists or “shiftas” as they were called then being dragged on the streets by Ethiopian soldiers. I remember the emotional pain of seeing someone who look like me being dragged and the feeling of extreme fear of name calling or group punishments. A punishment I did not escape as I was accused and arrested later and endured extreme emotional and physical torture.

My own suffering and that of others in the region stemmed from early colonial division/restrictions created through artificial borders, cold war meddling, and current regional power’s interests, all of them complicated by tribal, political structures and religious beliefs. These complications continue to affect the whole Somali ethnic group in the region and those now living in the Diaspora.

Losng Ethnic Survival Methods And Support Systems

These conditions of geographical location and environmental restrictions⁹ historically forced Somalis to adapt and create survival modes and to develop ethnic resiliency and survival skills that continue to sustain them. For example, historically, Somalis who had access to water resources especially around the Juba and Shebelle rivers, became agricultural settlers (Cassanelli, 1982, p 40), while people around coastal towns began trading with other countries using historically recognized trading skills. Examples of those skills are mentioned in the Bible: Egyptian pharaohs, Jewish and Phoenician traders who traded in the area called it “the land of Ophir” (Touval, 1963, p.8). It is an entrepreneurial skill they still possess and use in every country they are currently residing in. The majority of Somalis, however, (approximately 80 percent of the population), live a nomadic life dependent on a pastoral economy (Lewis, 1988 & 2002, pp.7-9, and Touval, 1963, p.13).

⁹ See the geography and clan relationships in Lewis (1962, Chapter 2) and Cassanelli (1982, Chapter 2).

Unfortunately, the arid land and way of life conditioned Somalis to emphasize the importance of close relationships and dependence on those relationships based on having a common patrilineal line. From this emerged the traditional clan system (called in Somali *Qabiil*). This connection, which was a requirement to overcome the scarcity of their food sources allowed them to share what they had in the time of need and aid each other against invaders. It is now used to divide and dismantle for the benefit of powerful groups.

Cassanelli (1982, pp. 7-8), a highly quoted Italian Somaliland or Southern Somali¹⁰ historian, argues that current social and political issues, as well as the lack of stable government in the regions known as the Somali Republic after 1960, has its roots in the above mentioned limited economical means and border restrictions. The temporality of religious beliefs and competition for survival does not support having a unified plan to go against oppressors. While other west and central African countries that gained their independence when the two Somali regions gained theirs in the early 1960s managed to have a nationalistic however corrupt leaders that kept them together as nations, for Somalis that option has seemed an impossible task. Instead they became further divided into not only regions but the smallest of sub clan lines. The temporary uniting and nationalist feeling they had pre and post 1960 independence or “*Somaalinimo*” became part of the lost history (Markakis, 1987, p.75). Those feelings and debates are now seen as sources of painful past memories in Somalis history including the relationship between former Italian Somaliland and former British Somaliland. It is an unforgettable history that is part of the post 1960 Somali Republic and its later painful unification experiences filled with oppression and governmental attacks on vulnerable civilians (Africa Watch, 1990 and Fergusson, 2013).

¹⁰ ‘Southern Somalia’ is used as an alternate to ‘Italian Somaliland’ which indicates the former Italian colony.

According to Cassanelli (1982), these memories of inter tribal wars, division and ethnic vulnerability has always been a Somali problem. Somali clans are often made up of several structurally similar groups, come together and divide based on need. He defines this process saying that a segmentary union based on agnatic lines¹¹ creates a “segmentary society” (p.17). Others argue that a society based on temporary clan connections makes nationalism conversations, such as shared beliefs, loyalty and permanency a challenging concept (Bulhan, 2008; Lewis, 1961; Markakis, 1987; Samatar, 1994; Samatar, 1982, 1991). As seen in the past and most recent history of the past two decades, these temporary contractual alliances do not transfer or generate a lasting relationship or feelings of strong political, social alliance, permanency or as Lewis (1961) defined it “a fixed territorial association” to create a united Somali nation (p. 297).

A Lidwien Kapteijns, (1994) (the one non-Somali female historian who is also fluent in the language) described this using the term clan which is as it is used within Somali communities a “social construct rather than a natural phenomenon”. (p. 212). It is a fractured community that was stitched together, as its name (“*tol*” in Somali) suggests. The word “*Tol*” when directly translated to English means “to sew together” a group of people with temporary common goals. For Somalis this word and its use have both negative and positive benefits bringing them together in time of need to overcome challenges through the reliance on those ties and the strength of agnatic lines (p. 212). The same tie also divides them further during conflict. Touval (1963) adds that this system is dysfunctional as relationships are often established based on having a common agnatic ancestry or clan specification that does not include non-blood relations

¹¹ An agnate is one's genetic relative exclusively through the male line (e.g. father and grandfather). One's tribe is his/her kinsman with whom he/she has a common ancestor by an unbroken male line. In other words, the agnatic ancestry of an individual is that person's pure male ancestry.

(p.15). Other relationships and the chance for creating a strong power sharing ability or trust are diminished by this process. Nationalistic feelings that bind people to create a strong solidarity based on nationhood or a strong belief in a common land are taken away by this temporary and need base relationship. Connections or systems like the one Somalis use based on blood line and lineage give a false image of political unity and systemic functions but it does not translate or extend to nation building as it is now seen in the breakaway region in Somaliland. For Somali communities, since the fall of Siyaad Barrie's government, the use and practice of a clan system reached its highest point in the history of the region with destructive outcomes for some. For future Somali studies, pre and post 1960 historical events and knowledge about the functions of Somali clan system are keys for understanding Somali political situations, community relations and planning individual and community interventions. These will be discussed in Chapter Six.

Tribalism: A Dysfunctional But Unifying And Reliable Support System

The only positive and promising aspect of this tribal-based divisive, deadly and detrimental clan relationship is the strength of its kinship ties that function as a reliable supportive system during traumatic events as well as its identity aspects that create both a sense of pride and belonging¹². It also works as an identifier for geographical (see Appendix C) and social location and functions as a social welfare system in the remittance money the Diaspora Somalis send home each month. The most interesting aspect of this relationship is that it works as a home address¹³ through which you can find any clan member around the globe.

¹² It is a system that makes the person's clan more important than his/her name. A Somali will want to know the person's clan first before knowing their name or what they do for a living, which differs from common Western communication and contact.

¹³ I have sent money to my relatives in those regions or at multiple refugee camps with no address using only personal and tribal names. Some say even in the Diaspora, going by clan name is an easier method to locate a Somali.

This dysfunctional and at the same time beneficial system also makes sense according to human need and identity formation theories. For example, Giddens (1991), using the stratification theory, describes this mode of creating clans as a reflexive awareness that enables people to monitor their actions according to environmental, social, or political response. People respond to survival needs and take appropriate actions as needed¹⁴ (Giddens, 1984, pp.3-5). Giddens (1991) describes it as a “practical consciousness” (p. 35) that dictates day to day activities within a group by stating:

All human beings continuously monitor the circumstances of their activities as a feature of doing what they do, and such monitoring always has discursive features. In other words, agents are normally able, if asked, to provide discursive interpretations of the nature of, and the reason for, the behaviour in which they engage. The knowledge-ability ... is not confined to discursive consciousness... elements of being able to ‘go on’ are carried at the level of practical consciousness (p. 35).

Geertz (1973) further defines this culture of survival based on clan as a temporary, segmental and contractual relationship designed for co-existence in time of need. It is confusing for outsiders; however, based on their geographical location, it makes sense for Somalis. Culture can be defined as “...historically transmitted patterns of meanings embodied in symbols in a system of inherited conception ...which men [*sic*]/communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about attitudes toward life” (p.89).

¹⁴ Currently Somali inhabited region’s economy is based on remittance money from the Diaspora communities who are sending money to support their destitute families left behind in those regions or at refugee camps. The majority of the Diaspora, including myself, use money transfer companies as a way to support these Somali scattered around the world in temporary or transit conditions. .

Not only that, but some of the internal understandings in clans, such as ‘*xeer*’ and ‘*diya*’ speak to well-established rules/regulations or localized modes of social and economic collaboration. Clan and Kinship or “*tol/ Qabiil*” in Somali is a conventional social organization managed by a political contract rule known in Somali as ‘*xeer*’ (Lewis, 1961, pp. 161-162; 1988 & 2002, p. 10). It functions as a social contract that mediates between the demands of Islamic Sharia law and dictates of native common law. It regulates behaviour in every aspect of life and defines the contractual rules for establishing future relationships and connections. According to Cassanelli (1982), each division or sub clan practices this customary procedure for sharing compensation, payment, and resource management.

However the most binding agreements and loyalty lie with the *diya*-paying¹⁵ groups (Cassanelli, 1982, p. 20 and Lewis, 1988 & 2002, p. 11). *Diya*-paying groups are patrilineal kinsmen from the same clan or closely related clans coming together based on an agreement to pay a clan “blood wealth”. It is a compensation method often measured by how many camels are given to pay for a loss of life or injury of a member of another clan (Cassanelli, 1982, p. 20).

Even though compensation is temporary, the terms are carefully considered by male elders who are responsible for negotiating clan contracts (Cassanelli, 1982, p. 20). In addition to compensation, this contract also defines the political or economic supports (organizing an army, sharing grazing lands, or trade) where both small and larger clans will have an assurance of support (Cassanelli, 1982, pp.20-21). It is a long-lasting judicial and moral system kept even

¹⁵ *Diya* (in Arabic) or *Mag* (in Somali) is a blood wealth/compensation traditionally measured by the number of animals paid. Urban dwellers pay that compensation in cash value. Women are usually worth ½ of the man.

after the introduction of Islam and Islamic rules which contradict with this system of group responsibility. (Islamic rules leave the onus of punishments for wrongful deeds to individual responsibility.)

Both Lewis, (1988 & 2002, p. 11) and Cassanelli, (1982, p.20) describe the diya-payment compensation methods as a system that works with a high degree of collaboration and mutual respect. Nomadic pastoralists who are conditioned by their arid landscape to compete and fight for survival, used to follow these strict rules of law in order to live together. Although this clan system is often still considered an issue, some Somalis believe that its benefit outweighs its destructive aspects. I believe further comparative study is required.

Islam: Another Unifying Source For Somalis

In addition to their shared landscape and clan lineage, Somalis always claim to be Muslims and descendants of Arab immigrants¹⁶ who came around the eighth century to the Horn of Africa to convert the people to Islam (Cassanelli, 1982, p.17). Nearly all Somalis are professed Muslims, some of them making a genealogical claim from Arab Qurishi, the clan of the prophet himself (Cassanelli 1982, p.119). This Islamic influence is seen in every aspect of Somali culture and belief system. As oral history tells as before the arrival of current Islamic extremism, Somalis followed the teachings of Islam under the “Qadiriya” sect. It is an Islamic teaching that has the flexibility of combining religion with local customs and traditions accommodating the local community’s need for both religion and culture.

The combination of cultural practices and simple rules of basic Islam was the centre for Somali religious practice for hundreds of years. For example, for me growing up yearly

¹⁶ This predominantly Muslim society still has a strong Islamic heritage which creates challenges in the current political climate where anything about Islam is under Western watch.

celebrations of past saints or sheiks were common practices that brought together different clans for a day of celebration, feasts, happiness and joy. One of the beautiful neighbourhood sounds were coming young children reciting the Quran under a tree or beside a Mosque, under the strict guidance of a bearded Sheik we called “Macalin” in Somali.

According to Cassanelli (1982), besides Somali oral history about the practice of Islam and connection to their Arab neighbours, there are no written literatures discussing religious practices which makes sense as there was no Somali Alphabet until mid 1970s. Early colonizers preoccupied with coastal land grabs did not mention in their historical writings either the arrival of Islam in the region or the Islamization of Somalis (p.119). Yet Islam ended up being the one unifying force used by Somali anti-colonial leaders to organize a resistance force throughout Somali history (Cassanelli 1982, p.24; Lewis, 1988, 2002, pp. 15-7; Touval, 1963, pp. 20-1). For example, the Dervish or “Darawiish” in Somali was one of the first religious resistance forces credited as a freedom fighting army organized by one of the Somali warriors Sayed Mohamed Abdullah Hassan (Lewis, 2002, p. 63 and Samatar, 1982, pp.93-136). He is a warrior mentioned by both Somali and Ethiopian histories and viewed by some Somalis at the time as a self-promoting oppressor while others pledged their allegiance by fighting for more than two decades with him against the British, Italian and Ethiopian forces (Cassanelli, 1982, p.183 and Samatar, 1982, p.93). Some Somali historians say he was an astute leader, a charming organizer and an articulate poet who used his poetry and Islamic studies to mobilize armies against colonials (Bulhan, 2008, pp.39-44 and Samatar, 1982 p.104).

Others even go further saying he was an enlightened man who was influenced by sharing his new knowledge of Salihya teaching (Samatar, 1982, p.103-104). His versions of Salihya teaching or as he called it a “religious awaking” overrode the moderate Qadiriya teachings

Somalis followed at the time. It is a similar religious based view to current extremist, restrictive and ritualistic practices, currently used by Somalis. Those teachings also imposed as it is now restrictions on food and cultural base gatherings such as entertainment functions including singing songs (Samatar, 1982, p.106). The Sayid, who was a charismatic man for some and a mad man¹⁷ for others, used his strong and well organised religious and tribal based mobilizing skills to wage wars on those he considered enemies of Islam like Al-Shabab is doing now. His war which lasted decades was motivated by his need to ban old religious practices and introduce his approach (Salihiya) that he called “*Qurb al-Zaman*” or the modern/new teaching (Samatar, 1982, p. 106). According to clan-specific oral history,¹⁸ he committed the first genocide on Somalis by Somalis. They continue to suffer from religious and historical events that created multiple historical tragedies for the Somali ethnic groups at the Horn of Africa.

Divided History: The 1884 African Partition

After the initial exploration ended, African partition officially began in 1884 at the Berlin Conference (Cassanelli, 1982, p. 183). Soon after, under the banner of Imperial British East Africa Company, the British arrived on the Somali coast facing Aden. There is a contradictory history regarding British troops’ arrival and their later subtle and brutal actions against Somalis, whom they saw as Muslim aggressors against Christianity. Somali people were labelled by the British as expansionists who pushed other clans further inland and created regional overcrowding and a shortage of food resources in a land that was seen as a food source by the colonials. The French and Italian colonials were also dealing with their own massive population displacement and turmoil created by fighting with the Somalis, who were being compressed by the British

¹⁷ British colonials

¹⁸ Based on which tribe the person telling the story is from.

army from the north and by Ethiopian expansion, both sides attacking and looting livestock (Cassanelli 1982, p.29). It was one of the first times in history where Somalis experienced the first forced migration and massive population misplacement.

The political manoeuvring and economic contestation of that time had significant effects on Somali pastoralists, especially those living around the newly defined borders. Somali poet Faarah Nuur (1880-1930), quoted in Samatar (1982), said:

The British, the Ethiopian, and the Italians are squabbling,
The country is snatched and divided by whosoever is stronger,
The country is sold piece by piece without our knowledge,
And for me all this the Teeth of the Last Days! (p.92)

As noted in this poem, a number of treaties were signed between the Ethiopian Monarch Menilek and other European colonials, which consolidated the Somali 'land grab' from 1894 to 1908, and permanently secured the dislocation and continuous suffering of Somalis (Bulhan, 2008, pp.27-29 and Cassanelli, 1982, p.30).

I grew up hearing stories told about the struggle for unity and the experience of collective punishment. Eastern Ethiopian Somalis have a long history of struggle for freedom or belonging that began in 1899 during the twenty year-long Dervish fight by Sayid Mohammed Abdulle Hassan. Sayid's army was finally defeated in 1921 by the British who kept the region as an outpost with no development. Since then parts of the region that were held by Ethiopia went under intense colonial power struggle among the Ethiopians lead by Emperor Menelik II and his claim of the land based on the 1884 Berlin agreement, the Italians who wanted to expand their territorial share and briefly succeeded in 1936, and the British. After the Italian defeat in 1941,

the British military administration united Somalis for the first time since 1884 only to divide them again in keeping with the Berlin agreement.

Surviving Multiple Colonial Partitions: Ethnic Resiliency

In his 2011 article, Cassanelli further explains that colonial partition not only divided the people, but created a partition of historical knowledge, as each colony researched and wrote about their own interpretation of the people, culture, economic relations and political process (Cassanelli, p. 5). Further, Cassanelli (2011) explains that Somali knowledge production has “three distinct traditions of intellectual production in Somalia: the Western secular tradition, the Islamic religious tradition, and the indigenous Somali poetic tradition” (p.4).

In order to understand the social, political and economic structures of the current day, knowledge of all three traditions are important. However, as mentioned, many non-Somali historians draw their own assumptions from only one or two of the above-mentioned traditions, creating a bias about existing political and social issues. Somali historians exploring the causes of current destruction, at times credit the causes of war, scattered life in the Diaspora, clan identity and recent fighting enforced by religious extremists such as Al-Shabaab to colonial partitions (Bulhan, 2008, pp. 19-48).

As mentioned earlier, the strategic location of Somalia and the attraction of major shipping lines from east to west led to the African land grab. According to Cassanelli (1982), Somalia is:

The only African country to be partitioned twice in the past one hundred years—first during the late nineteenth-century scramble for Africa, and again after the collapse in 1941 of Mussolini’s East African Empires. Somalia was beset with

continuing series of border disputes that absorbed politicians and scholars right into the 1970s, and coloured all cotemporaneous historical scholarship. (p. 28)

There are contradicting stories about the arrival of Europeans and the misinformation about Somali culture, that was written by early visitors. Burton (1856) and James (1888) for example, mentioned in their reports that Somalis were warlike people they met on the coast of the Horn of Africa. These two explorers also discuss how difficult it was for them to enter tribal land designations that put limitation on foreigners movements in certain areas without clan protection. Other researchers like Lewis (1961) also wrote about the challenge of movements during clan conflict limiting the access of researchers to certain areas. This shows the limitation of historical records of the time as researchers were unable to do ethnographic observation and collect narratives from different clans to rectify the bias and generalized information they had received from other clans . Such limitations on full access to regions inhabited by Somalis is seen in Burton's writing (1856) about his visits to Harar when he entered the city disguised as a Muslim merchant. This restriction is also recorded in Lewis's (1961) research in British Somaliland and Houd regions and Cassanelli's (1982) research on the Italian Somaliland.

In addition, later researchers relied on those limited records of the early explorers who lacked interest in the people and were always judging the people relying on their biased assumptions about Africans. For example, Burton in his 1856 notes wrote about the "fierce looking and insolent threats of the Somali people". Somali historian Bulhan (2008) quoted Burton's writing about early Somalis fighting and survival skills and what happened to the country known as the Somali republic from 1960-1991 as follows. Burton (1856) as quoted by Bulhan (2008) said:

At the present, a man armed with a revolver would be a terror to the country; the day however will come when the matchlock [an old gun] will supersede the assegai [spear], and then the harmless spearman in his strong mountain will become ... a formidable foe. (p. 23)

Somalis are not alone in these misinterpretations, and other post-colonial effects such as prolonged conflict, internal wars and mass population displacements. They share the post-independence internal power struggle with other African countries. One of those civil wars with stories of atrocities committed against civilians and genocide is the Sierra Leone¹⁹ war of 1991–2002. Krippner & McIntyre, (2003) pointing to this type of war and its impacts cites Martin Seligman (1999):

Most wars are conducted between states. However, in recent decades wars have started to take an ominous new direction, that of states conducting wars against civilians...Since the early 1980s and into the new millennium, wars against civilians have been and, in some cases are still being carried out in countries like Somalia. (p.111)

Other similar African wars include: the Angolan civil war (1975-2002), the Second Congo War²⁰ (1997–1999), the 1994 Rwandan genocide and Somali republic's religious and tribal wars from (1991-present). The impacts of these wars and forced migrations are studied in some countries more than others: the Rwandan genocide and the internal political struggle in Congo,

¹⁹ See Liberia's former president Charles Taylor and supporter of the war now imprisoned by the International Criminal Court ICC in 2013

²⁰ The first Kongo war also known as Congo-Brazzaville Civil War was (1665–1709). Since then there have been a number of ethnic wars some of them still going

Sudan and its refugee crisis, including gender base violence and child soldiers, are some examples of where these studies are concentrated.

As a new academic, a survivor of multiple civil wars in Ethiopia and Somalia, I often reflect on those experiences and the lack of studies documenting the impacts of civilian experiences. I am often amazed by Somalis ethnic resiliency and how they survive despite the continued tragic events that are happening to them. Throughout history they seem to develop a survival skill that helps them whenever they are confronted with past and present historical traumas and ethnic labelling. Their geographical location and foreign power interests to control it continue to be the tragic source of forced migration and resettlement struggles.

Geographical Location And The Cold War: Another Disadvantage For Somalis

As mentioned earlier, Somali ethnic groups' accounts, including labelling from early explorers and later historians, continue to shape the perception of Somali people and culture. Lewis's (1961) publication of his first book about Somalis starts with a quote from Richard Burton, who described Somalis as: "A fierce and turbulent race of Republicans." In a following edition (1988) Lewis himself described Somalis as:

... a warlike people, driven by the poverty of their resources to intense competition for access to water and grazing. Even under modern administration, self-help still retains much force as the most effective sanction for redressing wrongs and adjusting political and legal issues between groups (p. 11)

Narratives of pre-1960 Somali history or post-colonial political structure are layered with these past biases, ethno-cultural assessments, and the hidden reality of the impacts of past and present oppressions. Cassanelli (1982 & 2011) explains this continuous interpretation:

Somali society was not only the product of a series of historical experiences whose impact can be described in terms of new institutions, networks, social relationships, and the like, it was also the product of beliefs about the past and of the beliefs about the relationship of the present to the past. (p.7)

Despite these various narratives about Somalis as ‘warlike’ and ‘aggressive’ people in the horn, they were always the victims of colonialism, imperialism and its propaganda designed to hide the actual interest in their lands. Colonial and imperial incursions of their land imposed political, social and economical divisions that are still the primary sources of conflict. Those colonial partitions became a disastrous condition for people who did not have a nation but had culturally based self-governance. For the pastoralists, border restrictions prevented them from accessing tribal grazing lands and water holes, creating mass famine and punishments if they resist or ignore border restrictions and use their tribal lands. Breaking those border restrictions brought harsh punishments from all four colonials (Italians, French, British and Ethiopians) with an outcome of forced migrations, starvation and death. The Italian administration, for example, in the southern regions, was the worst, imposing daily humiliation, segregation, forced migration and forced labour which was similar to the apartheid rule in South Africa (Touval, 1963, p, 71).

The British were more elusive as they used racist acts tactfully, making it different but no less segregating than what the Italian and French were practising (Bulhan, 2008, p.45). Langton P. Walsh, one of the first Somaliland colonial administrators, demonstrates some of the cruel methods practised on Somalis by the British. Under his rule, Walsh enforced the law, by being

the judge, the jury, and the executioner, and deciding the types of punishments²¹ that would please him the most (Bulhan, 2008, p. 45).

Colonial rulers also pitted clans against clans and brothers against brothers even within the same agnatic lines (Bulhan, 2008, p. 46). By making treaties with individual clans who were afraid of attacks and losing water wells, a general mistrust grew among Somalis that divided them emotionally forever. In the long run, the new rule of law undermined the collective power Somalis had that allowed them to survive on arid land, and trust each other to settle disagreements through verbally binding contracts. Colonizers' unflattering propaganda also impacted the individual and cultural psyche, ultimately blaming Somalis for their own situation.

The turbulent pre 1960 independence years of the Somali Republic did have one glimmer of hope for a short period of time. The British Foreign secretary at the time, Ernest Bevin, presented an idea to the colonial governments in 1946, suggesting all Somalis be united under British trusteeship. His humanitarian plea was to allow Somali pastoralists a free movement to grass lands and water holes and stop human disasters during regional dry seasons (Bulhan, 2008, p.115). Bevin's appeal as he put it was to "ease the suffering of poor Somali pastoralists," and was supported by the Somali people, but strongly rejected by Ethiopia (Lewis, 1988 & 2002, p. 124), as well as the United States and Russia (Bulhan, 2008, p.48; Touval, 1963, p.78-79). The reason behind the appeal was it contradicted Britain's original plan to ultimately hand over the Houd/Ogaden (which is now part of the Kilil Five region) to Ethiopia due to a prior treaty between Ethiopia and Britain.

²¹ To punish individuals who tampered with the British water supply lines, Walsh loaded a donkey with a sack of Somali delicacy foods, pre-wiring it to explode during unloading, killing all Somalis within reach (Bulhan, 2008)

Ethiopia's Regional Advantage

This earlier treaty was secretly signed between the British and Ethiopians in 1897 without the Somalis consent and became available for Somalis for the first time during the Bevin report (Lewis, 2002, p. 61-62). During the pre-independence struggle, what Somalis later found or did not anticipate was Menelik's genius in world politics and how he secured his borders through various treaties with European colonials. Menilek was an Ethiopian Emperor (1844–1913) who understood early on the challenges of living in a landlocked country and the value of having access to the sea as well as food sources²² for his people. When European colonials began their scramble for territorial gains and control of Africa, he knew the rules of their game and played it well accordingly. Emperor Menilek's cleverness not only facilitated effective negotiation with European colonials convincing them about his country's political sovereignty but also his right to the "stateless Somali lowlands" Cassanelli (1982, p.30). Menilek's understanding of security for his people by making treaties with other powers allowed him to successfully negotiate and establish beneficial treaties with England, Italy, and France between 1894 and 1908 (Cassanelli,1982, p.30 and Samatar1994, p.194). His historical strength in the region includes his ability to defeat a European army (the Italians) in 1896 in Adwa. Menelik then gained added respect from powerful colonial giving him the upper hand to further negotiate with them for territories. For example, in 1896 he already had a beneficial relationship with France that was building the railway line that gave Ethiopia access to the sea. Similarly, Emperor Menelik also managed to secure a prominent place in African politics²³.

²² Ethiopia's high ground and mainly farming land, did not produce the food source of animal protein available on pastoralist lands

²³ Menelik did this through aiding other African states that were at the time struggling for their independence.

The British took notice of the king's political power and wanted to establish a permanent relationship similar to the Franco/Ethiopian²⁴ relationship by giving parts of the Somali territory to Ethiopia (Lewis, 1988, p. 56). Around that time, individual Somali clans, fearing the power struggle between Europeans and Ethiopia and wanting to profit from all sides, were signing separate treaties with different colonials or sometimes with the same colonial (Markakis, 1987, pp. 51-57) . This action ultimately weakened their positions, enforcing the interests of the colonial powers and further dividing them into different territories (Lewis, 1988, p.57). These actions will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five in conjunction with prolonged trauma and brain process.

Ethiopian and Somali historians write differently about the past contradicting one another in terms of land claims and boundaries. Ethiopian born academic²⁵ Gebru Tareke (2000) argues that Somali regionalist claims are based on ethnic and religious homogeneity. He claims the region known as 'Western Somalia' for example, has always been part of Ethiopia and inhabited by multiple non-Somali ethnic groups. The Somali Ethiopian's history often creates a complicated argument between Ethiopian and Somali historians each presenting a different territorial claim. This comes from the Somali ethnic group's "stateless" status before the arrival of colonials (Markakis, 1987). Before colonial borders were structured the people enjoyed sharing grassing lands based on tribal territories.

Since 1991 with the political and governmental changes in both Ethiopia Somalia that historical conflict seems to diminish further. With the prolonged conflict, displacement and the

²⁴ Britain was undergoing a colonial power struggle with France where each wanted to have ultimate power over entrance to the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf.

²⁵ Gebru Tareke's (2000) version of history is also taught in schools in Ethiopia which strengthens Ethiopia's version of history. Ethiopia has multi-ethnic, multi-language and multi-religion ethnic groups under a federal government, which Somalis are a part of.

destruction of the Somali republic eastern Somalis now fully accept their belonging in the federal government of Ethiopia. The region previously known as Western Somalia/ Ogaden is one of the strongest Somali territories at the Horn of Africa. They is a strong part of Ethiopia living in a self governing Somali district and becoming part of the eleven politically autonomous districts called 'Klililoch' or 'Killil' in the singular. In this current creation, Somalis are assigned Killil Five as their own district which is aligned with their original claim of the land except the loss of part of their region to other districts such as Killil Seven, Eight and Nine, which are now considered multi-ethnic and multi-language districts shared by groups like the Oromos, Sidamos, Harare and Afar tribes.

Tareke's (2000) contradiction of Somali historians' land claims on the Kilils which is supported by other Ethiopians who consider those districts as the best part of Ethiopia's rolling plains and lush valleys that are watered by numerous rivers and ample seasonal rains. Killil Five is part of the richest agricultural lands where Ethiopia's staple diet of "teff", barley, wheat, and coffee come from and it is difficult to imagine Ethiopia without it. It is a district that is often described by its different climates such as dry lands where mostly ethnic Somalis reside and as part of the richest Ethiopian pastoralist lands producing the finest cattle in the whole country.

In addition, the eastern districts also provide Ethiopia ample economical income, as it is also where the stimulant plant/drug known as "*khat*" or "*Qaad*" grows. This plant produces a temporary excitement, and euphoria making men and some women to forget their past and present issues. My participant Dalmar for example talked about this plant extensively and how her own family and others in similar situations are affected by this stimulant creating plant causing family conflict, sometimes violence that comes from its severe withdrawal or added economic burden. This plant is now banned by a number of Western countries including

Canada who acknowledges it as a drug that causes mild-to-moderate psychological dependence (Bhui et al., 2002, p. 35; Jaranson et al., 2004, p. 591- 594).

This stimulant or drug is legal in Ethiopia and exported on a daily basis to Somaliland, Djibouti and the Middle East contributing on a daily basis to these countries' economies. Finally, this Somali- inhabited region is also blessed with scenic mountain chains such as the 'Amhar', and the 'Mardha Pass' that have a strategic military significance for Ethiopia's defense (Tareke, 2000 pp. 637-638).

Within the context of these contradicting claims between the two country's historians is again the Ethiopian's past painful memories as a result of Somali land claims and invasions. A history remembered by Ethiopian history books shows the ongoing border disputes with Somalis including the sixteenth century (1529-43) devastating war with a warrior named Ahmed Gran²⁶ or "Axmed Gurey" who invaded and colonized most of Ethiopia (Cassanelli, 1982, p. 24). Gran's Muslim army, at the time coming from the Adal Sultanate or Kingdom of Adal located in Somaliland and Easter Ethiopia, managed to subdue the Ethiopian army until his death in the northern Ethiopian region of Gondar in 1543. With this painful and memorable history, Ethiopians developed a self-protective conviction of a "never again" thought process focusing on border security with Somalis and following the Emperor Menelik's idea and regional claim. Scholars like Markakis (1987,pp.169-191) call these actions as developing self-protection mechanisms against people with fighting powers like the Somalis. Ever since, Ethiopia has managed to always have enough guns and political agreements signed and sealed to secure its borders (Markakis, 1987, p.26-28).

²⁶ Ahmed Gran's story is a major part of Ethiopian history taught in schools in my time. It is a lesson taught to every school-aged child to remember the importance of having a nationalist political perspective and keeping Ethiopia safe from others.

Europeans, who had their own long history with Muslim armies during the Crusades, always had a greater understanding and a soft place for Ethiopia and were willing to support and defend this Christian nation against any Muslim power (Bulhan, 2008, p. 29-35). This religious connection and view of a common enemy, as well as the visionary skills and abilities of Ethiopian monarchs²⁹, became one of the reasons for Eastern Ethiopian Somalis to remain as part of Ethiopia. Even though the Somali partition was devastating to Somali pastoralists, some parts such as Eastern Ethiopia are now benefiting from the partition as Ethiopian districts, enjoying the safety, security and opportunity for development.

Regional War, Failed State, Forced Migration, Tribal Division And Social Change

As mentioned earlier, a major Somali political theme after gaining independence from the British and Italians in 1960 was the desire to reunite all Somalis, bringing together the three large Somali groups, including French Somaliland, the annexed Ogaden/Haud regions in Ethiopia, and parts of Northern Kenya (Markakis, 1987, p. 196). Despite this agenda, Somali governments managed to maintain a fairly neutral stance within international affairs until 1969, when Mohamed Siyaad Barre came to power and took a stance against international and African union to get back the Ogaden region (current Killil Five). With this agenda, as soon as he came to power, Barre began to obtain massive military armaments from the Soviet Union which he put to good use by invading Ethiopia in 1977.

He took advantage of the Ethiopian government's weakness due to various internal and nationalist groups fighting for equality. The following year, the Ethiopian army, re-enforced by Soviet equipment and troops from Cuba, recaptured the region from Somalia. The war initiated the mass forced migration or exodus of Eastern Ethiopian Somalis. It overwhelmed the Somali government who was not only dealing with the large number of refugees and lack of enough aid

but also was dealing with the cold war regional shift that happened at the same time. It was economically and militarily devastating for Somalia who lost the Soviet Union as its close ally and did not manage to capture America's interest or support. In addition, the government disappointed high-ranking Somali military officials originally from the current eastern Ethiopian region or Ogaden/Kilil Five who were supporting that region's unification with Somalia (Lewis 2002, pp. 242-248).

Soon after the war with Ethiopia ended, the anti-Siyaad Barre groups of high ranking officials and their supporters began their guerrilla war against the Barre regime. This internal power struggle and the guerrilla wars become the start of the Somali disaster, of clan-based divisions and external interest groups involvement with the destruction of the nation. By 1988, the result was a full-scale civil war resulting in the overthrow of Siyaad Barre's government in 1991. The former British Somaliland declared its independence from the rest of Somalia a breakaways state which is two decades later still not recognized by the internal community.

Both Ethiopia and Kenya understand the Somali tribal system and were fully benefiting from the destruction of the Somali republic. Since 1991 Ethiopia and to lesser extent Kenya, Djibouti and Eretria began to employ Somali tribal militias to fulfill their respective political agendas. The global fight against Al-Qaeda and Islamic extremism linked Al Shabaab a Somali religious group to the watch list which increased the security benefits for Somalia neighbours with their own regional interests. Religious groups and tribal militias often led by men with Diaspora connections whose first loyalty are to the ancestral rule of vengeance, honour and survival are leading different parts of the region. Those groups who have their head offices in foreign countries (including neighbouring counties in Africa) continue to fuel the conflict and ignore the human suffering. The regional powers (Ethiopia or Kenya) continue to act as the

secondary masters of those leaders managing silently the external and internal political affairs of Somali regions and fulfilling their country's interests. One of the most tragic Somali relationships is the tribal militias who fight anyone they see as an "enemy" and establish temporary relationships with any force as long as that force is helping them defeat their real enemy, who may happen to be a member of their own community another Somali tribe, or a long-time neighbour.

Despite continuous efforts through international intervention, including the establishment of an elected government in the former Italian Somaliland region, that part of the Horn of Africa still remains a conflict zone and a source of emotional trauma for the people and others in region who are impacted by dealing with historically divisive politics and constant conflict, forced migration and refugee issues (Bulhan, 2008; Cassanelli, 1982; Markakis, 1987; Samatar, 1994 and Samatar, 1991).

Understanding Somalis Historical Trauma, Sources Of Displacement And Losses

During my data collection, I met a few nationalist Somalis who still have fond memories and emotions of the common Somali flag, memories that are lost for others forever. They often talk about the flag by its nick name "*Bluugle*" in Somali, the blue one with its five point star representing each Somali region (Markakis, 1987, p.169-236). The older generation discuss the independence song by Faduumo Abdillaahi 'Maandeeq'. This song describes the unifying flag and its star symbol at the center indicating hope, freedom, unity, equality and most of all dignity. I also remember it when growing up. Faduumo Abdillaahi's 'Maandeeq' song which is still shared through social media says:

It was born auspiciously this flag raised above us

We will not differentiate among any Somalis

Since none of us are closer to it than the others,

Let us be equal in front of our flag

Somali words...

“Waa samo ku dhalayoo calanka noo saaran

Soomaali oo dhan, kala sooci mayno

Uma kala sokeynno, ha loo sinnaado”

These words also mention how losing this common identity not only fractured Somalis but it also affected the younger generation who do not remember the emotional traumas attached to past histories of displacements which is still the source for the current fractured community. The youth not only lost the ethnic pride but also lost their common ethnic identity.

Understanding The Impacts Of Prolonged Conflicts And Displacements

Past and present Somali historical issues are complex requiring a detailed understanding of the impacts that colonization and the superpower interest at strategic geographical locations have on the people. Researchers like Tan Boon Kean (1988) explain how some countries started to deal with the aftermath of the Second World War exploring the impacts of post-colonial resistance, cultural development, and problems related to ethnic minority rights (p. 16). According to Kean (1988):

It is disappointing to find political leaders, civic groups and academics still displaying the failure to understand or provide a heuristic framework for explaining the basic questions, which most ethnic conflict situations raise (p. 16).

Kean (1988) describes existing ethnic and conflict studies as “more descriptive than explanatory” (p.16). For example, most studies try to describe the course of ethnic conflict while

at the same time failing to explain how the source of ethnic self-determination or regional conflicts began (p.17). Since these issues have different historical accounts based on each writer's resources and personal political views, it also requires sensitive or empathic exploration of those views. In this study, I use in this chapter both written historical records by Western and Somali researchers who all of them present the Somali history from their perspectives. For me the challenge is choosing literatures that match with the oral history I grew up hearing and learning from my elders. This combination of historical literature, oral stories and memories also gave me the chance to explore my own assumptions about my people, building new memories and provided me another view of the past as it relates to my people's historical trauma.

Understanding The Impacts Of Torture And Trauma Response

The above description of Somali history shows the challenging lives and the resiliency Somalis had to survive those events. To understand those traumatic experiences I turn to Gonsalves et al. (1993) who describe how these traumatic and torturous experiences damage the human spirit:

Torture is a method used by those in power to reduce an individual or ethnic group to a primitive level of helplessness and confusion. What the survivors learn is to suppress one's feelings, to distrust oneself and one's world view and to dissociate from one's own experience. This exploitive process has been described as one of moral and personal coercion or of personality reversal. (p.354)

Their description of the impacts of past traumas gave me the basic understanding of what happen to me, my family and my people which is the first research question I try to address in this study. Past traumas, which will be discussed in later chapters of this study, challenge the

personal and moral fabric of the society and shatter “the psychological structure of the self at the most basic level of personal identity” (Gonsalves et al., 1993, p.354). In my view, these theoretical descriptions of trauma and torture explain what the colonials have done to Somalis. Since the partition of Somali-inhabited lands at the Berlin Conference in 1884, Somalis have endured torturous punishment in the hands of all the colonial powers, the most severe coming from the Italians who practised forced labour and caused intentional famine. What is happening in that region since the fall of Siyaad Barre Barre’s government in 1991 is an indication to those historical traumas and torture as they continue to struggle with forming unity or peace building.

There is a story of torture, dislocation, famine and trauma experienced by majority of Somali families around the globe including the Somali-Canadian women I interviewed for this study. Some have gone through the trauma of watching the death of their families, others coming from pastoralist families have experienced the trauma of watching their livestock perish due to waterhole restrictions (Bulhan, 2008; Cassanelli, 1982 & 2011; Lewis, 1961, 1988 & 2002; Samatar, 1982 & 1991; Samatar, 1994). However most managed to survive and remain resilient through these experiences.

Gonsalves et al. (1993, p. 352), describe the long-term and extensive implication of the above mentioned traumatic and torturous events which they call “human-induced disasters”, that have an impact not only on the individual members of the targeted group but that also created the destruction of the entire social and political fabric of a country. The authors explain this type of trauma or torture as systemic assaults against primary socio-political groups, often leaving lasting emotional scars and profound psychic traumas that will be discussed further in the following chapters.

Bulhan (2008, p. 237) picks up on that description of past traumas and present the traumatic events that have been happening to Somali ethnic group for the past few decades. He uses the phrase “clan neurosis” to describe those events and their outcomes. In this outcome, he identifies the source of abandonment for cultural negotiation tools such as “*xeer*” in Somali and the excessive use of “nepotism”. Bulhan (2008) acknowledges that current conflicts in Somali regions have been brewing prior to the 1960 independence of the British and Italian colonies. According to Bulhan (2008) with the birth of clan neurosis, these conflicts turned into power grabs a long time ago establishing the “emergence of clan hegemony” in all Somali regions with disastrous effects (p. 124). He argues that ill-equipped political elites, relying on confidence gained through Western education and social connections, continued to exploit the people after the 1960 independence using the latest political or religious conditions to benefit themselves (Bulhan, 2008, pp. 124-125). Supporters of these leaders continue to be the beneficiaries, causing suffering through infighting, divisive media and stories of righteousness to gain both economic and political power (Bulhan, 2008, pp. 125-130).

Bulhan (2008), also explains how these events became part of a current Somali script for humanitarian disaster, making a reality of one of the Somali’s main fears of war and famine called “*Col Iyo Abaar*” in Somali. It is a fear that is so great that Somalis include it in their daily prayers saying in Somali “*Col Iyo Abaar Ilaahay ha inga hayo*” which means “may God protect us from war and famine” which ironically Somalis never seem to avoid. The impact of living with constant fears on the wellbeing of the individual or community is well documented in social neuroscience literature which will be discussed in Chapter Five and Six. Somali Academics (Abdi, 2007; Bulhan, 2008); Elmi,2010; Samatar, 1994 and Samatar,1982&1991) explore the outcome of the prolonged striving for survival and dignity looking at the various

internal changes that continue to enforce ethnic divisions and infighting. Bulhan (2008) adds the impacts of historical trauma describing colonizers as powers who not only limited Somali resources but also left them with prolonged trauma that is affecting Somali psyches and is still used as control (p.38).

Historical trauma left Somalis with a strong mistrust of each other and excessive dependence on previous colonizers who have maintained their strategic interest in the region. Years of suffering by starvation, segregation, forced labour and unreported genocide by various colonials still haunt Somalis. Aside from segmented conflicts, this constant group trauma became a source for anger, disagreement and distrust (Bulhan, 2008, p.237) which is inflicting prolonged emotional trauma that maybe transferable to the next generation.

Trauma theories developed by Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart (1999) define historical trauma as “cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma” (p. 2). In an article Brave Heart et al. (2011), describe clinical considerations in doing research and intervention planning which will be discussed later in the section about Social Work Practice.

Brave Heart et al. (2011) identify a range of symptoms associated with posttraumatic stress disorder and symptoms of unresolved grief (pp. 283-284). These symptoms are expressed by various Somali historians in their description of clan relations, as well as economic, political and social structures (Bulhan 2008, Samater, 1994 and Samatar, 1991). Clan behaviours are interpreted as having excessive disregard for loss of life (Bulhan, 2008) and the manifestation of suicidal ideation what Brave Heart et al. (2011) termed as an ‘historical trauma response’.

Since suicide is prohibited by Islamic teachings, the alternate choice for Somalis now seems to be participating in dangerous actions such as pirating, joining the religious fighters and

suicide bombing. In addition, Brave Heart's description of society's withdrawal from the impacts of war such as psychic numbing, by focusing attention on revenge fits the patterns of an historical trauma response. Other symptoms such as substance abuse are seen within the Somali community by the excessive use of "khat" by men (Bulhan, 2008) and women's addiction to excessive time spent on around-the-globe phone conversations. Some women say this phone addiction was created by the destruction of the family support system, separation of families and the need for family support who now live in Diaspora communities around the globe (see Chapter Five and Six).

Brave Heart's research will be beneficial to opening the dialogue about what cultural healing methods would look like for the Somali people in order to mend the wounds of historical trauma response. Since my case study is about Somali –Canadian women's past and present trauma, in this section I will touch on the gender roles within Somali history and the impact that colonialism, culture, religion and dislocation have had.

Understanding Gender Relations, Cultural Rules And Religious Norms

For Somali women, aside from sharing ethnic trauma, other cultural-based internal oppression begins for them at birth. It starts with the woman's unwelcome status as female and continues throughout her life, as she is tolerated only because of her crucial role in demographic replacement, participation in the mode of economic production, and her beneficial status to be bartered as needed for political cooperation and economic sharing among tribal groups (Samatar, 1994, pp. 213-218).

The Somali historiography and meta-narratives including social, political and economic structures are based on gendered accounts of events that are told or written by men that assign women to supportive roles. Every aspect of women's lives, including their involvement with

nationalist movements, is framed by masculine identities (Bulhan, 2008; Casannelli, 1982; Lewis, 1961&1988; Samatar, 1994; Samatar 1991). The culture, climate, living in arid lands and being dependent on the environment has demanded men's physical ability to fight enemies and secure wells, giving them prime importance, while women's roles and participation for survival were often ignored except in women's poetry (Kapteijns, 1999). Somali poetry, songs and historical tales support this argument, expressing gender roles depicting women in their supportive roles to men's relationship with the environment (Samatar, 1991).

In cultural norms, Somali women's lives are dependent on the male members of their tribes. Each woman belongs to her father's clan until marriage, going back to her family again if the marriage fails. She continues to keep an associate status with her ex-husband's tribe if she has children who preferably are sons. Through marriage, a woman's birth-clan status becomes secondary to the clan she is married into as she gains temporary membership into her husband's family. For Somali pastoralists, clan collaboration is often dependent on "exogamous"²⁷ unions strategized for getting immediate assistance; marriage outside the immediate clan is encouraged to build "a circle of potential allies" during war (Lewis, 1961, p.5). A woman's status and social location in that alliance depends on her ability to produce male heirs and on the strength and unity of clan relationships (Cassanelli, 1982, p.19).

This type of clan membership forces women to be dependent on men. According to Ahmed Samatar (1994):

Women are expected, by the rules of exogamy and virilocal marriage, to work and raise children for their husbands. Thus a kin group such as a clan or sub-clan always consisted of [insider] men and [outsider] women – that is, of men who were full

²⁷This is a social arrangement where marriage is allowed only outside of a social group.

membership of their group in their own right and of women whose communal identities were ambiguous and whose membership in their marriage community depended on husbands and sons. (p.14)

In Somalia, marriage benefits men primarily by allowing them to establish their own households and increase their social status as a married man. Through wealth, which is measured in pastoralist societies by the size of the cattle and clan family, a man can aspire to be the head of the tribe or at least be an influential person who can make political decisions on his own, including waging war or building peace with other clans (Samatar, 1982).

Men gain economic benefit through their wife's and sons' labour (Samatar, 1994, p. 216). Wealthy men gain even more from multiple marriages if they can afford to take care of all their wives equally (in accordance with Islamic marriage law). Multiple marriages are used on occasion solely for economic reasons, disregarding Islamic teachings.

These oppressive gender-based systems within the pastoral Somali society can be understood using Hegel's influential idea of "bondage in master and slave" analogy. Bulhan (1985), discussing the interpretation of Hegel's analogy by Alexander Kojve, explains systemic or cultural oppressions based on recognition as:

...man becomes conscious of himself only through recognition by the other. But when the desire for recognition is frustrated there is a struggle, a conflict. He who attains recognition without reciprocating becomes the master. The other who recognizes but is not recognized becomes the slave. (p.102)

The master and slave dialectic allowed Somali men to enjoy this unbalanced relationship: benefiting from women's social and economic production without actually recognizing their value. The only recognition given to women even now is their role in the "sustenance of the

society and its reproduction over time” (Samatar, 1994, p. 217). Lidwien Kapteijns (1994) further takes up Somali women’s social roles and status saying:

By the logic of the definition of Clan as a community of agnatically related men, women are second-rank members. Considered a temporary member of her father’s household, a woman gains only outsider status in the household of her husband, as the proverb has it, “A woman belongs to [the group] the man to whom she is married” or in Somali “*Naagi wa ninkay u dhaxdo*”. (p. 213)

Commenting on the value of a women’s life in Somalia during the 1990s, Kapteijns (1994) shows how early casualty reports did not mention the names of the women who were killed after the fall of Siad Barre’s government (Samatar, 1994, p.213). The gender-exclusionary nature of Somali culture and its patriarchal history has affected women’s agency, rights, and in this case, the value of their lives. This role has been seen in oral history tales of counting the winners or losers of tribal wars by the number of men lost from each side of the warring faction but not the women.

Although they work behind the scene in mobilizing, fundraising and taking care of the injured, women have never been included in the decision-making process of going to war or ending it. That part is left for the male clan elders and male warriors, as women are presumed incapable of making a significant decision on the matter²⁸. Somali women are excluded from all visible social, political and economic participation. Their participation is consistently challenged by religious and local leaders, which limits their power in knowledge creation, decision making

²⁸ Strong Somali women are the root of social and economic systems. In pastoralist societies, they are responsible for taking care of all animals, except camels, and building the home (“Aqal” in Somali), while their urban sisters do this as well as make additional money in trade. From my own personal experience, women pay the ultimate cost of war and often have enough sense to oppose a senseless chauvinistic war with no end in sight but this ultimately destroys their own families.

and other responsibilities. This extends to all parts of social life, including marriage contracts, divorce procedures, and property ownership.

Such a marginalized social role has had grave consequences for Somali women, especially during war and conflict. Historically, women were traded as a commodity in exchange for peace offerings. After each tribal war, marriage contracts between opposing factions flourished as women were exchanged as gifts between opposing factions (Cassanelli, 1982, p.19; Lewis, 1961, pp.56-68, 1988 & 2002, p.8). This exchange was often dangerous for women, as in this hostile territory, her loyalty and trust is always in question, sometimes creating oppressive or abusive relationships with her husband and his family²⁹.

Women's Roles In Somali History

This cultural marginalization of women is replicated in many of the historical accounts. For example, women's roles in early historians and ethnographer's writings (Cassanelli, 1982; Lewis, 1961, 1988, 2002) are almost invisible. Women are often mentioned during the discussions about "blood wealth" payments in marriage where women's subordinate role is defined by the value on her life. In the blood wealth payment mentioned earlier, "diya-paying" groups agree on establishing a rule of law or "*xeer*³⁰" that estimates the value of a woman's life at often half the value of a man's life (Lewis, 1988& 2002, p. 8). When I was first thinking about forced migration and women, thoughts of women's initial experiences of dislocation kept coming back to my mind. I remember my own forced dislocation/migration to another province by marriage as an early teen. In Somali culture it is common for women to experience their initial forced migration at the start of their lives when they are traded during exogamous

²⁹ An example of this is the challenge of living with a mother in-law who has lost her son (the woman's husband) in a war.

³⁰ The word "*xeer*" means customary law.

marriage arrangements with stronger clans (Cassanelli, 1982, p. 19; Lewis, 1961, p. 119; Samatar, 1994, p. 214).

Another time Somali women are mentioned in history is in the diya payment and their role in the oral education of children such as memorizing their bloodlines through the counting of a child's genealogy,³¹ which often reaches over twenty names. Women also teach their children, beyond social skills and survival tips; they assume sole responsibility for teaching their children not only to memorize these clan names but also learn about social location, lands and historical relationships. Women in pastoralist families have other sole responsibilities too, including making materials needed for building shelters, loading and unloading family possessions, and constructing the hut during multiple clan moves while searching for grass lands (Lewis, 1961, p. 56).

A third mention of women's roles in traditional historical accounts is during the pre-independence (former Italian and British colonies) liberation movement and their political participation in the municipal elections of 1958 as community organizers (Lewis, 1988 & 2002, pp. 158-159). Historians like Lewis say, it is only after independence, northern political parties looking for voting numbers recognized women's citizenship and voting rights (Lewis, 1988 & 2002, p. 178). Keeping this subordinate position, Somali women still continue to struggle during war and peace taking on the burden of caregivers for their family and community.

The political and social turmoil in the Horn of Africa over the past two decades continues to add complexity and hardship to women's lives. Not having a legitimate or a strong unifying government in the area known as the Somali Republic has pushed women's struggles and hardship beyond losing their homes and families. They continue to be the most affected group

³¹ Limited to the agnatic line.

during war as it brings to them additional threats of physical and psychological violence including rape and stress related to shifting gender roles as women became the main bread winners of the family. This change in gender roles and new religious regulations further oppress those who are already hit by other war related violence. In a patriarchal society like Somalia, this current gender role reversal also becomes contentious and leads to men trying to control women through emotional punishments, religious edicts and other controls such as clothing restrictions and social relations. These rules add another layer of re-stigmatizing, marginalizing and Othering that exists in the new communities where refugee women like Somalis are trying to resettle or integrate. In the following two sections I explore theories informing the resettlement/integration challenges Somali-Canadian women currently face.

Section Two: Social Theories

Feminist Theories

In this section I explore how feminist theories contribute and explain the impacts of multiple barriers for Somali-Canadian women. Both Black and White feminist theories describe social interaction using the spaces women function in, for example, in the presence of patriarchal rules and other oppressive systems. The first White feminists started their argument using economic and domestic equality (Collins, 2000, pp. 4-7; hooks, 1984, pp. 3-34). Similarly, Black feminists including those from continental Africa use similar arguments as White feminists but add to their arguments the role of negotiating spaces they have in the presence of other oppressive systems (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1984).

This constant debate particularly between various Western feminists (and I say Western to identify Black feminist theories based on North American experiences) only describe their

struggles based on culture, economy, politics and religion. Since my study focuses on Somali women who share multiple oppressions with Black North American born feminists, I am using some their theories to explore the unequal processes Somali-Canadians face in their struggle to create change.

Patricia Hill Collins (2000) takes a distinctive approach to studying oppressive systems, self-isolating actions, resistance and empowerment related activities that inform my study. She (2000) reflects on oppressive systems starting with patriarchy, culture, colonialism, post-colonial division, war and systemic oppression in the Diaspora, and the adaptations and resistance to those systems. She (2000) links oppressive systems to creating lives of poverty and social injustices (p. 7). She also explores the dynamics of oppression and activism, where groups with greater power always try to oppress those with lesser power. Oppression and resistance work simultaneously as one influences the other; it is a dialectical process. Collins (2000) emphasizes that for Black women, systemic barriers further restrict their needs (Othering, housing, jobs) creating intersecting oppressions that will have an impact on women's lives and the lives of their children (p. 274).

Using further examples from Black American women's life experience, Collins explores their subjugated knowledge within a controlled and exclusionist White educational system and a double-edged patriarchy. Collins explains that patriarchy comes from two fronts for Black women: as both an external and internal force. The external comes from general patriarchal systems, and the internal, as with Somali women, comes from deeply impeding, silencing, and socially-constructed restrictions and oppressions within their own communities. Collins (2000) cites Audre Lorde:

In order to survive, those of us for whom oppression is as American as apple pie have always had to be watchers. Watching generates a dual consciousness in African-American women, one in which Black women become familiar with the language and manners of the oppressor, even sometimes adopting them for some illusion of protection. (p.97)

Collins (2000) clearly identifies the challenges for Black social thinkers and their struggle for creating knowledge based on personal experiences. She also suggests that other marginalized women, including those coming from continental Africa, can learn significantly from Black American women's struggle, knowledge and experiences. According to Collins (2000):

Dialectical approaches emphasize the significance of knowledge in developing self-defined group-based standpoints that in turn, can foster the type of group solidarity necessary for resisting oppression... group-based consciousness emerges through developing oppositional knowledge such as Black feminist thought. (p. 275)

This gives a voice and room to change the negative language coming from the intersection of race, gender and other oppressions while contributing to image building and individual and community self-esteem. Collins argues that academia is the appropriate location for cultivating self-defined stand points that will empower those working on resistance and create a place for advocacy and change. She (2000) states:

While domination may be inevitable as a social fact, it is unlikely to be hegemonic as an ideology within social spaces where Black women speak freely. This realm of relatively safe discourse, however narrow, is a necessary condition for Black women's resistance (p.100).

For historical examples of Black women's strength and will for survival, Collins reviews literature that explores the community resistance during 1905, when oppression of Black Americans was going through a period of heightened racial repression. Educator Fannie Barrier Williams viewed: "African-American woman not as defenceless victims but as strong-willed resisters" (Collins, 2000, p.98). This view contributed Black women's silence based on cultural restriction, patriarchy and oppression, not to be "interpreted as submission in this collective, self-defined Black women's consciousness" but as a resistance (p.98). Rather, according to Marita Bonner and quoted by Collins (2000), the women used 'consciousness' to survive the dehumanizing experiences they were going through, navigating both patriarchy and oppression. Collins (2000) in her analysis often uses her personal life experiences to address issues of gender, race and the relationships between empowerment, self-definition, and knowledge production (p.227).

Collins is one of the few Black social thinkers concerned about oppression and identity politics as emerging issues in the feminist struggle. Challenging what is left out in White feminism's struggle, she eloquently presents issues of power, culture and patriarchy within Black feminist thought. Collin's challenge specifically confronts the intersecting oppressions that are shaping the matrix of black American domination (p.227). According to her (2000), Black women are sitting at a theoretically interesting point within the women's liberation, as their struggle is against two major oppressive systems, gender and race (p.227).

Throughout her work, Collins addresses the importance of multiple Black communities' knowledge that transcends group-specific politics or the description of gender equality. For example, she says that by examining "subjugated knowledge of subordinate groups, a Black feminist standpoint and Black feminist thought requires more ingenuity than that needed to

examine the standpoints and thought of dominant groups” (p.251). Finding the educational training and process for Black women in White male dominated educational centres; she examines throughout history how Black women used alternate ways of knowing to create their own self-definition, self-evaluation and ways of validating knowledge. Quoting Sandra Harding, Collins (2000) defines this theory of epistemology as constituting “an overarching theory of knowledge. It investigates the standards used to assess knowledge or why we believe what we believe to be true” (p.252). Collins (2000) suggests four characteristics of this alternative knowledge production. Firstly, alternative epistemology claims should be explored and presented by individuals and communities who experience the social consequences of events and who can select their “topics for investigation and methodologies used” for their investigation and study (p.258). This can create “connected knowers” who are starting their journey from personal experience (p.258).

Secondly, women of all races and ethnicities must create an inclusive and alternative epistemology dialogue, rather than adversarial arguments. A woman using her own experiences can critically and reflexively foster continued knowledge development (p. 260). Using lived experiences creates meaningful knowledge that is culturally-based and built around an ethic of caring (p.262).

Thirdly, Collins (2000) challenges existing social science research that presents a researcher as a value-free entity. Instead, she argues that all knowledge is fundamentally value-laden and should be critically analyzed with the presence of empathy. Her research openly acknowledges that alternate epistemology is holistic/organic, and filled with the emotions and values of the knowledge-creator or researcher. This goes against the current format of Eurocentric-based ‘objective’ knowledge values. According to Collins (2000), knowledge

creation does not separate us from our own values and thoughts, therefore in research “including emotion indicates that a speaker believes in the validity of an argument” (p. 263).

Finally, Collins (2000) suggests because of these personal perspectives, alternate knowledge creation or Black feminist epistemology requires personal accountability making a critical reflection or assessment of the researcher’s values, including moral and ethical standpoints as an important venue for validation (p.263).

bell hooks (1984) looks at oppression and what it means to different women. She suggests that feminists lack a sound format to develop their own feminist theory and praxis (p.18). For example, women in the margins are reminded in their daily interactions about their social location based on race and domination. While White liberal and socialist feminists’ inequality is based on the mode of production in the labour force and economic imbalance (p. 19), Black women who participated in early women’s movements did not see that liberation comes ‘with gaining social equality with men’ (p.20). According to hooks (1984), “The lack of any emphasis on domination is consistent with the liberal feminist belief that women can achieve equality with men of their class without challenging and changing the culture basis of group oppression”(p. 20).

Other White and radical feminists also argue that patriarchal oppression goes deeper and includes other societal evils such as class hatred, ageism and war, leaving at times oppression and marginalization touted in racism (Dominelli, 2002, pp. 25-27; Crow, 2000, pp. 453-459). They discuss feminist issues connecting it to gender-based violence, rape, sexual harassment, incest, pornography, and domestic violence and how those issues are addressed (Burstow, 1992). The limitation of these types of explanations or arguments is that their theories arrived at a restrictive solution, where women need women-only spaces, a place that is free from male

control, where women can nurture each other, regain control over their own bodies, and develop a woman's culture.

hooks (1984) argues that the shortcomings from these radical arguments came when early White feminist movements presented their arguments based on a reaction to male domination (hooks, 1984, p.34) while others kept reminding women about the need to remember past historical silences and current distorted representations of women's causes.

Somali women in the Diaspora need to understand these feminist arguments and how each explains the multiple gender based oppressions that still exist not only in their own communities but also in the society that they are now part of. As Somali-Canadians, we are now at a crossroad with our past and current challenges. Each White and Black feminist argument contributes to women's diverse and multifaceted issues. Learning from other feminist groups and their struggle for freedom and equality will give us an understanding of our current situated identities within patriarchy/religious rules, migration and resettlement as well as integration barriers. This knowledge gives us as Somali-Canadian women a lens to understand the intersectionality of oppressions and their impacts on us as Black, Muslim and as heads of our own households. In refugee resettlement and integration analyses, the role of racism and religion in that process is missing. Both race and religion function as a form of "Othering" based on physical attributes such as skin colour or religious/cultural practices such as women's clothing. These are other attributes that make Somali-Canadian women to be seen as less deserving and a burden on the welfare system.

Social Work And Practice-Based Theories

In this section I will explore social work practice-based theories which are designed often to inform the functions of existing barriers and service needs. Francis Turner (2002, p. 50)

describes Canadian social work as a practice-based model that uses diverse methods to contribute to the knowledge of the service providers. As social workers we are open to knowledge sharing that will benefit those we are committed to serve. It is a necessary practice-based skill that guides our profession, preparing us for working with people from diverse backgrounds and needs. It is also aligned with our core values and understanding of human needs during interaction with the environment. For example, in social work education knowledge sharing allows us to better understand societal issues and systems and gives us the opportunity to use multiple approaches in our daily practice, research and education (Healy, 2005).

Over the years as a social worker, I came to understand that theories of social work practice depend on the institution, structure and the service provider's knowledge. For example, Francis Turner (2002) describes how those working in frontlines only need a theoretical base that helps them in their day to day interactions with service users, a solution-focused intervention. Other social workers differ in theoretical use based on their practice, for example those doing clinical social work practice use knowledge from psychology and neuroscience. Turner (2002, p.46) defines these differences, as I explained earlier which include the need to intervene in issues that come from the interaction of the service users and their environments. Other social work theorists Jan Fook (2002), Bob Mullaly (2002), Karen Healy (2005), Lena Dominelli (2002) and Dennis Saleebey (2013) indicate that human environmental and systemic interactions cannot be explained by one theory or knowledge base and require the use of various practice-based theories important to social work intervention.

At a personal level and as a non-Western born social worker in clinical practice, I struggled over the years with some of theories and Western based practices that often assume a "one size fits all" model of practice. This often comes from the service provider's training and

practice preference. For example, in clinical social work “psychoanalysis” is often used to understand why people act the way they do. In our globalized world where we are dealing with people and communities from diverse backgrounds, beliefs and sometimes bi-cultural adaptations make it challenging to evaluate the issues or needs for intervention and psychoanalysis’ promise of ‘understanding’ misses the mark. Yet even with our growing multi-ethnic, multi-cultured communities, we still use psychoanalysis and its linear and Western based explanation of individual behaviours.

Psychoanalysis remains one of the main clinical practice-based theories used by social work practices (Trevithick, 2007, p. 1220; Turner, 2002, p.47). Newly introduced practice-based theories such as social neuroscience are also making their way to social work practice providing more explanatory and hopeful tools for the healing processes. Other dominant theories that are used in diverse contexts come from sociology, law and organizational theory (Healy, 2005, p. 7).

Healy (2005) outlines how these dominant theories in social work practice become influential sources due to their strong alignment with “Enlightenment ideas of objectivity, rationality, individualism and linear notions of progress” (p. 18). Healy (2005, p. 18) argues that while these ideas and practices are beneficial and have been proven to be effective in some cases, their success comes from service providers’ ability for using the theories in creative ways. It is this creativity that makes some service providers like me look for “other ways of knowing”. Having an anti-oppressive practice-based background gave me the vision for including in my practice the use of self awareness/self-reflection and openness for new knowledge which will be discussed in chapters five and six.

Using Anti-Oppressive Practice (AOP) In Social Work Practice

Lena Dominelli (2011) describes AOP as a practice-based paradigm that can be used by social workers to address inequality, poverty and social justice. Various groups including feminist social workers and anti-racist advocates use this practice effectively to address social inequality and its impacts on certain excluded groups.

Dominelli (2011) claims that AOP and its egalitarian values such as its “person-centered philosophy” helped radical social workers to address or resist marginalization. She uses examples of how “feminist work with women has contributed to a rethinking of masculinity” and Black and anti-racist perspectives have had implications for the way in which White identity and Whiteness is understood (p.9). Dominelli (2011) suggests that as social work practitioners we need to acknowledge that “anti-oppressive practice is a speciality with specialist knowledge” that demands from those who are using the theory a particular commitment and preparation “at the emotional and intellectual level, as well as the abilities for implementing it in practice” (p.1).

Martha Kumsa (2007), describes working with women who are struggling with resettlement and gender role reversal, and the difficulties she faced when she adapted AOP to her practice (p.118). Kumsa (2007) critically addresses how AOP, even when it is explained by authors from different racial backgrounds, often shares a common Western ideology, religion and culture that creates discomfort for Diaspora practitioners like her. She (2007) explains how at times AOP’s rigid boundaries - such as ‘outsider and insider knowledge’ - assume that groups or individuals have “a fixed, predetermined, and unchanging quality” (p.119). Over the years, I came to understand how the explanation and use of AOP sometimes contributes to feelings of hopelessness and stigma by pointing to barriers rather than inner strength and resiliency factors of individuals and communities.

Understanding The Impacts Of Stigma

Goffman's work (Drew & Wootto, 1988) used in social work intervention explains in detail social labelling, stigma and marginalization demonstrating the impacts of those labels on the individual or communities. However, misuse of this theory happens when it solely based on deficit-oriented helping. Goffman explains this happens when service institutions and providers such as mental health intervention programs exacerbate the social problems they intended their service users to overcome (Drew & Wootto, 1988, p.7). This comes from Goffman's belief in the human capacity for "doing extraordinary things during extraordinary circumstances", such as creating ways to overcome pre-assigned labels that are damaging to them (Elliott, 2010, p.51). Goffman's work on "identity politics" and the troubled interaction between the stigmatized and their advocates is particularly interesting for social work practice as he explains "stigma as a deeply discrediting attribute in the context of a set of relationships" that further marginalize those intended to be helped (Elliott, 2010, p. 51).

Giddens (1984), acknowledges Goffman's work, who never self-identified as an advocate or social theorist but contributed important aspects of social interaction theory especially to the "notion of co-presence" (p. 36). This is exceptionally important for social work practice that focuses on resettlement and social integration as the notion of co-presence³² dictates both the condition and outcome of human social association (Elliott, 2010). Furthermore, Goffman never identified or gave specificities of his research population, but his findings on human interaction and human responses to social exclusion, as well as overcoming situated identities, are duly

³² Co-presence is an idea that the presence of other factors shapes individual behavior. It is explained by social theories that link social interaction at the macro and micro level.

noted within sociological writings contributing to social work practice (Drew & Wootton, 1988, pp. 1-2).

For example, Goffman defines how stigma works in mental health services by explaining the use of the word “deviance” to describe different rule-breaking behaviours (Drew & Wootton, 1988, p.42; Smith, 2006, p.68) which are equally explained in social work practice as “non-compliant or resisting” services. Exploring different rule-breaking actions of mental patients in hospital wards, Goffman confronted our general understanding of “Anglo-American Society rules” which is centered in an exclusionary, morally-based world governed by Western rules (Healy, 2005, p. 155).

For Somalis this process is familiar as they have relied on exclusionary systems based on gene selection and ethnic/tribal identity. They are familiar with ethnic hate going through colonial partitions, cold war struggles, internal ethnic genocides that changed their psyche forever. It is a suffering based on Othering that followed them to their new resettlement communities. As refugees coming through humanitarian resettlement programs, this poses new barriers and creates a new stigma that makes them continue with their struggle within exclusionist systems based this time on race, religion and their immigration status.

Section Three: Migration Theories

In this section I explore exclusionist systems for new Canadians using migration theories relevant to this study. This is important for the practice of social work starting with an understanding of the “push” and “pull” factors in migration theories (Brettell & Hollifield, 2000; Kunz, 1973 & 1981). Canada is one of the few countries in the world that has an active immigrant and refugee admissions policy and related programs (Galabuzi, 2001, 2005, 2006).

Immigrants as well as refugees from various countries have been making Canada their new home since it became first a colony of France, and then a colony of Britain. Until the 1960s, the majority of new Canadians migrated from Europe, especially Britain. These immigrants were considered to be highly educated, skilled, and Caucasian who could easily assimilate with the rest of the Canadian population. The 1967 Immigration Act removed the Anglo-European preference increasing for the first time the rate of visible minorities immigrating to Canada while the number of Anglo-Europeans declined (Reitz, 2001, p.582). That immigration policy change was followed by the 1976 Immigration Act which enabled for the first time a large number of non-European immigrants and refugees to resettle in Canada (Galabuzi, 2001; Reitz, 2001; Reitz & Verma, 2004).

Refugees forced to leave their home countries due to lack of safety or natural disasters vastly differ from immigrants leaving in search of a better life. Kunz (1973) explains the settlement experiences of these two immigrant types, and points to the lack of theoretical understanding about forced migration. Even though this article was written decades ago, it remains one of the most relevant and current literature describing the experiences of economic migrants (Liu & Kerr, 2003; Reitz, 2001; Reitz & Verma, 2004; Reitz, 2009). For forced migrants, the urgent need and care to assist them ends when they migrate to their second or third country for permanent settlement (Kunz, 1973, p.128). This creates a knowledge gap and theory continues to suffer in silence as they soon begin dealing with their past and present trauma. In contrast, economic migrants demand integration into the labour market and their struggle against poverty interests academics from many different disciplines. Sociologists have explored theories of migration more than any other discipline, and the history of this research can be traced back to the Chicago School of Sociology. In the early twentieth century, major researchers endorsed ‘the

assimilation perspective' and centered their teachings on that paradigm. These researchers were convinced that the solution for multiethnic, multi-race and multi-region migration meant assimilation into a melting pot and eventually the singular cultural identity of 'American'. It was an optimistic idea that believed that all immigrants could achieve economic prosperity and cultural unity (Heisler, 2000, p.77).

Leo Driedger's (1996) assimilation theory framework was based on the assumption that all new immigrants will eventually succeed, like the earlier American immigrants who had shared common continents, race, religion (Christianity) and drive. What is left out of the equation is that the majority of the earlier American immigrants arrived voluntarily (push & pull factor) and had common values of "the spirit of free enterprise, individual initiative, competition, private property and the profit motive which fitted well into a laissez-faire style of capitalism" (Driedger, 1996 p.27).

Potocky-Tripodi (2002) explains the push & pull theory as a process. The "pull" relates to events in the destination country and the benefit for economic development, while the "push" stems from the place of birth or origin country's events such as economics, wars, or political affiliation (p.13). Papadopoulos (2002) argues that loss of home and the experience of trauma have different outcomes for different people. Based on personal factors such as inner strength, coping mechanisms, community support, and individual interpretations, a person may have a positive, negative, or neutral response to settlement experiences (Papadopoulos, 2002 & 2006).

The last twenty years brought out immigrant integration literature mainly focusing on economic integration of immigrants who are brought in for their specific skills. For the past year the conversation turned to forced migration and resettlement issues, due to the expansion of war in the global arena and refugee issues facing Europe. In the immigration and resettlement debate

Grove and Zwi (2006) write that, over the past decade, a number of researchers have been exploring the various frameworks of integration, including social capital (immigrant's specific ability and motivation to integrate), and theories of 'Othering,' which marks and names those identified in that category of Othering (pp. 1933-1939).

Other scholars such as Healy (2006), quoting Giddens (1984) and Structuration theory, use human integration and systemic structures of the host society to analyze resettlement (Healy, 2006, pp.256-259). It explains the value of host country's existing structural/ systemic issues as well as the overall political climate of time that may have the greatest impact on the integration process of refugees (Healy, 2006, p.256). For example, those seen as terrorists before their arrival will have a different experience than those perceived as model immigrants before their arrival. It is this social relation that makes a lasting difference.

Reitz (2009) looks at this by exploring the 'Canadian multiculturalism theory' which is based on a 'social philosophy' as an alternative concept to the American assimilation theory (p.1). Even though the success of Reitz's theory is questionable, as his explanations on the topic are not detailed, the idea was designed to explain how different cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds mould people (Reitz, 2009, p.1). As an early implementer of multicultural policy, Canada claimed that its multi-cultural policies and processes were a great success, and was leading other host nations since 1971 (Reitz, 2009, p.1). Political philosophers arguing on moral grounds back the concept of 'recognition', using sociological and psychological explanations that suggest, "recognition of diversity helps create positive self esteem and greater social unity" (Burton, 1990; Fraser, 2003, 2005 &2007; Reitz, 2009).

In his early research, Reitz (2001) further discusses structural differences by explaining how pre-existing relations among ethnic and racial groups in host societies affect the reception or

rejection of all immigrants. He argues that a justice remedy requires inter-group adjustment and accommodation because:

Pre-existing ethnic attitudes, as well as inter-group boundaries and hierarchies, provide the social framework within which integration processes occur. They may initiate formal and informal institutional arrangements including laws, organizational policies and practices, interest groups, and popular culture, all of which may affect the opportunities available to newcomers and the constraints they face (p. 1007).

In his work, Reitz critically looks at issues of immigration and settlement and multiculturalism; however I feel that his work focuses on economic migrants arriving due to the “pull” factor as opposed to forced migrants coming through resettlement programs.

Forced Migration And Resettlement Issues

There is a dearth of Canadian literature on trauma in refugee and immigrant communities, particularly concerning the experiences of continental African refugee women and children. The few existing resources discuss how women who have experienced extreme trauma and gender oppression, such as rape and loss of family members during war, often show signs of persistent psychological distress (Kinzie, 2004; Levy & Side1, 2006; Simich, 2008). Many of the women struggle with health and mental health issues such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and anxiety disorders (Bhui et al., 2006; Rees & Pease, 2007; Warfaa et al., 2005). Questions remain how the continuous oppression, exclusion, lack of labour marker integration and their past traumatic experiences affected the women I interviewed for this study including their children.

Resettlement And Integration

For refugees who have experienced prolonged war and displacement, their attendant needs go beyond initial empathy and the often emotionally charged solutions through

resettlement. Hyndman (2011) quotes the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR, 2009) which states that if refugee resettlement means “protection plus” then resettlement for refugees corresponds to “settlement plus”. This requires establishing support systems that go beyond bringing in refugees into a third country. For me this means giving them the chance to rebuild their lives through extended language training options, educational transition for children that goes further than the existing English as a Second Language (ESL) training and establishing accreditation processes for pre-resettlement educational qualification and labour market integration.

In this study I present my argument showing the lack of coordination between “protection plus” and “settlement plus” and how it impacted Somali-Canadian women/mothers for decades after resettlement. In Chapter Four, Five and Six I explore individual stories of pre and post migration experiences. In these chapters I also explore the lack of programming based on the “settlement plus” idea or gaps in services that are creating what I call internal and external barriers for Somali-Canadian Women and its lasting impacts including transference of trauma to the second generation.

Researchers explain how the process of refugee resettlement does not end with the initial gesture of giving protection through resettlement (Ager, 1999; Drachman, 1992; Hyndman, 2011; Papadopoulos, 2002&2006; Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). I remember what resettlement looked like when I arrived in Canada with four children and nothing else. I felt that I had been dropped off at another refugee camp and feared that this time it might be permanent. My own struggle involved raising my children and establishing a career that took over two decades. Since I was unable to access my educational accreditations due to events in my own country Ethiopia, I was forced to restart my education while struggling to support and educate my children.

Refugee resettlement researchers such as Drachman (1992, p. 69) and Potocky-Tripodi, (2002, p.18) define the refugee resettlement process in a stage of migration framework that can be used as an assessment tool for service providers (see Appendix D). This framework is helpful in making plans for “resettlement plus” or integration based programming. This framework emphasizes the importance for understanding group differences at each stage of the migration process and the related resettlement needs. Knowledge about immigrant and refugee groups begins with the differences between immigrants³³ and refugees³⁴.

Those differences are further refined by each group’s resettlement conditions, including age; family composition; pre-migration socioeconomic status; education/occupation; cultural and religious practice/belief systems (extremist vs. moderate); life style (rural or urban backgrounds); internal conditions (family and tribal) and external conditions (government, social geopolitics and host community reception). Some of these are pre-existing conditions that determine or influence how a family or a group resettles or integrates into their new community (Ager, 1999; Drachman 1992; Papadopoulos, 2006; Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). Refugee resettlement without planned integration or a “re-settlement plus” format can lead to a life of extreme poverty and the re-experiencing of violence only this time it is silent. I will be further discussing this in detail in Chapters Five and Six.

Summary

This literature review contributes to my research on Somali Canadian women and their children dealing with past and present issues in their lives. In this review, detailed historical

³³ Economic migration arriving in search of a better life.

³⁴ Forced migration that fits the description given by United Nations Convention stating that refugees are those who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted ... is outside [their] country of nationality. (Article 1, Geneva Convention, 1951)

traumas are used to increase the understanding of present realities and the challenges that the Canadian Somali communities are facing. The theories that I have discussed in the second section, including feminist, social work and migration theories help to explain the little-understood inheritance of trauma, and why certain intervention methods are needed to design future social work practice with marginalized communities. I also recognize the intersectionality of multiple identities and the various systems of oppression Somali women face when they arrive in Canada. I used in this chapter and throughout this study literatures that help to explain the impacts of prolonged trauma and the possibility for healing. In this process, I also explore the community's potential for creating its own opportunities particularly for the second generation to have a peaceful life, better health, and progressive thoughts that value and choose unity and collaboration over isolation, division and suffering in regional silos.

III. CHAPTER THREE: Research Design And Methods

Life history researchers such as Ardra Cole and Gary Knowles (2001) say the overarching purpose of life history inquiry is: “to understand situation, a profession, a condition, or institutions” by finding out how “individuals walk, talk, live and work” within that particular space and context (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p.11).

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodological choices I made for this study, to explain how life history research responds to the cultural background of my research participants, and how it fits within a Black feminist theoretical framework which is informing this study. Since my goal was to capture each woman’s personal insights on surviving the conflicts³⁵ and major social disruptions that they have been struggling with for the past two decades, I felt a strong need for selecting this method for the analysis of the participants’ personal stories in their narratives of survival.

Situating The Study Within Social Work Theory And Practice

My research is intended to be practice-based research study that is informed by knowledge from multiple disciplines. New knowledge is often embraced by the social work discipline producing informative social knowledge from scientifically sound empirical research studies (Healy, 2005). According to Karen Healy (2005):

Social work is a profession that varies enormously by historical, geographical and institutional contexts...social workers negotiate their purpose and their practice with others, including clients, employing agencies and society at large. In negotiating our practices, we may draw on our formal practice base, which includes our values and the theories for practice developed within the profession (p.1)

³⁵ These include various governments’ aggression against civilians.

What we know and how we know what we know today in clinical social work intervention comes mainly from dominant discourses that inform the delivery of our health and mental health interventions (Healy, 2005, p. 17). Similarly, evidence-based social work research often supports political discourses from dominant scientific and empirically-based traditions (Rubin & Babbie, 2014, p.1-26; McCarl, 1990, p. 2).

In the last four decades, the field of social work practice and research has been increasingly made visible by those advocating for integrating postmodern thought into practice and research (Chambon et al., 1999; Fook, 2002; Healy, 2005). Within this postmodern focus, social workers have merged qualitative research methods with new biomedical-based interpretations that emphasize the impacts of social issues on the long-term health and wellbeing of the people we serve. This new knowledge is informed by both human needs theory and scientific explanations that seek an alternative perspective on practice (Rubin & Babbie, 2014, p. 5; Savin-Baden & Major, 2010, p.24). One important and current development includes how clinical social work intervention has begun to embrace social neuroscience knowledge. According to a recently edited book by Matto et al. (2014):

We have long experience as that “in-between” profession, putting to use our powerful skills as we mine the critical junctures between and among other professions and their knowledge bases. The social work profession is uniquely situated as the dendrites³⁶ and axons³⁷ of social neuroscience, continuously receiving

³⁶ Dendrites are a short branched extensions of a nerve cell, along which impulses received from other cells at synapses transmit messages to the cell body. They branch out in a tree-like fashion, working as the main apparatus for receiving incoming signals from other nerve cells.

³⁷ The axon extends a great distance from the cell body and carries signals to other neurons.

and integrating information for other sources, and sending out that integrated information to the target systems we serve (p.xii).

This awareness of the history of clinical social work knowledge has greatly influenced my choice of methodology and later analysis and in turn informs both my research goals and intended outcomes. Throughout this study I demonstrate how my research is aligned with my personal life, my professional career as a clinical social worker and an anti-oppression practitioner, I always place human feelings on the center stage in both practice and research. My research also comes from my own professional experiences working in community-based health clinics. During that time I was able to witness and connect the private troubles of individuals, families, and communities to structural and systemic sources (Mullaly, 2002, p. 14-15).

Throughout my education research experiences over the years, I have also become aware of how privately discussed stories connect to larger discussions of public and human right issues within academia and social justice studies (Baines, 2007, p.99). While searching for appropriate methods for my study, I recalled a quote from Paolo Freire (1970) in a book written by Chin and Rudelius-Palmer (2010): “Storytelling in a human rights context allows those who have been marginalized to tell their stories in an authentic and meaningful dialogue and with reflection that identifies causes” (p.268).

This point of view inspired me more to use a life history method for my data collection. Over the years I became convinced that telling stories provides a cultural base of understanding and a better way of communicating what happened to my family and what is happening within my own Somali-Canadian communities. I agree with Peregrine Schwartz-Shea’s (2006) description of storytelling that recreates my participants’ worlds: “as they see it and as they want to present it to others” (p.320), and opens a window to their shared resettlement experience.

Choosing Life History Method For The Study

Some say life history research method is a fitting choice for exploring the human condition or understanding others as they lived through certain situations (Cole & Knowles, 2001). Others say stories allow researchers to provide a thick and enriched description of data that respond to the epistemological and ontological question of “self-defined viewpoints” - in this case, my participants, Somali-Canadian women who have been silenced by culture/religion and marginalized by social systems (Collins, 2000). Therefore, life history method is used in this study to identify and document each participant’s actions and reactions to stages of migrations. Life-history method is a qualitative research method, which is different than the empirical and evidence base methods. It allows me to explore the Somali-Canadian women’s micro-historical (individual) experiences within a macro-historical (history of the time) of war and resettlement. Each woman’s story and testimony informs the larger Somali-Canadian community. I indeed explain the emotional patterns of my participants, opening a window for me as a researcher to explore each woman’s life within a historical context and a time frame. This method also helps researchers like me, practitioners and educators to analyze current service user attitudes and behaviours that may have been influenced by past experiences, decisions and adaptations made in their life time. While my sample is small, it has the potential to offer much insight into the experiences of the larger Somali-Canadian community.

Life history research methods have been used since the early 1920’s as a method of making sense of people’s experiences. Starting with the Chicago tradition of sociological research, this methodology was widely adapted by educational researchers especially in the 1980’s (Goodson & Choi, 2008, p.5). During this time, teachers began to use the method to explore other teachers’ professional lives, careers, educational structures, ideological traditions

and policy initiatives that mediate their thinking. Similarly, feminist educational researchers began to show interest as the method provides flexibility to explore the emotional aspects of professional and personal experiences. They began to realize how this method allows researchers to, as Goodson & Choi (2008) called it, “unveil[ed] female teachers’ oppression by teaching institutions” (Goodson & Choi, 2008, p.5). This can be translated to other forms of oppressions.

Life history research not only allows me to explore these areas but the method itself is aligned with my own theoretical lens and understanding of Black feminist theory which is extensively detailed by Patricia Hill-Collins (2000), a leading researcher of Black American feminism discussed in Chapter Two Section Two. Collins (2000) uses life history research to explore Black women’s lives within the U.S. systems as they: “Escape from, survive in, and/or oppose prevailing social and economic injustice” (p. 9). She defines their stories and reflects on their efforts in overcoming intersecting oppressions based on race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation and religion (p. 9).

Other researchers such as Clandinin & Connelly (2000) use life history method to explore how certain life experiences lead to other experiences that often create changes and further experiences (p.2). With my interest in presenting the life experiences of Somali-Canadian women/mothers who have been through horrific events, I write in a format that integrates both approaches. It is also important to keep in mind that stories may not be an accurate representation as a photographic picture. Pointing to these challenges in life story research Charlotte Linde (1993) writes that a story is :

A discontinuous unit told in separate pieces over a long period of time, since it is a long-term unit, it is necessarily subject to revision and change as the speaker drops some old meanings and adds new meanings to portions of the life story (p.4).

Keeping in mind my intention in this research, which is focusing on the temporality of each story, I focus on understanding their past and present social and structural issues and the process of creating documentation³⁸ of their survival and resiliency. In the process, I am hoping to capture rich and in-depth details of specific life experiences, memories and social realities of these particular women and survivors of wars. I am also hoping it will allow readers and future researchers to use “alternative ways of seeing, knowing, understanding and interpreting of life experiences” (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p.9).

In using this approach, I am also aware of the emotional challenges and cultural limitations of asking for personal histories that include experiences of gender-based violence, ethnic Othering³⁹, discrimination, inequality, poverty, and racialization. I instead strive to achieve a sensitive and collaborative exploration of community issues to inspire transformative change. Maggi Savin-Baden and Claire Howell Major (2010) call this type of research *narrative action reflection* (NAR) and explain it as:

The process of challenging oppression that requires particular forms of shared wisdom. Stories are shared as a collective, rather than a one-on-one basis...listening spaces allow multiple voices around different themes to emerge, which then enable participants to identify individual and collective actions over time (p. 131).

Life history research method has its own critics over the years, however social scientists continue to effectively use the method to focus on getting specific answers to specific social issues (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Faraday, &Plummer, 1979; Goodson & Sikes, 2001). . Aside

³⁸ I say “process of creating the documentation” to do justice to the fact that this prolonged historical conflict and its impact on women cannot be covered by this short study. Hopefully my research will be used as a source for further studies.

³⁹ Somalis have hierarchal tribal values and discrimination of other tribes. This means that about half of the population in my region is identified as “*gaboya*” –which is similar to the untouchable caste in India.

from the few existing criticisms, the method opened the conversation around social change such as certain aspects of women's lives and views that may not be discussed otherwise.

Criticism Of Life History Methods And Responses

Critics of life history research method say it is not a scientifically based research using evidence. They describe the method as a final product of a journalistic type story, based on a few good narratives making the method “methodologically unsound and practically inefficient” (Faraday, &Plummer, 1979, p.774). Some even say, it takes unnecessary data collection time that involves months or sometimes years to collect a few stories from a small number of participants (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p.22). Critiques of life history research methods base their arguments on the scientific evidence-based tradition that they say makes it possible for a researcher to collect more data from a large number of participants within the same or a shorter amount of time (Faraday & Plummer, 1979, and Goodson & Sikes, 2001). These are ‘Enlightenment era’ explanations that based research and new knowledge on ontological reality where philosophers such as Descartes prioritized a particular way of human thinking rather than feeling (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 1-4; Linde, 1993, p. 20; McCarl, 1990, p.2). Reason rather than experience is prioritized as the foundation of certainty; proven ideas are presented as measurable elements rather than personal stories.

I saw life history method as part of qualitative research with its benefits on the humanizing aspect of collecting people’s experiences, feelings, views and ideas. This comes from my interpretative-based training in social work and feminist views that consider human experience and feelings as credible sources of knowledge (Harding, 1987 & 1991; Patton, 2002, p. 115). In addition, the life history research approach also supports relational-cultural theories

(RCT) that emphasize the benefit of knowledge creation based on promoting positive social interaction, human connection and communication. Judith Jordan (2010) describes RCT as stories functioning as a source that promotes ways of making positive changes through interpersonal, intergroup relational adjustments. It allows people to build connections while achieving a sense of wellbeing and safety through this type of communication (Jordan, 2010, p. 2).

Supports of life history method such as Charlotte Linde (1993) mention the challenges of doing life history research indicating that human feelings are complex, and sometimes the notion of a story and its meaning are immeasurable. This occurs when storytellers are presenting to their listeners a complex series of life events as I am doing in this study. According to Linde (1993), there is a challenge when presenting stories that say, “see what events have made me what I am” or more precisely “what you must know about me is know me” (p.20). For social work researchers these are centered in our discipline’s values of looking at the person in their environment (Linde, 1993).

No matter what the critiques say about this method, for people who have been marginalized by race, ethnicity, gender or sexuality and who at times have difficulty in either establishing the cultural context (silenced) or understanding of the complexity of their suffering – this method addresses the sources of their stories. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) acknowledges that these factors explain how this type of research or knowledge creation, especially when researching groups who have been excluded or silenced by powerful systems, is important (p. 256-7).

Therefore, in my research, being part of the Somali-Canadian community and a survivor, experiencing most of the same events as my participants, my interpretation of events and my

analysis can be considered an added bonus in presenting participant stories. I have both inside and expert knowledge of current Somali-Canadian issues. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) explains the importance of expert knowledge collaboration between the researcher and the researched when making knowledge claims about marginalized groups. Her argument is that individualized lived experience counts as evidence, and shows strong credibility in research, rather than relying on words interpreted and presented by others who have never had the insider knowledge of events and conditions (p. 257).

I went to the field with awareness of these benefits of life history research in co-creating knowledge. Having explored both the critics and supporters of life history research method which is also considered interpretative research (McCarl, 1990, p. 1-3), I focused on the benefits rather than its challenges, and considered how this methodology fit best within the parameters of my research focus and theoretical approach, as explained below.

Life History Research Method For People Known As “A Nation of Bards”

I was raised and live in a culture of storytelling where life skills are passed from generation to generation through stories or poetry. Life history research methods are congruent with Somali cultural communication where historical and personal life events are told and retold orally through generations. Since the written language was only introduced recently, people culturally still prefer story telling. It is not unknown for Somalis when they meet to ask each other about the latest news, which is part of the Somali cultural greeting in Somali “*Maxa la sheegay*” or English “what has been told”? Therefore, exploring the personal truth of survivors and the impacts of war on Somali-Canadian women’s health requires the full understanding of this cultural method of communication.

In nomadic life, where there is a high level of illiteracy and no access to radio or television, the only form of communication Somalis had for centuries was and still is oral communication shared from one village to the next. For example, traditionally living as pastoralists in mainly rural areas made it mandatory for boys to learn the arts of storytelling and debating is seen as a necessary part of social skills especially in settling family disputes. Furthermore, Somalis used oral traditions to preserve history; passing on important survival skills and instilling life lessons such as values and morals that shaped the world view of younger generations.

For untold generations, that is how knowledge was transferred where there was no written form of the Somali language. In 1964, two Somali Studies scholars, B.W. Andrzejewski and I.M. Lewis, explained how Somalis managed to share their history and knowledge by reciting their messages saying:

It was one of the salient characteristics of traditional Somali culture, before it was affected by the spread of cheap portable tape recorders in the 1960s and by mass literacy in the 1970s, that its oral poetry of the public forum was memorized verbatim. Poetry reciters were under the strict obligation to memorize, and then reproduce as faithfully as they could, the oral texts of the poems, which they learnt from poets or other poetry-reciters. Any form of wilful change of the text by the reciter, such as improvised additions, deletions or substitutions, was prohibited. The reciter, who was seldom a creative poet himself, was regarded merely as a channel of communication and a memory storage device and was in no way a co-author of the version he recited (p 27).

This shows how fitting story telling is for Somali studies. It supports findings from narrative literature - including life history methods - that show how the consideration of storytelling in cultural practices can also enrich a qualitative research study by collecting “well-formed narratives” that can be further analysed (Horsdal, 2012, p. 30). Storytelling techniques allow people to tell their side of story without interruption and creates a space to talk about how they grew and changed with the events, and how they look forward to a better future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 71; Larsson & Sjöblom, 2010, p. 274). According to Larsson and Sjöblom (2010):

The term ‘narrative’ carries many meanings and is used in a variety of ways by different disciplines, but often it is synonymous with ‘story’. As in all stories, multiple voices and identities come into play. Narrative accounts give us access to the identity constructions of individuals and can be a good strategy for giving voice to minority and/or discriminated groups (p.274).

Exploring stories of wars requires a cultural understanding of people and their past and presents challenges as they go through the meaning-making process. For instance, the Somali oral tradition is different than the presentation of the voices of war in the west, such as in Poland, where writing memoirs became an important form of self- expression and historical recording between the two world wars and the communist era. Thompson (1978), explains how the humanistic tradition in Polish sociology contributed largely to the pre-and post-war European history, including the Nazi occupation and the radical “social construction taken place later under the communist rule” (Thompson, 1978, p. 18). The remarkable Polish contribution to European history was encouraged by various memoir competitions organized by the Polish media who encouraged participants with great prizes (Thompson, 1978, p. 18). I was reminded about the

media's role in cases like this and the difference it can make between countries that faced similar experience of the human distraction of war. While the Polish media generated at the time what Paul Thompson (1978) calls "democratic enthusiasm for history" (p.19), the Somali media on the other hand created over the last two decades and continue to do so as a space for sharing a divisive, destructive and misguided history.

To learn more about how culturally-based storytelling still fits into an academic study for this particular community, I took a graduate course on life history research methods with Dr. Naomi Norquay in the fall of 2011. In this course I learned the importance of attending to the gaps, silences and omission within stories. What I learned was forgetting is an active denial process which can involve silent actions such as "refusal, discrediting, silencing and omitting" (Norquay, 1999p.2) of certain stories, people, or events . While forgetting may be an individual process, it may also be cultural process such as the one presently used by Somali political and religious leaders. These silences and denials have been used by oppressive powers against Somali women in the past and the present including events related to their displacement, dislocation and resettlement. As a result, their stories of pain from gender-based violence and loss are silenced, their historical strength discredited and their justice claims in resettlement countries ignored. This group of women continue to suffer in silence. I strongly believe that using life history research method gave me the opportunity to present their stories and their voices to be heard, shedding a light on the impact of those silences and practices.

Cultural Changes, Silencing and Gaps In Somali Women's Stories

Currently, the Somali-Canadian Diasporic community is struggling with those silences and forgotten histories of past ethnic unity and traditional healing processes. Powerful

community leaders who are often located in the Diaspora including Canada continue to use silences and historical omissions to further destabilize Somalis. These new and invented Somali histories are then reinforced by mistranslated religious edicts, historical gaps, silences and omissions. I am often amazed when I hear the new and invented stories relating to tales of the past, including some historical events I was personally aware of as a journalist or as a source of my multiple forced migrations. For example, to name a few the 1977-78 Ethiopian/Somali war, the Siyaad Barre Barre's governmental attack on the people from what is now known as Somaliland (former British colony) and the destruction of the country known as the Somali Republic. To explore how these events happened and the silences that are used by the above mentioned powerful groups as a divisive mechanism requires a method that encourages remembering or telling stories in context. Over the past two decades other challenges also became present in the Somali historical tales as imperialistic and regional interest groups have also began forcing Somalis to do what Maurice Halbwachs called "to shed their own collective memory like a skin and to reconstruct largely different set of collective memories" cited in (Cosser, 1992, p.21). Similarly, Naomi Norquay (1999) explains: "Forgetting is often socially organized. What is worth remembering and what is to be remembered can be determined and regulated by larger social forces and structured and maintained through authoritative discourses" (p.3).

In my lifetime and going through multiple migrations, I witnessed how these forces and structures worked to erase Somali history and the group's collective memory, re-inventing a divisive past that changed national identity and belonging. For example, the latest reconstruction of memories is based on new Islamic extremism and a tribalism agenda. As a result of this and other past and present systemic issues, the community is struggling with the impacts of fear, self-

isolation, and suspicion (Louis Cozolino, 2010; Papadopoulos, 2002 & 2006; van der Kolk et al, 1996). Using these new stories, interest groups continue their divisive agendas, causing emotional stressors that impact on the wellbeing of communities (Bulhan, 2008 and Kapteijns, 2008).

On another level, there is the challenge of presenting a gendered history of the Somali war. Male versions of war and its oral documentation are not new for Somalis, and men have been producing a highly sophisticated form of oral poetry for untold generations (Andrzjewski & Lewis, 1964; Samatar, 1982). Choosing a method that will instead contribute to the historical accounts of Somali conflict and resettlement processes from women's perspectives is an important part of my study.

In Somali, "*hisout*" or moral values or modesty, are seen as the standard measure for correct social behaviour which is now often used in combination with religious edicts to further silence women. As Western feminist writers have shown, historically women have been represented or misrepresented as wives, daughters, sisters or mothers of important men. Somali women and their representation in history are not different, including roles such as the first lady or mother of a hero, in Somali: "*marwo ama gesi ama hanad ayey dashay.*" While Western women gained visibility after 1960, feminism for Somali women remains hidden and invisible. Women's heroic actions before and after the 1960 independence of the two Somali Colonies (the British and Italian) are rarely heard. There are multiple tales about male Somali freedom-fighters especially during pre-independence period of the two colonies. Women's voices were silenced from those tales until Siyaad Barre come to power and began to encourage various women's movements in the 1970s. After his fall those movements were eliminated once again particularly by interest groups and religious powers wanting to change society's perspective about women's

roles in all Somali regions. Currently there are symbolic women's organization in each Somali region at the Horn and a strong female lead charitable organization that are serving their own tribal lands and communities.

The current phenomenon is that in Somali regions and the Diaspora, reversals of gender roles are seen as threatening to masculinity. The powerful leaders I mentioned earlier are minimizing women's knowledge both quietly and actively using the media and public community conversations in rural and urban areas including the Diaspora communities. Kapteijns (1994) quotes one folktale that tries to explain Somali women's assigned and inferior roles from the Somali men's perspective: "knowledge cannot come to reside in a bosom that has contained milk" (p. 217). Yet throughout history Somali women have been silently the backbone of community strength, economical production and sustainability – a strength proven again within the last two decades as women struggle to save their families. These are the stories I will be highlighting through my research process. Life history research method will provide a means to genuinely give women's knowledge and storied accounts of their experience a place in history (Collins, 2000, p. 257; Goodley et al. 2004, p.61; McCarl-Nielsen, 1990, p.72-73).

Oral history writer such as Paul Thompson (1978) points to the importance of empowering silenced groups such as Somali-Canadian women through the recording of their own experiences. Using long excerpts from interviews will make my study a collaborative presentation of women coming from regions divided along political and tribal lines, who may not otherwise have come together. In so doing, they have overcome the pressures of the silencing forces. The use of long excerpts from individual interviews will also demonstrate the

empowering potential of women sharing their own version of events about prolonged war and resettlement struggles. According to Thompson (1978):

Historical information need not be taken away from the community for interpretation and presentation by the professional historian. Through oral history the community can, and should, be given the confidence to write its own history (p. 17).

I am convinced that this method will allow me to explore women's stories and the changes in their narrative when explaining their pre- and post-resettlement journeys (Cole & Knowles, 2001; Gluck & Patai, 1991; Hagemaster, 1992; Kadar, 2005; Thomson, 1978).

Ethical Considerations And Practical Challenges Of The Research Process

As I take this journey of knowledge production, I have considered some of the challenges I will face doing research in a community heavily divided by politics and that has suffered from prolonged war. It is not an easy task to research the personal truths of past and present in this type of community. So as a self-check, I entered into dialogue about my research with the community, taking feedback on issues as well as sharing early findings. I also consistently read other resources including news media as one form of fact-checking current events (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009, p. 21-22).

Since all my participants are survivors of conflict with traumatic stories to tell, I also considered the challenges that can arise from remembering and revisiting past traumatic events and the time it requires to document these stories. From both personal and professional experience, I realize the challenge of conceptualizing and parcelling painful stories into acceptable narratives or texts that are presented as the storytellers see it or want it to be seen. This process is evident in my interviews where some of my study participants attempt to articulate their stories and transform them from "knowing into telling" by sharing their private

worlds to communicate the social meaning of their experiences and their points of view (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006, p.316; Sitzia, 1999, p. 162; White, 1987, p. 1).

For a new researcher like me, doing time-sensitive research connected to my PhD study, the challenge was working through the massive amounts of data I collected to highlight meaningful stories and select the parts of the stories that responded to the research questions. According to Charlotte Linde (1993): “Life stories express our sense of self: who we are and how we got that way and we use these stories as an important method of negotiating space, belonging and identity” (p. 3). I realized then how the presentation of the stories, which is dependent on my interpretation, is bringing a heightened responsibility to me as a researcher and a community member.

Entering the field, another concern was how my identity as an educated woman, a researcher and a community member with similar experiences would affect the integrity of data collection and analysis. However by establishing a member participant checking process where I asked participants to verify my translated stories to check for my interpretation along with the use of self-reflection notes, I managed to turn our similarity in experiences into a strength.

Feminist studies encourage researchers to use similarities between the researcher and participants as a method of sharing ideas and perceptions about a phenomenon (Collins, 2000 and Harding, 1987). Other approaches such as relational theory state that identifying connection and sharing differences is an important step in establishing human connection and trust during field work and data collection (Jordan 2010, p. 2). Steiner Kvale (1996) describes this type of relationship in research as working on “a construction site for knowledge” development that has good connections and healthy communication (p. 14). According to Kvale (1996), the interview

itself is an “inter-change of views between two people discussing common interests” (p.14), this describes the process I used for data collection.

Life history research also enables researchers to take this world view and highlight the importance of connections and collaborations to examine each participant’s sense of self and how they communicate or negotiate that aspect of their lives with the researcher and with others (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009, p. 6-7; Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p.28; Linde, 1993, p.3). Charlotte Linde (1993) further explains:

First, a life history is a social unit...exchanged between people, rather than being treasured in solitude in the caverns of the brain. Second, life stories...have different characters due to their different purpose and third, a life story is a discontinuous unit, told in separate pieces over a long period of time (p.4).

As a result, using my community’s shared knowledge and similar experiences in the end only strengthened my research. I found life history’s collaborative aspect of doing research as a way of building a good connection between individuals; the researcher and the researched, who have both experienced painful events of loss of place, family, and identity. It is a way to share their stories and record them for future use. As a researcher and a part of the story, this process gave me a self-awareness that reminded me of how important it is to have a detailed map of events of the past to build a better future.

Field Work And Participant Selection

I used a cross-section of literatures to guide the process of participant recruitment and selection (Creswell 2003; Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009; Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Kvale 1996; Merriam, 2009). One thing I considered in conducting this study was that in life history research,

the numbers of participants are often small due to the need for multiple follow-up interviews and the lengthy process of transcription and analysis required by the method (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p.22). Steiner Kvale (1996) claims that in qualitative research the number of participants is “need-based on the study.” (p. 102). He also warns researchers to be aware of the specific method choice and not to make the number either too large or too small, as that can have an impact on the quantity and quality of data. Kvale (1996) points out that having enough participants and data allows the researcher to obtain enough generalized knowledge and interpretation about the topic (pp.101-2). That is one of the reasons I chose to interview twelve women instead of the usually recommended number of participants in life history research method which is often around five participants (Cole & Knowles, 2001, pp.13-14). In this study I focused on finding women who are from various Somali regions and can contribute to the historical events of the last two decades and the Canadian refugee resettlement process.

Anthropologists and sociologists speak of a good respondent as an “informant” or someone who understands the culture but is also able to reflect on it and articulate for the researcher what is going on (Sharon Merriam, 2009, p. 107). So I went into the field hoping to find women who remember how we got to where we are as a Canadian ethnic community. Quoting Maurice Halbwachs’ work in collective memory, Coser (1992) says, “While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember” (p.22).

When choosing participants, I looked for women with the ability to articulate stories of their past, present and future. I also saw the importance of including both educated and illiterate women. Furthermore, four out of the twelve women I interviewed have been service providers in

the Somali-Canadian community for over a decade, which gave me additional insight into the resettlement process and service use of the community.

Another key consideration was to include women who represented each Somali region. For the past twenty years, the Somali community, whether living back home or in the Diaspora,⁴⁰ have been divided by the impact of prolonged tribal war and past colonial history. Yet, in much research, Somali Diaspora communities are often seen by as homogenous despite these historical differences. Keeping in mind historical migration, tribal, political and economic issues and current collective resettlement situation, I focused on getting an adequate representative sample of all Somali-Canadians.

I began my search for participants using personal and community connections targeting what Rubin & Babbie (2014) term “where the action is” (p.500). My plan included distributing flyers at building where a large number of Somalis live, as well as mosques and markets located in both the east and west end of Toronto. I was surprised when I received a number of calls in response to those flyers. Some of those responses came from first generation Canadian Somalis wanting to know if they can be part of the research. Explaining the purpose of the study as looking at pre-and post migration experiences of Somali-Canadian mothers, I asked if they could recommend their parents instead, and some of them did. I also received calls from women who wanted to participate but expressed their concern and fear of the consequences if they were identifiable by their stories. After extensive discussion and reassurance based on research ethics and my obligations for participant anonymity, I managed to recruit enough participants for my study.

⁴⁰ Those living in neighbouring countries as urban refugees or in refugee camps.

During this process of recruitment and selection, I had a few distinct advantages as a researcher. I had the advantage of a father who was known in Somalia for his community leadership in both religion and education. As well, being one of the first Somali-born female journalists, I have name recognition within the older generation who remember the 1977 Somali Ethiopian war. Finally, in Canada, as a social worker and community activist, I have developed good connections with other service providers over the years.

Having these established relational connections with community members allowed me to have a good selection of participants. These prior relationships gave me the chance to select those I considered valuable to the study while allowing them to be comfortable enough to tell their personal truth. However, I excluded some participants that share close family or tribal relations with me in order to limit data contamination: I realized that knowing their history so intimately could impact my interpretation of their stories (Kvale, 1996, p.125).

Selecting Interview Questions

To increase the “audit-ability and credibility” of the research, I followed a detailed, qualitative research guideline approach, paying attention to each step of the research process (Hagemaster, 1992, p. 1124; and Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009, p. 3-16). Hagemaster also points to the importance of audit-ability by following the logical progression of the human subject with strategies for achieving credibility achieved while,

- (a) checking representativeness of the data, (b) examining data sources and collection procedures for congruence, (c) making certain that descriptions, explanations or theories contain both the typical and atypical elements of the data, and (d) obtaining validation from subjects themselves (p. 1124)

The above strategies were followed throughout the data collection and analysis process of this study. Since life history research was discovered as a useful method for following the human progression, such as changes in memory or differences of opinions, it has also been used by researchers from varied disciplines who followed the above strategies in their study (Goodson & Choi, 2008). As a result, it also enabled me to capture stories about impacts of forced migration, barriers to resettlement and resilience of my community (Hagemaster, 1992; Cole & Knowles, 2001; Gluck & Patai, 1991; Kadar, 2005). However, there were a number of additional considerations I needed to keep in mind as I began to meet and interview women. I found the description of Steinar Kvale (1996) about field work and a qualitative interviewing as “miner” and “travelers” (p. 14) work to be true as I was digging with participants into events that happened in the past. The first description helps paint what it is like to dig for information that is painful to share or limited by ‘hisaut’ - the cultural restriction for women. The second description of a ‘traveler’ characterizes the researcher as an explorer of an area where the subjects live, asking questions along the way, and allowing participants to tell or share their own stories (1996, p.3-5). For this study I also did both: asking questions during the recruitment and interview, and then exploring their responses with additional questions and personal observations.

The interview questions for the first and follow-up interviews were guided by the overarching question of “How do Canadian Somali women conceptualize surviving war, forced migration and its relationship to resettlement and well-being?” Other resettlement-related questions were driven by “What is really going on within this community that has been here in Canada for the past two decades? Why is the community at the core of poverty and violence statistics?”

With these underlying themes in mind, I designed each interview question to capture the contextual feeling on the topic from each individual woman. Beginning the interview with semi-structured questions, I was able to get storied accounts of participant experiences of their pre- and post- migration journeys. For sensitive questions such as those about gender-based violence, poverty and family issues, I pre-planned to ask direct and indirect questions based on the participant's comfort level⁴¹ (Hagemaster, 1992, p. 1125).

Using this approach, I managed to collect a time-lined response inviting participants to construct key events during their journey of forced migration which I then used as a guide to explore those events (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 30). As well, following this method of questioning allowed me to stay focused on the topic, rather than getting into an overly generalized conversation (Linde 1993, p.59 and Patton, 2002.p. 343). I used some of the following questions as a starting point for the initial interviews, and will discuss the rationale behind each one.

“What is it like to be survivors of a war, forced migration and to face resettlement challenges?”

This question is designed to explore the differing causes of migration from the Horn of Africa⁴² and how this relates to pre- and post-migration trauma. In response, each woman explored her experience with forced migration, that for some happened multiple times across multiple borders. Each woman also addressed the political situation and conflicts of her particular region, giving a detailed outline of events as they happened to her, her family and collectively⁴³. The women further addressed the impacts of changing global, regional power and

⁴¹ Indirect questions were asked when the existence of trauma was noticed through avoidance or deflection to get further explanation.

⁴² The range of different causes will be discussed in a later chapter.

⁴³ Collective trauma as based on ethnicity and a history of colonialism and patriarchy.

politics on women and children – factors which have resulted in Somalia internationally being known as a failed state.

The second main questions in the interviews was designed to explore the post-resettlement experiences and barriers the participants encountered, including systemic racism, religious prejudice and other barriers:

- “What is it like to resettle in Canada?”
- “What type of services did you require during your initial resettlement process (e.g. language training, schools, and health centers, housing). How did you hear about them?”

These questions are derived from existing migration and resettlement literatures (Abdi, 2012; Danso, 2002; Danso, & Grant, 2000; Jibril, 201; Macdonald, 1998). They are based on exploring barriers I myself encountered as a young mother, witnessed as a service provider talking to clients, and read while researching projects that explore resettlement, the labour market and wellbeing.

These questions led me to ask my third and fourth questions about health, identity and belonging:

- “How do you describe you and your family’s health?”
- “Do you feel Canadian? How do you describe your integration to your new Canadian community?”

Existing literature shows that Canadian refugee and immigrant women as a group often experience a disproportionate level of health concerns and mental illness linked to social determinants including housing, labour market barriers, urban violence, socioeconomic status, race and gender (MacDonnell et al., 2012; Raphael, 2004 & 2008). While these questions are

related to reports on other immigrant populations and refugee health literature, I use them as a base to explore the health conditions of Somali-Canadians. Even though most of my participants did not respond to these questions directly, they referred to social behaviours developed over the years due to social and systemic barriers that affected their health.

After doing the second interview with my first participant, I realized the need to design questions for the follow-up interviews. For this, I focused on capturing additional resettlement experiences, identities, feelings of belonging, and asked the women to reflect on their participation in and future expectations of the study. These questions included:

- In your own words can you discuss defining moments in your life specifically during resettlement?
- What would have made it easier to transition from refugee life to a Canadian life?
- This research is about the Somali-Canadian's historical past of survival and their current everyday challenges of resettlement- is there anything you would like to add to our discussions?

Asking these secondary questions was more challenging than the first ones, as participants continued telling the same stories in different contexts. However, having those guiding question helped bring the conversation to present realities. Trauma literature such as that written by van der Kolk et al. (1996) describes the process of trauma and remembering, saying for some it leads to extreme retention or in sometimes forgetting of certain events, while for others, talking about it means an integration of traumatic memories with certain familiar, present day experiences (p.282). It is this integration I found in the field: the interviews were taking some of participants back to pre-settlement events, and they related each response to the past,

reliving the same traumatic scenes by repeated discussions. Using my counseling and interviewing skills, I managed to listen, explain and give resources for those who needed it.

Sampling Techniques And Lessons From The Initial Interviews

I used the “purposive or judgmental sampling⁴⁴” technique for this study; based on my prior knowledge of the population’s history and my research purpose, I selected women who were born in different regions at the Horn of Africa and have special knowledge and experience with my topic (Goodson & Sikes, 2001,p. 24; Rubin and Babbie, 2014, p.385). Therefore the main criteria for my participant selection process included:

- Representation from five regions where Somali Ethnic groups reside (Eastern Ethiopia or Kilil Five, British Somaliland, French Somaliland or Djibouti, Northern Kenya and the region formerly known as the Italian Somaliland). The women may not belong to one of the major tribes in those regions but must be born and spent their early years in one of those regions (pre-migration experience).
- Representation from a range of education levels
- Representation from the two main cities where Somalis immigrated in the late 1990's - Ottawa and Toronto
- First generation women, who had experienced both internal, regional conflict or war and resettlement, and are between the ages of 35-65
- An ability to share life stories to a certain level of comfort and understanding.

⁴⁴ Also known as criterion sampling this is used as a selection criterion for research participants for a specified issue the researcher wants to examine. Participants in this case were women who have a special perspective, insight, expertise, experience in pre- and post migration barriers impacting Somali-Canadian mothers resettlement and integration process.

I also acknowledge that based on my professional social work experience that everyone who experiences similar events is not equally able to tell their stories. To overcome this, researchers like Hagemaster (1992) emphasize the importance of having pre-selection interviews taped and then later decide who to include in a study (p. 1123). Following this suggestion, I did a short selection process asking questions over the phone, or conducting in-person interviews without recording.

Taking into consideration the level of past traumas faced in my community, I focused first on describing my research rationale and the ethical considerations I intended to follow. As planned, this initial conversation gave me the chance to talk to possible participants about the interview process, the nature of the study, my motivation/intention, expectations and plans for the final outcome including participants' involvement in future publication as co-creators of this study (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009, p. 6-7).

I did my initial unrecorded interview or assessment while selecting participants. This process helped me anticipate the interview length and the participant's interest in the study. During this assessment I noticed that I may not get enough answers to collect the needed data for my study. This emerged from following the qualitative interview guidelines that recommends minimizing the researcher's part of the conversation to less than five percent (Rubin & Babbie 2014, p.500). In my initial interviews, I was only leading the direction of the conversation, giving ample time for the respondent to answer the questions.

However, I found myself getting detailed answers, but shorter than expected conversations. Somalis are known for their long and friendly conversations, which are often lengthy and take hours, or the time between afternoon prayers. This came from my personal

observations during meetings with family, friends and my community. However the formal interviews for this study took a shorter time due to the sensitivity of the issues discussed. Most of my participants used shorter explanations for their past experiences. Trauma literature explains that avoidance of certain trauma-related topics is quite common among survivors as they escape remembering certain events from the past (Muller, 2010). I also noticed how asking about specific stories still brought out painful memories that the women preferred to avoid.

Because of this shorter response time, I realized my initial research proposal misjudged the time it would take for each interview. I had originally allotted three hours, but after the first interview lasted only 45 minutes, I decided to increase the number of interviewees from five to ten, and managed to get twelve participants. While most of the participants for this study currently reside in Toronto, I have also included three from Ottawa. The lower participant number from Ottawa was not by choice but by the number of interested participants and lack of funds to stay in Ottawa longer to recruit and interview participants. I previously thought I would get a balanced number of participants from both cities, but unfortunately with time and money constraints, I settled on the three available women I found in Ottawa. According to Merriam (2009) adequate data collection is one of the important strategies in qualitative research. However:

How long one needs to observe or how many people need to be interviewed are always difficult questions to answer, since the answers are always dependent on the particular study itself. The best rule of thumb is that the data and emerging findings must feel saturated (p. 219).

Participant Profiles And Initial Observations

As Dhunpath and Samuel (2009) explain, my research intention is to show a detailed process and presentation that goes beyond simply showing the process of extracting an individual's life history through the records of "exclusively verbal interview." Instead, it is a presentation of each step of the process, starting with each participant's profile, and then presenting their storied lives of survival and resilience while dealing with the impacts of a prolonged war, a process which "is rich and varied" (p.11).

Below, I will provide an initial profile of each participant: a window into their personal lives, as well as some of my initial impressions. To protect the participants' privacy, I refer to each woman by a pseudonym name I gave each of them during the recruitment. It is a standard strategy used by life history researchers and other qualitative researchers to maintain participant confidentiality (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p.90; Jessee, 2011, p. 289). In this study, I also withhold certain aspects of their life history to facilitate further anonymity. To also signify political and cultural context, I included regional names based on colonial partition to simplify the current political divisions among Somalis, to specify the historical connection with colonial partition, and to decrease the confusion in the constant change of regional names in the Somali Republic.

Participants From Former British Somaliland

Asli was born in 1950 in British Somaliland. At the time of the interview, she was a 63 year-old divorced mother and now grandmother who came to Canada as a refugee in 1990. She is an educated woman from Somaliland who has been working with the community for over a decade. After arrival, she acquired an additional college education for labour market readiness to the Canadian job market.

Asli and I met for our initial interview at the apartment she currently shares with two of her grown children and occasionally many of the other grandchildren. Due to the shortage of affordable housing, family disruption, and lack of stable employment, two of her daughters often become homeless and stay with her in this two-bedroom apartment. Although all of her children and grandchildren were present on the day of the interview, what impressed me about her family is how organized they were. Despite the number people living in that small space the apartment was clean, and the children well-behaved, giving us the dining room area as a quiet space to conduct the interview. The children were somehow kept out of sight and remained quiet which facilitated a meaningful conversation. The interviewee was recovering from a major surgery and often stopped talking to accommodate her comfort level. Noticing my surprise at the number people in the small space, Asli told me that they came to take care of her while recovering from the surgery.

Kafiya was born in 1966 in British Somaliland. This participant is a mother of four who was sponsored by her husband before the collapse of Mohamed Siyaad Barre Barrie's government. She did not experience forced migration but instead shared a story about raising her children alone as widow when she suddenly lost her husband. A number of years after moving to Canada, Kafiya's husband died of stomach cancer that was left untreated until the last moment of his life. He was a hard working man, who owned his own business, but Kafiya lost everything soon after due to lack of knowledge.

She is a strong woman who supports her children while working full time and living in a three-bedroom government subsidized house. Even though she did not personally experience forced migrations due to war or civil conflict she talked about secondary trauma and what happened to her family she left behind and what it was like to witness the collapse of a country

and its people from afar. She was in Mogadishu when the government attacked Somaliland and left Somalia before the collapse.

Maandeeq was born in 1968 in British Somaliland and a colleague and best friends with Ladan from former Italian Somaliland. Both women came to see me together due to the unexpected circumstance I will explain later. When they came in they immediately starting talking about how they became friends when they came in Canada to in the same year and resettled in the same neighbourhood in Ottawa. The two women overcame the division by tribe and regional location focusing on their common need as new mothers and newcomers adapting to a new country. They were telling me how their friendship became one of the lasting supportive systems they have.

After our original appointment, which was meeting in their individual homes both women changed our meeting location due the unexpected sudden death of Ladan's family member on the day of my arrival. Since I traveled a long way, they did not want me to postpone the interviews and asked to be interviewed together, and agreed to come together to see me for a short interview. When I asked if they consented to hearing each other's stories -they said that they were friends and that they shared their life stories all the time. They did not mind to hear each other's story now. They both separately signed the confidentiality agreement and I started directing the questions to each woman especially their pre-resettlement stories.

This was a challenging interview because the details could compromise the confidentiality of their personal stories. However, I managed the interview by asking the women to respond to each question separately which they did most of the time⁴⁵. However, coming from

⁴⁵ Somalis like to respond to questions or join a conversation that is of interest without asking permission like Westerners do.

different regions, the stories of their forced migration were different. This difference also helped me in getting separate answers for my questions. Doing this interview was challenging but informative because both women work in the community as service providers as well and have been friends for a long time. This made them comfortable enough to answer both personal and professional questions together as well as including their own service-related critical reviews.

Participants From Former Italian Somaliland

Udubo was born in 1944 in the Italian and was a 70 year old mother and a grandmother at the time of this interview. She is the oldest participant in this study and was a prominent public figure prior to 1991. I have met her at events in Somalia and here in Canada and often admire her unwavering dedication to Somali unity.

Udubo's participation adds to the research a perspective on gender roles in education, politics and culture, which contributed to Somali women's historical accounts of events. Her story begins when she got the chance to attend school as one of the first Italian Somali-land women allowed to go to school during the Italian colony in Southern Somalia and before the 1960 independence. Even though I originally proposed to interview women between the ages of 35 -65, I felt her story would contribute to the gendered structures in the regional political struggle.

Udubo currently shares a two bedroom government subsidized housing unit with her youngest and unemployed son. Her story gives a detailed account of her activism around gender roles and gender-based social barriers including the challenges she overcame to have a career outside her home. She also shared the barriers she faced in her resettlement process, including language and health care barriers, isolation, as well as how happy she is to finally be in a country where she does not need "to run for her life". When I went to her apartment for the initial

interview, she was watching Somali TV channels that are available through satellite connection and she described this as her only window on her home country, her people, helping her to overcome isolation.

My participant Ladan who I mentioned earlier and a friend of Maandeeq from former British Somaliland was born in 1966 in the former Italian Somaliland. She and her husband arrived in Canada applying for a refugee status with their first two older children. She did not want to talk about her arrival system or her struggle with her difficult marriage she hinted without disclosing details. When her friend Maandeeq began talking about Ladan's husband as an example of the marriage breakdowns due to stressful environments I noticed the discomfort in her face and changed the subject by asking a new question. Based on my observation in addition to the sudden death of a young family member Ladan's face shows her stressful life including again hinted life struggles of her older children.

Eastern Ethiopia, Former Ogaden Region And Now Killil Five

Gacalo was born in 1963 in Eastern Ethiopia and at the time of this interview she was a 51 year old mother. She left her birth place for the first time in 1977-78 during the Somali Ethiopian war. Following this, she experienced multiple forced migrations. Between 1977 and 1992, Gacalo became either a refugee or an IDP⁴⁶ five times, and described it in her own words: "I feel like I have been running most of my adult life. The worst one being in 1988 when I gave birth to my first child while running from Ethiopia to Somalia".

⁴⁶ internally displaced person

With just unfortunate luck or coincidence as she called it she also gave birth again to her third child while running from the government attack of Somaliland. Gacalo at the time of this interview was a mother of seven, two of her oldest children have finished their postsecondary education and two other are in the process of finishing. She lives with her husband and children in a four-bedroom government subsidized housing complex, and works fulltime. Although she did not speak English she managed to find full time work when she arrived in Canada over a decade ago. Her story is traumatizing, but I was also amazed by her strength and calm while talking about her past and her current struggle with her husband's existing health issue.

Hoodo is a 48 year-old mother of three children at the time of this interview. She was born in Eastern Ethiopia or (Kilil 5) and migrated as a child with her family to Somaliland during the 1977-78 war. She was enrolled at a university in Mogadishu when the longest civil war erupted when Mohamed Ziyad Barr's government collapsed in 1991. She shared stories of multiple forced migration between 1977-2001 with those who escaped the Ethiopian Somali war and again after the collapse of Mohamed Ziyad Barr's government.

She shares her stories as a strong and resilient Somali-Canadian woman who survived tremendous past traumas during her escape from Mogadishu to Nairobi in 1991. She said in her own words that “her strength, resiliency and survival instinct saved her life multiple times”. She is now married and raising her children with her husband in a government subsidized four bedroom housing unit.

In the Western world, population movements are seen as a security threat that requires countries to implement several policies to protect their territories. However, what is not discussed in the literature is the cost of displacement on civilians who happen to be caught

between internal, regional and global power struggles for political control and economic benefits (Bariagaber, 2006, p. 3-6). The ways Eastern Ethiopian and Kenyan Somalis have suffered in these struggles will be further discussed in later chapters.

Jamaad was born in 1973 and is a 35 year old mother who was born in Eastern Ethiopia. She is one of the youngest women I interviewed for this research, and arrived in Canada at the age of eleven. Similar to the other two participants from Eastern Ethiopia, Jamaad talked about experiences with multiple forced migrations from age four until she came to Canada as a Government Assisted Refugee (GAR) at age eleven. One of the sentences that stuck with me is: "I do not remember having a home with a promise of permanency until I was 11 years old."

Jamaad currently lives in a two-bedroom apartment with her daughter. She is a well-educated, working mother who despite her experience with multiple childhood traumas shows strength, resiliency and survival. Even though she struggled with the initial barriers at school during early resettlement years including employment opportunities for students, she appreciates the peace and permanency her adapted home gives her. I conducted most of the interview in English, as that was the easiest mode of communication for her and this saved me time in translation later.

Former French Somaliland: Djibouti

Dalmar was born in Djibouti in 1969, and at the time of this interview was a 44 year-old mother. Born in former French Somaliland, she was sent to Somali land in the late 1980s to stay with extended family members due to the government's political attacks against certain Somali tribes. After finishing school in Somaliland, she moved to the United States with a family friend and later applied for refugee status in

Canada. She speaks both English and French fluently and works with a non-profit organization. As a service provider, Dalmar discussed in detail her experiences with the impacts of war and multiple migrations on her and those she met as a service provider. She is a currently divorced mother of three who uses her personal inner strength and ambition to integrate herself and her family into their new Canadian life.

I went to see her at the well-maintained home she owns. Her children were well-dressed, wearing normal Canadian youth attire, and looking culturally integrated. Most of Dalmar's story relates to post-migration experiences: especially her early years in Canada as a refugee, being married at a young age, as well as parenting issues. At the time of this interview, she was on a leave of absence from full time employment and was planning to go to Alberta to make extra money. She indicated the booming job market there would help her to make enough money to cover some of her personal debts. When I ask her if she takes normal holidays she said "No" and explained that she needed to use that opportunity to make extra money⁴⁷.

Filson was born in 1950, a 63 years old mother and a first-time grandmother to a baby girl at the time of this interview. She had experienced multiple migrations after leaving Djibouti during the pre-independence struggle. Filson was orphaned and was raised by extended family members until her marriage. She shares her story as an orphan who spent most of early years working as a maid for those relatives who raised her. During her marriage, she had 8 children and later became a business

⁴⁷ This reminded me of my own life, as I have never had a holiday break since I came to Canada over twenty-five years ago.

owner which she continued to do when she arrived in Canada after multiple migrations to Somalia, Ethiopia, United States and finally to Canada as a refugee.

I frequent her shop here in Toronto and she knew in advance about my research interest and agreed to be part of it, helping me at the same time in the distribution of flyers and recruitment of other participants. As a participant, Filson is an example of a strong Somali-Canadian woman who never had a chance for education, but made possible for herself and her family a better life. She has never depended on social assistance, often proudly talking about her determination to provide a better life for her and her children. My connection with Filson is her respect for all Somalis, her resiliency and her work ethic as an uneducated woman who had no language skills upon arrival but still managed to thrive by using her existing skills.

Filson never talks about her husband, the father of her children, and I knew very little about her personal life before this interview. However, watching her conduct her business, interacting with Somalis and other Canadians reminds me of the determination and resilience of Somali women who managed to keep families together and safe despite the trauma they endured. Filson is one of those women who believes in self reliance and hard work as a method of survival. At the time of this interview all Filson's children had either finished school or were currently in the process of finishing.

Former Northern Frontier District (NFD) Now Northern Kenya

Bishaaro was born in 1953. At the time of this interview, she was a 60 year old a mother of seven and grandmother three including a new born she was babysitting during the interview while her daughter was back to work. Born in Northern Kenya (NFD), she spent most of her adult life in the capital city Mogadishu. In 2007, she

was sponsored by her daughter to move to Canada and later applied for permanent residency.

My conversation with Bishaaro quickly went to her first forced migration experience when she was married at the age fourteen and moved to another country with her new husband. She never had the chance for formal education and is now fully dependant on her children's support, especially her daughter. Bishaaro was widowed shortly after her first marriage and was forced to remarry her husband's brother - a type of marriage by inheritance that functions as a religious and culturally-based support system for the young when there is no other support available for the children. Her second husband also died of illness during the conflict after they were forced from Mogadishu following the fall of Siyaad Barrie's government in 1991. He was the father of her four youngest children and she never remarried.

Currently, Bishaaro shares a two-bedroom apartment with her daughter, grandchildren and her son-in-law, helping out with the children's before and after-school care. Our conversation centred around her health. She is a twice breast cancer survivor who is grateful for being here when it happened to her the second time. She had her first diagnosis and mastectomy shortly after she escaped from the war in Mogadishu and arrived in Kenya. Despite these difficulties she has a positive outlook about life, explaining the double mastectomy with ease and making fun of her appearance. However, I noticed the distress on Bishaaro's face when she started answering the question about her escape from Mogadishu back to her home town in Kenya. Some of the topics discussed were witnessing rape as it happened to others, mass killings, hunger, robbery and coming close to death multiple times.

Degan was born in 1949, and at the time of this interview was a 65 year-old mother and grandmother. She never attended an educational institution and is having

difficulty communicating with non- Somali or Swahili speaking people. Her family is originally from Northern Kenya, which was known as the Northern Frontier District (NFD). She initially arrived through a visa from Kenya, which is considered a stable and non-refugee producing country. Degan later applied for permanent residency papers in Canada and is still waiting for a response.

Born and raised in Kenya (Nairobi), Degan said she did not personally experience forced migration but was a witness to the impact of forced migration, colonization and often heard the words “you are not one of us. You are a Somali”. She said she experienced secondary trauma when most of her family members from war-affected zones came to live with her immediate family. We met in the two-bedroom apartment she shares with her daughter, three grandchildren, and son in-law. She originally arranged that her friend who also lives in the same building to be part of the interview, but unfortunately she was unable to come because of a family emergency.

After my arrival to Degan’s apartment, she started talking about her friend’s family situation and the reason behind her travel. The apartment was very clean despite the number of residents and is located near schools, shops and a health clinic. This participant had pre-existing medical problems with diabetes and arthritis and is now living in isolation during the day when the children and other adults living there are away at school and work. She shared her embarrassing moments with medical care with her translator who was her twelve year-old grandson.

Follow-up Interviews And Process

After these initial interviews, I conducted follow-up interviews accordingly, going back to the women’s place of residence. However due to distance and financial constraints as a student, I did not travel back to Ottawa to conduct follow up interviews. Instead, I did follow-up

phone calls and arranged a meeting with one of the participants when she came to Toronto to visit her relatives. Due to technological challenges, I did not attempt to record the phone conversation but relied on my notes to document these conversations.

Connecting with Ladan from Italian Somaliland became a challenge, for I lost touch with her for an extended period when she went back to Somalia to deal with a family crisis. In a later detailed follow-up phone interview, we talked mainly about her resettlement experiences, labour market challenges, childcare, and family disruption for educated Somali Canadian mothers who are still struggling with balancing home life and establishing their careers.

I learned more from both Toronto and Ottawa residents who were service providers about their personal and professional narrative as they deal with their own past and navigate community services with their clients. They shared with me the community challenges including divisive forces, concern about the future and their children which I will be discussing in Chapter Five and Six.

After the second interviews were complete, most of the follow-up interviews for further clarifications occurred during the stages of my writing. I made over-the-phone conversations as needed to clarify my understanding of some of the issues raised in the first and second interviews. I also learned a great deal from those over-the-phone conversations, adding to the two initial interview, and my field observations about social life as well as the new gendered interaction of Somali-Canadians.

Field Observations

My first observations are the changes within the highly gender- differentiated and segregated Somali-Canadian community that has become more polarized in the last two decades. Going to Somali restaurants located in the east and west ends of Toronto and again in Ottawa

where most of Somali-Canadians reside, I noticed immediately the scarcity or lack of the familiar Somali artifacts that are used in other ethnic restaurants such as Ethiopian restaurants (another community I personally belong to). Ethnic restaurants use homeland artifacts and pictures not only as decorations but to also as reminder of culture and belonging.

I speculated that since artifacts represent tribal decorations and regional identification maybe they are avoiding these conversation-starters, wanting to eat their patron's food in peace. It could also be that there is a cultural change as Somalis are lately identifying themselves by their commitment to religious and tribal devotion. All the restaurants I visited are divided into two sections based on gendered spaces. Some religious individuals do not like to share space with the other gender and prefer their privacy even in a public place such as this. The main eating area also has a prayer space which is shared, but gender-segregated prayers are conducted respectfully. This is different than the normal Canadian restaurants where a family eating out does not include an interruption for prayer time.

I also learned during my observation how Somalis are still well informed about world news and politics which reminded me of a childhood memory of hearing news from short-wave radios installed in shops and even in remote trading posts where people would gather around to hear about world affairs from local stations and BBC Somali Service. This memory also reminded me of an article I read during my search for Somali colonial history which written by B. W Andrzejewski for the "New Society" news paper. Admiring this Somali skill of wanting to be informed about world affairs he included in his publication the following anonymous poem,

*Oh men the beautiful world is going to be spoiled
The nations assembled in London have brought about this trouble*

*The West and East have approached each other ready for war
See the pride of Nasser, the Chinese, the yelling Arabs and Nehru negotiating
with ingenuity
Whenever the sun sets the Russians bring equipment
Power has been launched on the sea
See Eden proud and stuttering and Dulles inciting him to conquest yet unwilling
to take part himself
The French driven by jealousy and zeal, yearning for the din of an explosion
The United Nations make no decisions with mighty pens
A great explosion will come from Suez Canal
The people who have done this do not know the value of their lives;
If planes drop the equipments entrusted to them
If cannons resounding, fire without ceasing
If the hidden submarines come to face each other
It is certain that smoke will bellow and boil there
Certainly, of the two sides, one will subjugate the other, as with a burden saddle
How horrible is the smoke and perdition which they pursue
Oh God, the Powerful, save us from the roaring thunderbolts (New Society,
March 21, 1963)*

Listening to the news provided poets both material and information they shared through their own ways of oral and historical documentation. This interest in the news is a Somali skill that is still seen in the Diaspora communities by the presence of television screens right at the entrance of each Somali restaurant I went to where the BBC World service in the English language is blasting. The difference from my childhood memories is the availability of both television screens and news in the preferred English language.

Taking field notes in this setting would have been seen as odd, therefore I decided to hide my note pad and write as little as possible while making mental notes of events and scenes

(Emerson, et al, 2001, 356-7). When there is no religious leader in sight, some moderate Muslim families like mine will sometimes share space with men. During one of the visits I sat at a table alone surrounded by men but I noticed the server was feeling uneasy with my sitting location which he demonstrated clearly to me by the type of service he provided. The food was late but I did not mind as I focused waiting for one of my participants, Filson, who was late for our meeting. While waiting for the food I noticed the interactions between the men and how comfortable, friendly and courteous they were to each other. Listening to their conversations I also found out how important the news from home, family life and employment issues were for the men.

Sitting in the women's section again I learned how women's busy lives even extend to the public areas as they appear to be the sole care givers of the children (men socializing and women busy with feeding their children). This may be related to cultural roles for women and men that dictate public and private behaviour. Somali women and girls are expected to have at all times a sense of modesty called (*hisaut*) which includes in this case not participating in men's discussions unless invited. As I listened to the recorded voices of the participants during the transcription process, I began notice their hidden abilities including their resilience and strengths. I began to remember how within those stories their painful experiences and losses are also kept under the surface making the conversation a twofold (in words and by body language). I remember what I heard and observed during the interviews. They reminded me of certain events that are kept hidden by trauma and avoidance or the cultural practice of "*hishout*" and how this translates to the self isolation, tribal politics and contributes to marginality.

Data Management, Transcribing And Theme Selection

In this section, I focus on representing the Somali-Canadian women's voices without contaminating the seriousness and complexity of the stories in their narratives of suffering and survival. These stories were difficult for me to tell at times, to hear and transfer them into written words as I too lived through these past few decades, the narratives of war, forced migration, resettlement and remembering painful events of the past. However, when I decided to use life story and narrative analysis to highlight the human experience of this prolonged ethnic destruction with its social, emotional context and its impact on the next generations, I knew the challenges that are entailed in doing so. These methods gave me the opportunity to document, understand and interpret the woman's experiences and the social phenomena happening at each stage migration. I later (See Chapter 5&6) analyzed each textual units or chronology of the story within those narratives. The selection and use of both methods (Cole & Gary Knowles, 2001, p. 9; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.85; Creswell, 2003, p15; Merriam, 2009, p. 202 and Riessman, 2008, p. 3-7) are also congruent with my theoretical personal, professional, cultural values and communication style, and gives me a better chance for exploring my chosen topic accurately. To make sense of the large amount of data gathered during my field work and during the analysis, I selected specific segments from the stories in the narratives to consolidate and make sense of the women's lives at each stage of migration and resettlement (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.92-118 and Merriam, 2009, p.175-176). Somali-Canadian mothers' views of events are rarely explored or consulted for service or practice improvement. Individual narratives are often used by community members to remember the past, justify behaviour or explain actions. Using narrative analysis allowed me to reconstruct their journey through stages of migration including

resettlement from the selected time-lined stories they shared with me during my multiple interviews and conversations.

My intent in using life history interviews and the analysis of the stories in their narratives of forced migration and resettlement was to effectively present the goals and intentions of survivors as they navigated cultural, political, systemic barriers in their home and resettlement countries (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2006, p. 318-319; Schutt, 2012, p. 339).

Data Management

After the initial interviews with participants were completed and transcribed, I sent copies to those able to read the translated English version. Some of the participants chose to get a copy of the audio before hand, while the rest preferred to listen to the original audio recording before we began the follow-up interviews on the same date. This approach was part of the initial “respondent validation or member checking” process recommended by current qualitative researchers and an important step in self-checking or ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting participants’ thoughts (Merriam, 2009,p. 217). For this study, it was important for me to hear participant feedback, whether they read the translated/transcribed version or listened to the audio recording of their responses to my initial questions in the first interview. My goal for this study was and still is to bring forth silenced voices and to put those voices into text changing the women’s knowing about the prolonged war and displacement into telling.

As well, the type of life history interviews I conducted are based on linking events as they occur at both the micro- and macro-levels as described by Goodson and Sikes (2001, p. 17). This entails moving from initial “life story” at the micro-level to “life history”, which adds a second layer of the past present and future that is open to interpretation. Working closely with each participant and constantly cross-checking both the story and the history ensured the

accuracy of events and their impact on the participants at both micro and macro levels. The multiple interviews, types of questions, and cross-checking of facts allowed each participant to discuss in detail not only their lives but the social, economic, and political events that had a specific impact on them, their families and their communities. As discussed in the methods section and following recommended steps of data collection in qualitative research, I started data interpretation while collecting the data, during transcription stages and continued the process throughout my writing stages (Goodson & Sikes 2001; Goodley et. al. 2004; Merriam, 2009; and Riessman, 1993 & 2008). Following this process personally allowed me to make sense of the “first-person account of experience from the narrative text” in each stage (Merriam, 2009, p. 202).

Deciding on this process, I began using my field observation notes as a starting point to analyze and make notes of repetitive issues, emotions that were raised or mentioned, as well as common responses/ reactions to a question or events discussed. This helped me strengthen my reflective procedure and analysis by allowing me to think through their stories in their historical contexts as verified in literature, UN reports, the media, and by the women themselves (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.92-118; Hagemaster, 1992, p.1, 122-1, 126; Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 34-35; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2006, p. 320-321; Merriam, 2009, p. 202; Reitsman, 2008, p. 53-58).

Being part of the Somali- Canadian community I am studying, also gave me a dual observer/participant, relational and collaborative position with my research participants, sharing stories during each interview, over-the-phone follow-up and fact-checking with existing literature or media reports. My knowledge of the regional politics also eased my interaction with each woman, building rapport and deepening relational connections as described by Judith

Jordan's (2010) relational-cultural theory (RCT). Jordan's (2010) theory emphasizes the importance of human connection as the starting point for this type of research. Others say establishing relational connections throughout the data collection process by sharing stories, ideas, interests and helping each other in understanding a phenomenon is an important alternative to focusing on a "separate self" which builds boundaries that separate human interactions and thwart real connections (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.119-130; Cole & Knowles, 2001, p.171 and Jordan, 2010, p.2).

The Transcription Process

Following the interviews, the initial challenge was that in being part of the community; I not only share the experience of motherhood and settlement but also my own past experiences of trauma. Exploring events through one-on-one interviews and checking historical facts took me back to my own experiences with forced migration, gender-based violence, witnessing horror, and the daily struggle of keeping my children safe. Both the data collection and interpretation stage of the research emotionally and physically exhausted me and impacted my health. At the end of my data collection I suddenly developed problems with my vision. Thanks to the medical advances we have here in Canada, my problem was finally diagnosed and treated. It was related to an early trauma I endured in 1974 when I was imprisoned and tortured in Ethiopia due to my ethnic identity and political associations. The physical responses to stress and its impact on health will be explored in the discussion chapter.

I am still dealing with some of the emotional issues related to remembering while working with my data and rereading stories, but the most substantial challenge I faced during the transcription stage was a lack of clear methodological guidelines in the life history approach. According to Goodson & Sikes (2001):

Having made a recording, the next stage is usually to make a written summary of a complete transcript. This stage is time consuming and can be expensive in terms of transcription costs. Doing your own transcribing also enables you to become familiar with the data and helps you with analysis as repetitive listening creates an intimate engagement with the data (p.33)

Similarly Cole & Knowles (2001) explain this process of transcribing the voice to text as one additional way of ensuring the confidentiality of participant stories allowing the researcher to also develop an intimate understanding of the narrative in each story (p.189). To avoid the dilemma of not having a deeper understanding of the process as a new researcher, in addition to my theoretical background, I relied on multiple literatures in qualitative, life history and narrative methods as well as my research questions, and overall goals to guide me at each step of the research process including the transcription, editing and later analysis stages (Riessman, 2008, p.28). For example, generally, the transcription of qualitative research requires transcribing “every utterance, even repetitions and noises” within the recorded conversation (Merriam, 2009, p.202); however, it is never easy to translate and transcribe a recorded conversation between two people speaking the same language when it is changed by the temporality of culture, political events and different backgrounds⁴⁸.

As well, in transcribing my data the first unexpected surprise was having a problem with the new language discourse that is currently used by the community to communicate social and

⁴⁸ For example, educational level, culture and current religious practices change the communication method for ethnic Somalis. It is now common or expected to use religious readings into conversation rather than Somali poems and stories used often in the past. For this study I made a conscious decision to not include religious readings used in the conversations because religious readings are open to interpretation which is not what I intend to do in this study.

religious-based relationships. For instance, Somali greetings which used Somali words are no longer in practice. Instead, Islamic greetings are now normalized within the discourse and added to each conversation⁴⁹. The changing communication method, ideology, and even religious practices began to worry me as I realized the extent of the changes in the social relations that have happened in the past two decades. The religious practices, the changed self-identity and community relations all began to surface when I listened to the women's stories and their narrative of events. I saw the widening gap in the remembering of certain cultural practices that those of us who left earlier in the war and never returned still hold on to and how some of the women were embracing these changes as cultural and religious awakening. I heard these challenges while listening to the audio as an old-fashioned Somali and a moderate Muslim trying to communicate with women who now understand and practice what it means to be a Somali or a Muslim differently than I do.

These changes gave me two new opportunities in my early data collection and later transcription process. First, I realized the importance for more conversation with the women to clarify these changes. Second, I started to be very conscious of each woman's choice of words during the interviews, and to use self-monitoring steps during transcription, theme selection and my representation of their stories during the analysis. The positive outcome of that realization and the changes I made gave me the chance to understand how religious or certain cultural questions have now become individualized and private. I noticed how religion and these cultural questions are now used as divisive and isolating factors by those in power. It also became

⁴⁹ Certain new words or verses are currently used to describe events, thoughts and ideas. The simple "good morning", "good evening" greetings are generally no longer used, and instead many use the Islamic greetings of "Aslaam Alekum", followed by a long religious verse.

apparent to me how survivors are also trapped in these self-isolating cultural practices that are keeping certain traumatizing or fearful events private in family discussions only. For example, I noticed during the transcription of the initial two interviews and follow-up phone calls none of the women clearly discussed their views on new religious practices and their barriers concerning them. That left me with my interpretation, which will be discussed in the analysis chapter, on how the women talked about those issues that are sometimes presented to me as stories they heard and/or behaviours they witnessed in their communities. Riessman (2008) describes my thoughts and reactions as a process we use: “as qualitative researchers we are not bystanders reporting just what has been said, but investigators with our own understanding and interpretations of the narrative that is later transformed into a text” (p. 29).

Others like Donald Ritchie (1995) say that once data goes through the transcription and theme selection process, it becomes a textual representation open to the interpretation of “the intended meaning of what has been said” and how it is said or what is not being said. According to Donald Ritchie (1995):

Even the most slavishly verbatim transcript is just an interpretation of the tape. Different transcribers might handle the same material in different ways, including punctuation, capitalization, false starts, broken sentences, and verbal obstacles to present spoken words in print (p.43).

With this knowledge I began to feel comfortable with the responses I received from the participants and started to organize the transcribed data into conceptually manageable written summaries files (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 33). I saved those files on my secure firewall and password-protected computer at home, which is also equipped with NVivo software that helped me organize and manage my data. The selection of stories from the narratives in each stage of

migration was challenging as their responses to the questions were presented differently even when all the circumstances were similar. Therefore, I focused on the intent and meaning of their responses to similar situations leaving the interpretation of their silent gestures to later analysis (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 33).

In this process, doing my own translation and transcription, besides helping me in cutting costs, it also helped in familiarizing myself with the data giving me a deeper and meaningful understanding of each story and how it is presented in each woman's narrative (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 35-36). This process not only gave me the chance to do on-the-spot thematic analysis but it also allowed me to reflect on each response to the questions, the connections to events happening at the time and each woman's meaning making process (Merriam, 2009, p. 171-173; Riessman, 2008, p. 53).

After completing each transcript, I reread them again a few times to review emerging themes and identified versions of the stories that are told in context comparing those with the general narrative and content (Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 33). For example, during the initial interview, I listened for the impacts of forced migration and traumas, as well as the process of adaptation and formation of new beliefs: including the barriers to changing from an old social homogeneity to a newly fractured society with multiple languages and religious differences.

Theme Selection Process

After completing the transcripts, I did a second reading looking at emerging themes and categories then organised the data into broad topic areas in each stage of migration and resettlement. I organized the themes focusing on identifying the meaning-making process related to each participant's feelings at the time and why the participant connected those feelings with what was happening then (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.130-135; Riessman,2008, p. 55-56).

Life history researchers say this gives a representation of participant's life, creating themes for important or critical events which are then organized in chronological order by the researcher (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p.4 and Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p. 34-35). I used the above process to explore deeper emotional feelings that were present and repeatedly expressed in each woman's story. Setting events in chronological order of migration and traumatic points helped me to notice how the women who experienced the same situation responded differently and how they presented the situation in their narratives. At each step or realization, I also engaged in self-reflective assessment of my thoughts, my own emotions and consciousness, which I recorded in my personal notes. This process helped during the selection of each theme, grounding my thoughts in the women's stories and differentiating theirs from mine. Since our stories and experiences were similar in many ways, I was "constantly engaging in an internal assessment of boundaries" to avoid data contamination (Cole & Knowles, 2001 p.171). Sharing similar experiences with some of the participants and working over the years with other survivors this was a necessary step for me. I paid attention to the interpretation of the women's narratives and personal stories highlighting defining moments in each stage of migration. It became a "balancing act" I was "performing in my dual role" as both researcher and participant (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 172). This also became the guiding steps I used for my data analysis chapter. According to Merriam (2009) this process is the heart of exploring, "the ways humans experience their world, and it is through these explorations that we come to understand their world" (p. 202) as qualitative researchers.

Finally, after reading each written transcript and reviewing my field notes, I was able to identify and record themes and sub-themes from the women's stories based on the order, structure, and meaning they used to express their experiences at each stage of migration. As well,

I was able to compare individual responses to the same question, comparing participants who came from different regions. I started selecting themes from their responses making a constant comparison with each story in each stage of migration as various participants' experienced similar events but differed in their responses to each particular event (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 119-124; Hagemaster, 1992, p.1122; Goodson & Sikes, 2001, p.34-35; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2006, p. 321; Merriam, 2009, p.205; and Reitssman, 2008, p. 53-58). The combination of the above steps during the data transcription, interpretation and theme selection also helped me manage the massive data I collected during my four months-long field work. As a result the following themes emerged.

Emerging Themes

Even though the participants of this study came from different countries of the region and had varied re-settlement experiences, the twelve women I interviewed shared painful narratives they expressed in each stage of migration. Using the traditional Somali way of communicating, each woman initially shared a long response to each question focusing on either pre-resettlement journey or post-settlement struggles. Being mindful of similarities and differences of the women's experiences, I selected the words used by the women, bringing out their voices and the spaces they occupied in the larger narrative of a prolonged war and the resulting multiple migrations. This follows what Cole & Knowles (2001) call a process of clarifying "the fact that the voice of the other was given its own room to emerge, unhindered by the researcher's own thoughts or experiences" (p. 172).

The surprising answers to my questions came when the women would focus or explain defining moments and the selection of their wording and the choices they made as to what to share or what to keep private. I selected the following themes from the women's insights based

on major defining moments, their emotional responses and their experiences during conflict and stages of migration. Forced migration in refugee studies are define and takes place in stages of migration from: 1) Pre-migration, fear and anticipation stage; 2) escape and survival stage; 3) Transit stage and dealing with prolonged fear, gender base violence and emotional stress ;4) resettlement stage (Ager, 1999; Drachman, 1992; Papadopoulos, 2002 &2006; and Potocky-Tripodi, 2002).

1st Stage Of Migration: Pre-Migration Fear And Anticipation

During *the fear and anticipation stage of migration*: all participants remembered those moments being the beginning of fear and overwhelming stress they came to live with over the years. Feelings coming from their fear of the unknown, the anticipation of losses including their homes and the meaning that comes with it is what the women tried to express in her own way during the interview. They sometimes described these feelings as disoriented which came with the realization of what was about to happen to them. Some participants who experienced this stage multiple times in different regions also remembered feeling a renewed grief and bereavement from their past with each new experience.

2nd Stage Of Migration: Escape, Survival And Transit

The second stage, *flight or transit* as some call it, is the devastating stage: this is where some of my participants experience extreme horror as they left their homes to escape war. A majority of women repeatedly mentioned in their narratives at this stage, the level of violence they witnessed including gender-based violence, loss of family members, neighbours and friends. The word 'fear' was also used as they talked about the long journey by foot from Mogadishu to Kenyan's borders or from Ethiopian to Somalia or back again in the late 1980s. Words of extreme fear and horror were used describing their experiences in witnessing mothers throwing

their children onto moving cars hoping to save them or passing the body of a relative without having the time to give it a proper burial. The depth of trauma and what was happening during an escape on foot and border-crossing in these narratives was difficult to hear and a reminder of my own journey during this stage. Coming close to death multiple times, as well as surviving hunger and living with fear, they said changed their lives as it did mine. It is a change that stayed with those of us who had witnessed firsthand and experienced human actions and cruelty during war that they described as the beginning of their experience with marginalization and Othering.

3rd Stage of Migration: Prolonged Fear, Gender Based Violence And Emotional Stress

In this stage, which is often described by migration theories at the *pre-settlement or temporary settlement*, the major emerging themes from this stage are again words of fear, stress and xenophobia as they describe their interaction with the public in refugee receiving countries especially in Kenya. Those who fled to Somalia or the eastern region of Ethiopia had a lesser response of fear at this stage.

4th Stage Of Migration: Re-Settlement And Reintegration Challenges

During the *re-settlement in Canada or post-settlement stage of migration* part of the interview, I asked questions such as: what type of services did you use or require when you arrived (e.g. language training, schools, health centres, housing)? How did you hear about them?

Women talked about language barriers as the main barriers between themselves and service providers. Some said they did not know the system or the services available to them. Others said while they were busy adapting to the country, including finding a home and good school for their children (both public and religious schools), they missed out on free resettlement programs. Isolation and dealing with health issues were also reported as a hindrance to a successful integration.

The main themes from the follow-up interviews, which were related to settlement, again detailed the women's fear for their children's future who they described as isolated from the host society, and their own culture because of segmentation and different levels of religious devotion.

Other themes in the follow-up interviews included the impacts of changing gender roles on family structure, living with a culture of silence, shame from admitting mental health issues, and concerns related to their children's lack of success, as well as isolation and losing hope. Identity and belonging were defined at each stage of migration/resettlement and repeatedly mentioned at this stage by all participants.

Stressors during re-settlement are often described as creating family disintegration, and include the men's focus on regaining their masculinity and ignoring their children's education/integration by holding on to dreams of going back. Other stressors mentioned multiple times by the women were the demands from their families for financial support (remittance money). Those stressors were mainly discussed while responding to the questions related to barriers to health and their wellbeing. Some of these themes also appeared in notes I made from previous conversations I had with members of the community and repeated during participant recruitment or interview conversations.

Surprises And Insights

I was surprised by the women's descriptions and the gendered responses to fear and their experiences. I also noted that even though the extent of gender-based violence was visible in the women's narratives during the first three stages of migration they were never shared as an individual experience. The second surprise concerned was how some of them described their partner's emotional response to traumas experienced during resettlement. These women often discussed their partners as, checked out from family responsibility, some choosing to self-

medicate themselves with “khat” others becoming over-involved with religious activities or Diaspora politics⁵⁰. I also noted how these relationship experiences are the viewpoints of some of my participants.

Other themes include the systemic barriers their children experienced in schools and during labour market integration which the women often described as one of the major stressors in their lives. Even though the older women used health related words describing their ill health, the younger generation used words of resiliency, opportunity and going forward with personal development and active community participation.

During the initial interviews and later follow-up interviews or over the phone conversations, themes that continued to emerge were related to constant fear, stress, and disappointment with their resettlement. They used the term “lost dreams” to describe their original hopes and dreams they had for their children and their own future. All the women, including the four service providers, talked often about their children and in their stories about resettlement, some of them used examples from the Toronto District School Board’s “Somali Task Force”. It is a proposal by the school board to deal with the high dropout rate of Somali students which parents consistently described as another form of marginalization.

In resettlement questions and responses I was surprised how mothers downplayed the role of changing language based on the development of the new culture and religious practices, and how this could contribute to self-isolation impacting the children they are concerned about. There is a lack of attention or understanding of the impacts moving away from Somali culture and religion will have on future generations.

⁵⁰ I know this does not apply to all as I know hard working Somali-Canadian fathers.

I saw the acceptance of their excessive religious practices as modern ways of knowing and embracing Islamic culture or new opportunities to know the Quran. I saw the healing aspect of this religious practice for some of the women who went through visible traumatic events and losses who used religion to emotionally center themselves. My fear at the same time, which is shared by many educated or moderate religious leaders, is that Somali women who did not have the opportunity for higher education and still lack in-depth understanding of this new-found Islamic knowledge. This knowledge, which is sometimes based on extreme teachings that can endanger some Somali-Canadian youth (as seen by the number of youth who joined Al-Shabaab or current currently ISIS and can be connected to the death of promising young Somali Canadian youth.

Summary

This chapter was intended to discuss the detailed processes employed in the selection of the research method, participants, interview process and analysis. Throughout the course of my field work I have been acutely aware of my power and responsibility in representing this community as I share pre- and post migration experiences as well as ethnic identity. Based on my theoretical reflections in this chapter and throughout my dissertation I wish to present the community's experiences in a vivid, readable way to illustrate events, relationships, encounters and to make my work as accessible as possible to the participants of my research. Intrinsically, I was inspired by historical trauma, refugee/resettlement and Black feminist researchers, who have taken a creative approach to addressing community issues and ethnic relations. However, in this study I wish to balance that knowledge with personal experiences as a survivor of prolonged war, multiple migration, trauma, motherhood and integration. Choosing a life history research and narrative analysis as a methodology, I am also aware that I will not be a silent observer or interpreter and I

followed throughout my field work the ethical guidelines required for human participants in research.

I decided to combine in the analysis women's stories from the transcripts of initial interviews, follow-up and over the phone conversation/discussions. My data collection method gave me the chance to spend time with each participant and establish stronger relationships and this enhanced my understanding of current social changes, existing traumas and the level of their toxic environments that are impacting their health. I will address these issues further in the discussion chapters. During my field work, the most surprising event was my own lack of awareness of the level of social changes that have been taking place in the past two decades. I witnessed the distance and mistrust level of the community that is clearly visible at contact points such as Somali malls and family restaurants. Gone is the normal cultural greeting between two strangers and the practice of a more self-imposed isolation seems to be used against others as a protection. It is a part of the emotional response to past traumatic experiences, which will be discussed in later chapters.

Re-reading the transcripts and my own field notes I also noticed that a number of times I mentioned the visibility of poverty and stress level of parents regarding their children. I also noted multiple times the lack of understanding of the cultural norms of their new country and its benefits in securing connections and establishing relationships. Some of the conversations and responses to my resettlement questions were based on 'fear of the unknown' and the actions some of the parents felt necessary to ensure the safety of their children. Unfortunately, those safety measures are the ones that are making them more vulnerable to poverty, isolation and the danger of joining 'the wrong group'.

Poverty and the overcrowded homes they live in are adding to children's isolation who are missing or not experiencing the chance of having standard Canadian amenities such as individual bedrooms, or having friends from other cultures and religious practices. I noted multiple times the number of homes without a TV or toys for the children. I often put down notes questioning how this self isolation, lack of awareness and poverty is further isolating the next generation of Canadian-Somalis from mainstream society. It is a question I will be exploring in my future research.

For many of the children I met in the field and those I noted while interviewing their mothers, the Canadian life seems limited to language ability, whereas everything else remains a foreign concept for them. I noted this life style which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five and Six is often enforced by poverty and fear which contributes to the second generation's dropout rate and contact with the justice system. Finally what surprised me the most in listening to the multiple interviews and reading my field notes was their reluctance to answer questions regarding religion, rape or life style choices. Yet, religiosity as a means to morality, human development and enlightenment are discussed by a number of the participants of this study.

In this chapter I focused on my methodology and the selection of participants who contributed to this study. In the following chapters I will be exploring their stories, developing narratives of their experiences and connecting these with promoting resiliency, health, wellbeing and community healing. Throughout the study I will also be connecting stories of forced migration and resettlement to human actions within a sequence of political, social, cultural and systemic events.

IV. CHAPTER FOUR: Women's Stories Of Forced Migration And Resettlement

Data Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the process of forced migration and resettlement through the unique voices of the women who participated in my study. As stated in the previous chapter, the bulk of my data comes from life history interviews with Somali-Canadian women living in Toronto and Ottawa. In this chapter, I will be covering the emotional journey of participants as each goes through the sequence of dislocation, relocation, and final settlement in Canada⁵¹.

This chapter will connect emerging themes from the previous chapter to stories told by the women I interviewed for this study. Their stories do not follow a chronological order in the stages of migration but trace a trajectory based on their emotional feelings at each stage and what they wanted to share during the interview process. Findings suggest that these emotional experiences do not present a clear-cut similarity among women. Instead, what emerged are the different, dramatic experiences each woman shared through her story.

During the process, I found that Somali-Canadian mothers were trying to adapt to a new country, and were having new feelings of stability and new hope for belonging after losing their homeland decades before. However they also had to deal with the task of making peace with their past while juggling the process of adaptation into new communities. I see this as an almost impossible task because the war remains active in some regions in Somalia and the globalized world makes the upheaval there still very present to those living here in Diaspora.

⁵¹ The women's voices are presented in long quotations from transcribed interviews from Somali to English. Because I aimed to stay close to the direct meaning of the words, some of the sentences may not be grammatically correct.

Traumatic Stories Presented Within Narratives Of Forced Migration

During the data analysis, understanding past and present experiences, thoughts, and behaviours within the context of historical legacies was challenging. Looking into the meanings and actions of the twelve participants who come from different colonial histories, economies and subcultures⁵² required the acknowledgement of different political situations. In my analysis, I focus on the women's direct stories of war as well as the non-verbal cues, including body language, to understand the emotional response to each interview question. This process helped me to ask further questions in order to explore the meaning-making process behind each woman's story. Using feminist fieldwork analysis as described by Sherryl Kleinman (2007), I investigate how each woman's feelings and actions reveal her individual voice during defining moments in the journey from forced migration to resettlement.

Refugee Analysis And Participants' Perspectives

Refugee studies give us only a limited understanding of past experiences (Ager, 1999; Danso, 2002; Papadopoulos, 2002 & 2006; Potocky-Tripodi, 2002). What is missing from these studies is, first, the voices of those who experienced forced migration, including their interpretations and actions; and secondly, the resettlement experiences of refugees in Western countries such as Canada, which is known as one of the largest refugee recipient countries in the Western world.

In addition, in refugee and forced migration studies, the discussion within existing literature is limited to the second and third stages of migration when refugees are in survival stages and either on route to safety or living in temporary refugee camps. These stages described in Chapter Three are considered as the most traumatizing stages of forced migration, causing the development of post-

⁵² Based on colonial interaction and adaptation of colonial culture

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Ager, 1999; Papadopoulos, 2006 & 2002; and Potocky-Tripodi, 2002).

Yet, as seen through responses from Somali communities, trauma has a devastating impact on some people more than others, and often depends on the challenges they face during the ‘Adjustment Stage’ (Danso, 2002; Papadopoulos, 2006; Siegel, 2007; Farmer, 2009; Simich, 2008a & 2008b). This final stage is a focal point in the lives of the women I interviewed. Understanding how trauma is re-enacted after resettlement is essential to understanding the complexity of refugee experience, and in creating better intervention programs and service practices.

Below, I will describe my participants’ perspectives at each stage of migration, and how defining moments in earlier stages affected health and emotional trauma in their resettlement experiences.

The Fear And Anticipation Stage: Loss Of Home And Place

During this stage of migration, all participants remembered moments of dread and the beginning of fear with the realization of what life could look like after they had lost everything. They described the overwhelming stress and feelings they came to live with over the years, which included fear of the unknown and the anticipation of grief from losing their homes. Some of them described feeling disoriented when they finally realized what was about to happen to them, and some participants who experienced this stage multiple times in different regions remembered feeling renewed grief and bereavement, as well as a sense of reliving the past.

One participant, Hoodo, described her first experience with fear saying:

There is a story I want to share with you that happened before my family and I left our last residence in Mogadishu. I just remembered that story when you asked me this question. One day a family member told me to get her sugar from the store.

Some military men who I think were related to Siyaad Barre were standing in front of our door and as soon as I came out they [asked] me to identify myself by my tribe. I could not tell them my tribe because of my accent - I was afraid they will not believe me because at the time they were killing tribes from the north who spoke like I did. I was afraid when one of them pulled a gun and demanded that I identify myself again. Fortunately, my family heard my screams and came out and rescued me, explaining my tribal connection to eastern Ethiopia not Somaliland tribes. These were government soldiers and they hated people from Somaliland at the time. That was the defining moment for me in living in fear for myself and my family. That is when my family decided it was time to leave Mogadishu and run to the unknown. At that time people in Mogadishu were struggling with making decisions for leaving the city, and some of them had additional problems based on economical circumstance. Those who had money left the city early, avoiding the later trauma of seeing homes destroyed and family members killed. As a family⁵³ we rented a car and we headed toward Kismaayo, which was the safest option for us. I was afraid what would happen to my other family from my father's side, which I could not reach because they were living in another part of the city. I met some of them a decade later and others are still living all over the world.

For Hoodo, who was at the time experiencing a second migration from eastern Ethiopia as a child, growing up in Somaliland and adapting a new accent became a life-threatening issue for her. She explained that time as the moment when she lost her feeling of permanency and safety and instead developed strong fear and anticipation of future losses.

⁵³ family members from Hoodo's mother's side

Reviewing my participants' stories about their feelings at this stage of migration, I realized that they all point to these initial experiences with fear. Many had very similar experiences in Mogadishu, which made them ultimately decide to leave the city where existing political, tribal and systemic issues were not favouring them (Kuntz, 1973, p. 125-126).

At this initial stage of migration, the level of fear is a starting point that continues to build in later stages of migration. This level of fear is also present in the second stage where refugees are running for their lives, the third stage of settlement where they are introduced to toxic stress in a temporary refugee reception country, and the final settlement stage when they began to either adapt to the toxic stress or are re-traumatized in their new permanent home.

Hoodo articulates how those initial feelings of fear still influence her current emotional responses to stress: "I don't know why, but I feel sick and remember those past feelings when I am stressed." For Hoodo, these feelings stem from the day when she was first confronted by the military and later when she met other men with guns in her journey from Somalia to Kenya. In her case, life threatening situations were repeated multiple times in the journey from Somalia through Kenya, the Middle East, the United States, and finally as a refugee claimant in Canada. Giving examples of those past emotions and current responses Hoodo explains:

I was living with my sister here in Toronto when I found out that my refugee paper expired six months ago and I may be facing deportation back to Somalia. I did not know about expiry dates related to my convention refugee status; in Canada if you don't renew your status before the expiry date you have to leave the country and re-apply again. I was also in a bad state recovering from my ordeals during my escape. That was shocking to me and all I could think about then was deportation back to Somalia, and reliving my past journey again. I was overwhelmed with fear because I

had nowhere to go to and I became really sick emotionally and physically. I could not face the chance of being violated again or face starvation again or being killed - which was a better choice for me than facing the first two. At the time I had a relationship with a young man I did not trust or want to marry, but fear made the decision for me and when he asked me to marry him again for the papers I said yes. I was afraid. I did not want to go. My fear of him and mistrust came true when we got married. He used the power of my papers over me for three years. My life was a nightmare living with emotional and physical torture for those three years.

Hoodo's overwhelming fear and her decision-making process in this later stage of migration was determined by her earlier experience with life threatening situations. Information from past learning are often integrated to new experiences in areas of the brain that store information from prior learning, which will be discussed in the following chapter. For Hoodo the process happened when she took the drastic measure of becoming engaged, marrying and staying with her emotional and physical abuser for three years. Hoodo's actions reveal the impact of a traumatic past that can leave some people in unintegrated states of mind where drastic and sometimes re-traumatizing actions become common responses to avoid a repetition of past traumas. These responses are sometimes misinterpreted by service providers as rigidity or self-isolating actions based on avoidance, but they entail living with intrusive thoughts of chaos and PTSD flashbacks (Cozalin, 2010; LeDoux 2002; Siegel, 2007 & 2001; van der Kolk et al., 1996; van der Kolk 2014).

Van der Kolk et al. (1999), for example, uses the Israeli public response during the Gulf War to explain fear responses during what is known as the anticipation stage. When the Gulf

War missiles and chemical attacks against Israel and other Western countries were assumed imminent, the fear response of the Israeli public was also heightened. The researchers found that because of the extreme stress and inability to use the decision-making part of the human thought process a number of Israeli civilians made deadly mistakes during their process of self-protection. Due to an acute reaction to fear “ more people died from fear than actual exposure to the missiles” (van der Kolk, 1999, p.108). This study concluded that people can take extreme actions due to the extreme fear of impending danger, and in this situation, feelings of fear became not only distressing, but fatal (p. 109).

For Hoodo, the decision to ignore her initial feeling about this man and entering into a dangerous marital relationship in order to avoid return to Somalia was a dangerous and life-threatening response. This forced her to survive another form of gendered-based violence that survivors of war often face (Bokore, 2009 &2012). Death through domestic violence for women in Canada has been reported for some time, and is even more prevalent among marginalized groups (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2015). What is not often studied is how this links to survivors of other violence, including rape during war and forced migration. Being forced to choose between two types of gender-based violence, Hoodo saw the intimate violence as the less risky one.

During my participants’ narratives about the second and third stages of migration, I came to realize how silence about gender-based violence is strengthened by culture, and by continued connections to home or refugee camps where some of my participants still have close family members. The women I interviewed used what I call ‘emotional blockades’, to avoid discussing the topic as a personal experience, and instead chose to discuss it as if they were a witness to the event. I saw the tremendous courage and trust some of these women bestowed upon me to even mention

sexual assault as part of the story of their journey. Culturally, the practice of “*hisaut*” requires women to show a sense of modesty regarding sex-related topics. Therefore, throughout history and especially now, victims of sexual assault, especially young girls, are encouraged to hide their experience with violence from members of the community.

In the past two decades, there was a time when a small hope began to form among Somali women when, for the first time since the fall of the Siyaad Barre Barre government in 1991, the topic became part of the public discussion. In 2012, the newly elected President of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud brought the topic into the agenda. Even though this first public mention of issues related to gender-based violence was well received by some at the time (mainly women), it was rejected by others, including religious groups such as Al-Shabab. Therefore many Somali women wherever they are in their now globalized residency, continue to follow culture restrictions that shroud the topic of sexual violence in silence.

Yet, according to many external reports, gender-based violence during the refugee process exists to an alarming extent. For example, Human Rights Watch, the US-based rights group, reported that African Union troops stationed in Somalia: “Have gang-raped women and girls as young as twelve and traded food aid for sex” (Human Rights Watch Report, 2014). This 71-page report includes how some of the women were raped or sexually assaulted when they went to get medical assistance or drinking water at the African Union Mission in Somalia base camps.

Early reports published in 1993 about refugee camps show that in that year over two hundred rapes per day were reported at the Dadaab camp in Kenya, and as one rape counsellor puts it, the reported rapes were just the ‘tip of the iceberg’ (Kagwanja, 2000). Later reports by Human Rights Watch and other visitors to the Dadaab camp, including NGO groups, also

mentioned in their reports that “beatings of refugees, as well as sexual assault and rape, were daily and nightly occurrences” (Human Right Watch, 2013; and Kagwanja, 2000). Other aid agencies reported that women in refugee camps were being, “gang raped, knifed, beaten, and shot into submission,” by bandits driven by xenophobic hate who were attacking camp residents indiscriminately (Bissell & Tiessen, 2014; Mohamed, 1994; Kagwanja, 2000; Icamina, 2007).

Looking at my data and reading the most recent Human Rights Watch report triggered memories of my own experience with multiple border crossings, accompanied by feelings of survival and desperation. I remembered how powerful men in uniforms, traffickers and others often used women’s despair to their advantage. Young mothers desperate to save or feed their hungry children became vulnerable to what I often call ‘an unreported human tragedy’. Those who feel desperate during border crossings or while waiting for registration/refugee assistance in temporary settlement countries, sometimes experience this additional trauma. Avoidance of the topic of gender-based violence is not only cultural, but also due to what is defined by trauma researchers as a deep feeling of “shame”, related to their actions during their desperation (Siegel, 2011, pp. 167-9; van der Kolk, 2014, p. 13). Asli, Bishaaro, Filson, Gacalo, Hoodo and Udubo all spoke about those experiences as witnessing it happening to others but not to them. I also noticed during our conversations about the topic, the hidden pain they are not allowed to admit in public. It is a pain I am familiar with which cannot be expressed by words. It is a somatic/physical pain. It is one that comes from the multiple losses that are endured over the years and cannot be adequately defined. It is the one that cannot be expressed by words but after time passes it is repeatedly remembered in what I call a memory circles were the same traumatic stories are told repeatedly in context. However they were willing to discuss in detail the meaning of their other traumas and losses during forced migration.

The Meaning Of Home

The meaning of family for Somalis is different from the Western notion of nuclear family, which includes father, mother, siblings and at times grandparents. For Somalis, family is instead aligned with close tribal and extended relationships that share common agnatic or patrilineal relationships. This type of relationship is considered stronger than a shared nationality, and has existed for Somalis throughout history. In Diaspora communities such as Canada, this also functions as a reliable home address and guarantees the availability of immediate support.

That support system is now narrowed down from broader/extended tribal relationship like a clan family (for example, the clan family Isaq and Darood) to the closest agnatic line called in Somali "*Jilib hoose*". This is not unhelpful limitation not only narrowed sources of support but increased the mistrust and fear between the same clan family. This has a dire consequence for an ethnic group that has been impacted by environmental and political issues I explained in Chapter Two. When I asked my participants (Asli, Bishaaro, Dalmar, Degan, Filson, Gacalo, Hoodo, Udubo, Jamaad, Kafiya, Ladan and Maandeeq) and other community members individually they all explain its impact or consequences for future generations. Some of the women (Bishaaro, Dalmar, Degan, Hoodo, Jamaad and Udubo) felt more of the loss of these supportive networks during their struggle with resettlement issues here in Canada. It is hard for Westerners to understand how this support system functions and what happens to the people who suddenly lose the trust and supportive connection after a prolonged war (This will be discussed in the following chapters.) Currently there is a possibility that a Somali living in the Diaspora or back in their home regions, when in need of help, may never receive it from another Somali, unless there is a close tribal connection. The tragedy is that the second generation is now learning this distancing

and harmful effect of the war by trusting when it comes to ethnic relationships those close to them through tribal connection. I believe this is a tragedy for those living in the Western Diaspora communities such as Canada where having a strong network is important in the economic and social integration process. This also limits the other networking benefits such as creating stronger communities, establishing advocacy groups for change and improving their wellbeing, which promotes establishing neural connections for their social brain (This will be discussed in the next chapter.) Other refugee and resettlement studies also connect the physical and emotional impacts of losing this strong system of support (or the possibility of its loss) to the overall wellbeing of individuals and their communities (Davidson and McEwen, 2012; Simich, 2008; Papadopoulos, 2002; van der Kolk et al 1996 and van der Kolk, 2014).

According to Papadopoulos (2002), all human beings have a sense of home, belonging and attachment to a place. This sense is not just about the place itself, but also “the cluster of feelings associated with it” (p.10). Even though the explanations of loss by the women in my study were sometimes missed in the translation from Somali to English, all of them described what this loss of home, family, and sense of security felt like in the stages of migration from war and conflict zones. These women explained to me that home to them means a sense of place with multiple meanings, including tribal land, country, a place of nurturing and feeling safe, freedom from attack, a place of refuge, rest and satisfaction. Losing this sense of place is what made my participants dream of getting that back again, a feeling of both hope and loss (that will be described further in participants’ stories about the fourth stage of migration).

According to Papadopoulos (2002) quoting Giddens (1991), the loss of home for refugees is much more than the loss of material things that come with it, or the loss of family. It can cause other health risks such as “nostalgic disorientation” and “ontological insecurity” or “existential

anxiety”. This disorientation helps to explain the dreadful feelings of panic seen in people’s faces when they are in the anticipation stage of leaving their homes (p.18).

I remember how I felt emotionally when I left first Ethiopia then, Djibouti, Somali and Italy. For me, the anticipation of leaving Ethiopia was the most traumatizing event as I lost all of my important family connections and support systems. Decades later I still have flashbacks from those days. Even though Ethiopia had become a place of false imprisonment, torture, and loss of my family and friends, it was also my birth place, and the place I called home. Similarly, for my children, leaving each country where they spent their early years was the most traumatizing experience for them. Even though these countries were not comfortable, nor accommodating to their needs, each place became home with a special attachment for them.

Realizing that different generations may have different experiences, I asked participants Asli and Bishaaro who grew up in Mogadishu but were born in Somaliland and Northern Kenya to share their feelings about their tribal lands and what they felt about leaving Mogadishu in 1991. Their answers reveal the loss of home as a combination of losing a secure support system and a well-developed emotional attachment to place. They also both expressed that Mogadishu had a special meaning for them as the capital city of all Somalis.

Asli provided the following background information to her subsequent expression of her feelings as a combination of attachment, expressing her loss of home and fear at different points in her life:

After Independence, many urban Somalis living in other regions like me began to resettle in Mogadishu where there was a better chance of job and getting a higher education. In the 1970s, my husband and I benefited from a current government policy on gender equality, which resulted in me getting employment opportunity in

the government sector and contributing to the family income. After the 1977-78 Ethiopian/Somali regional war ended, the values of a double income began to decrease with higher inflation. Somalia began to deal with the economic fallout of war with Ethiopia and the loss of super power support and its long political friendship with Russia. Opportunities for scarce government and lucrative positions dwindled and intellectuals and other government workers including myself began to seek employment in oil rich Arab countries. Upon arrival overseas, we were faced with a lack of recognition of our education and we competed for positions with other international jobseekers. This often resulted in underpaid jobs that kept us away for years from our families. I finally saved enough to get back to my family when the anticipation of 1991 Somali civil war began to be imminent.

Coming back home to Mogadishu, Asli was confronted with another potentially permanent loss due to impending conflict in the capital city where she grew up and wanted to spend the rest of her life. She talked about it in the first interview, the follow-up interview and during other phone conversations, and this became one of the devastating and defining moments in her life, introducing her to a fear that she explains: “I am unable to shake or get rid of.”

Asli spoke of the first time she realized her long-held dream of going back home to settle into a good life may not be a reality:

I realized one night that the worst was about to come when I heard our neighbours screaming for help. I thought there was a break-in, but I did not try to help either because there was fear in the air. At the time I was alone with the kids. So in the morning when we woke up we went to check on her and found out that she and her daughter were both raped at the same time. I felt extreme fear at that time because

she was an old lady, and if it happened to her and her daughter I feared the worst for me and my daughters: pure horror and trouble for a mother to consider. Their house was next door to us and the reason it happened was tribal hate: they were from the Darood tribe and being targeted. I had heard horror stories before, but this time it was different - I was extremely afraid for my life and for my children.

Asli described these moments in her life as the most difficult and confusing times, shivering as she told her story, reliving how horrified she was for her own daughters and herself. She continued to talk about other memories, her feelings of dread and fear of the unknown, and a sense of loss of home as she then planned to leave Mogadishu for the last time. She said “*witnssising the kidnapping of men from the streets and the raping of women from opposing tribes confirmed my fear of what I was about to lose which was my home in Mogadisue*”.

For other participants from Eastern Ethiopia (Gacalo, Hoodo and Jamaad) that initial feeling of losing home and other losses are repeated multiple times, each time remembering the past and anticipating worse to come. When I asked Gacalo about fear and loss she said: “it was and still is *losing the trust in other non-relative Somalis.*” For Hoodo it was how her initial experiences had a lasting impact on her which she described as: “*fear and loss stayed with me for a long time moving with me to different countries like Somalia, Kenya, Syria and here in Canada*”. Jamaad explains her fear of losses as the friends she lost in her journey from Ethiopia as a child to Somalia and from Italy for final resettlement in Canada.

Dealing With Multiple Migrations And Prolonged Fear

Although refugee and trauma studies link the development of PTSD to the second and third stages of migration, for Asli and other participants who experienced multiple first stage migrations, this first stage is presented the most devastating and traumatizing time of their lives.

For my second participant Bishaaro, losing the safety and security of her home in Mogadishu was troubling as it was similar to her first loss of home and birthplace in Kenya when her parents decided to arrange her marriage with someone living in Mogadishu, Somalia. For her, moving to another country as a young girl leaving her family and friends was stressful and filled with fear as she described it. She expressed a strong sense of loss and fear that she later associated with the events that happened to her in Mogadishu that were echoed in her second forced migration. Only this time it was more dangerous and life threatening. She remembers this as a time when she felt the utmost fear, saying in Somali, *cabsi hoog ah aya igu dacday* which in English is “a great fear descended on me”. This was particularly terrifying for her as she was leaving the place where she spent most of her adult life, friends and family members including her beloved uncle who refused to leave her and the rest of the family. Her uncle who welcomed her in Mogadishu when she arrived as a young bride and became a father figure for her, was later killed while she was escaping; this occurred before she and her family reached Kenya.

During our first interview, Bishaaro was telling stories about the late 1980s and suddenly remembered the government attacks on northern Somali tribes in regions now known as Puntland and Somaliland. She connected the fear she felt then for the people of those regions with the fear she felt at the time when the initial forced migration from Mogadishu began. While talking to me about those initial days in Mogadishu she also relived her initial fears when she heard what happened to her friends and family living in the now breakaway regions of Somaliland and Puntland. She said as a result of those fears she became more anxious and fearful of what was about to happen to her and her family. Although the Siyad Barre government did not fall, her fears became stronger because of her lost trust in the government. That feeling became even stronger when she realized how the government was capable of

perpetrating unimaginable punishments on Somali tribes they considered to be 'anti-government'. As she recalls those days her fears as a civilian living in Mogadishu, a place that was not her tribal homeland, Bishaaro understood what was coming and the danger this meant for her family and began planning to leave the city in 1990. A day she still recalls sharply saying, "it was 1990 December 30th. I remember that day vividly it was Sunday that was the day forced migration was imposed on me and my family". She says this was particularly hard on her as she was alone with the children. Her husband was away at the time, working, like most other Somali men, in oil rich Middle Eastern countries, and Bishaaro was left with the responsibility of saving the children on her own.

When I asked how this responsibility made her feel, she said: "I was feeling extremely fearful and anxious because I was living among the now anti-government tribes, the Hawyees and I was afraid I would be attacked as well." When I asked why she was not afraid of her neighbours because of her tribal background, her response was: "I had a great relationship with my neighbours. Sharing all the extra food I had throughout the years as my husband was sending me enough money to buy good food. I always supported my neighbours especially the poor, giving them what they need". She added: "This long generosity gave me the guarantee for safe passage with my children back to my homeland in Kenya". During the initial stages of migration, others like my participant Gacalo (which I will explain later) were not able to rely on their neighbours for safety and security.

The Impacts Of Internal Governmental Oppression, Fear, And Loss Of Place

The participants talked about their anticipation/pre-flight stage while living in the capital city of Mogadishu, which remains the most dangerous place in the world, especially for women (Fergusson, 2013). Dalmar and Filson, who are from Djibouti (or former French Somaliland),

also talked about their own fears during times of internal government oppression and the presence of an internal power struggle.

Dalmar tells her story of being a young girl with two politically active parents and how she learned about fear from their discussions around evening tea time in Djibouti. The country is considered the hottest place in the world where temperatures year-round are hotter than North American summers. Families and visitors often spend the late afternoon and early sunsets drinking tea and cold soft drinks while discussing current events - which for Somalis, means business or politics.

During one of these conversations, Dalmar remembers hearing for the first time about her parents' decision to send her to Somalia because of unsettling political events happening in the city. For Dalmar, the topic was not a surprise as her mother was falsely arrested a number of times before the conversation came up. Her parents did not want the same for their daughter, so they had decided to send her to Somaliland to live with distant family members⁵⁴ instead.

Dalmar describes hearing this decision and feeling a dreadful anticipation of what could happen to her without her parents. This is a feeling she often associates with being alone and fearful in Canada when she married and had a child with an abusive man who according to her was "struggling with his own past and was not the right fit for me." Dalmar also talks extensively about her early unpleasant experiences in both Somaliland and in Canada with great emotional pain at times, explaining the connection of one experience with the other. For her, the important early years were lost by being away from her mother who was either arrested and sent to prison in Djibouti a number of times or was not with her in Somaliland or Canada. Growing up as a

⁵⁴ As mentioned earlier, Somali family membership is different from the Western nuclear family, instead family includes close tribal relations that take the responsibility of raising the young when needed.

lone child, and later missing even the surrogate care from other family members in Canada, she was eventually forced to learn about motherhood on her own without any role models or training⁵⁵. She explains:

I did not experience the war everybody is talking about - which is the one that has been going on in Southern Somalia. However I experienced and saw conflict, internal frictions and what fear does to people in my own home country during the colonial period and after the independence. The French divided tribes in the city, placing them in different neighbourhoods called “Quartier.” That is why you are able to guess the person's tribe in Djibouti when they tell you their neighbourhood.

During the pre-independence struggle and after, this division also functioned as a marker for political affiliation and sources for punishment. There was always tension between tribes, and mainly between Issa, Afar and other Djiboutians. For example, other Somalis are accused of supporting some group or a movement in Somalia or Ethiopia. Before I left Djibouti, these internal conflicts started small clashes between neighbourhoods and you would often see specific tribes like my tribe taken to prison – both my parents were accused of something and arrested at one time or another. We were living in the area where the problem was and that was very scary for my mother and father. This was why they decided to send me to Somalia before something happened to me.

My other participant from Djibouti, Filson, also talked about her fears when the country became unstable due to internal power struggles among politicians. At a young age she faced the unfortunate loss of her mother. Even though that is tragic for every child it is more distressing for

⁵⁵ Traditionally, community, family and other elders teach/train young mothers about motherhood and childcare.

a pastoralist child who is always dependent on the presence other tribal members. Due to the scarcity of food and shelter as discussed in Chapter Two a child in the pastoralist family learn during his/her early years to be dependent on care givers which means parents, close relatives and other tribal members. That loss made her resilient and always focused on survival. When talking about Canada her focus is mainly on her current health issues and finding solutions. Filson, commenting on her health issues and others in the community said:

I am dealing with health issues right now and I think this is because of my difficult childhood. I now have multiple health issues including diabetes and joint pains. It might be the food because back home. We use to eat fresh meat from the slaughter or the market. We never ate over a day old meat which we called was yesterdays meat or in Somali "*Cadki Shaley*". Here in Canada we eat food that has been in the fridge for years. We do not even know where it came from or it is really a Halal meat. It is hard to know because you never see the slaughter house. I think my problem now is not adjusting to this food and my stressful life when before my arrival in Canada. Bad life comes after you. Now as a community we are dealing with high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, and thyroid and about 200 illnesses we do not even know.

While she talks about her life in Canada in detail, however she felt uncomfortable giving details on her initial migrations and continues talking about other stages of migration to Somalia, Ethiopia, United States and then Canada (that will be discussed later).

Second Stage Migration And Prolonged Emotional Stress

During my interviews and follow up over the phone conversation my participants' responses to stages of migration did not follow a linear order as each chose where to start her

response to my questions. When I asked questions related to the second stage of migration for example, Bishaaro, going back to the initial stage, spoke emotionally about her ordeal as she spoke about the intensity of violence, lawlessness, rape, kidnapping, and sanctioned killings by both the government and anti-government groups:

I remember it clearly: it was Sunday December 30, 1990, after the midday prayer, that I realized that I may be losing my home again. There were things happening for a while before that day but that was the day for me. Yes I will never forget that day. I never thought it would come to this. In 1989, the number of violent thefts and robberies increased in Mogadishu. We were hoping it would end soon or the government would do something about it but it never happened. It just kept going. Oh yes and the violence became more daring and devastating, especially for women. I was just remembering this yesterday while talking to my sister. I don't know why I keep remembering those old and horrible days - maybe I was expecting your visit and this interview. But that may not be it, because I sometimes remember those days even when I am not expected to talk about it. Everyone was worried and scared but no one would talk openly about the coming danger. We were worried about our families living in other neighbourhoods and we did not have phones - actually there were few households with phones at the time. In the mornings, we used to send children⁵⁶ to check whether family members living in other neighbourhoods were alive or dead. Mornings were always bad because you never know what type of news

⁵⁶ Children are often sent as messengers because of their physical flexibility to go unnoticed. Because they are smaller than adults, they can hide if they need to, fitting into smaller spaces. They also have the ability to move quickly and quietly.

you would be getting. At that time neighbours used to ask each other how their night was and thank God for allowing them to see another sunrise.

It was a difficult time for those of us living in Mogadishu. In the end, I left my home and moved to Madina to be close to my uncle's family and to be safe. I was living in the area called *Hawl wadaag* in the middle of the Hawiye tribe and it took us a long time to get to Medina. There was safety in numbers and my uncles and in-laws had cars so we later used those cars to leave the country and move back to my hometown and birth place in Kenya.

Following this initial testimony, Bishaaro then articulated her journey from Mogadishu to the Kenyan border, as well as the loss of the man she described as "her beloved uncle". Bishaaro's memories of him as a father figure included how he took care of her when she first came to Mogadishu as a young bride, and sheltered her family during the initial stages of the conflict. She expressed those losses and past memories, reflecting on her deep sorrows, while at the same time recounting her uncle's contribution to the family. Her story reveals the mixed emotions that come with survival and living to tell the story of war and human tragedy, while witnessing horror and experiencing loss during escape.

Hoodo also recounted her experiences in the second stage of migration, focusing on the desperation of mothers to save their children. She describes what she called "a nightmare" from this stage, which still haunts her years later:

When we left Mogadishu we went to Afgoye, a small town near Mogadishu, and then heard that Siyaad Barre's army, with the aid of his son-in-law Morgan, was on the way. Some people, especially those related to Siyaad Barre, were happy that he was

coming to rescue them. We saw a small army on our way who told us that they are going to surround the Hawiye tribe and win the fight. Pretending to be part of them, we followed the army who were heading south to the city of Kismaayo. One of the worst days in that journey is when my 14 year-old brother went with his cousins to play in the area. A man who was a friend of the family from another tribe, and who used to eat at my uncle's house when he did not have money, saw my brother and told others that he was not one of them. So they caught my brother - picking him up from the ground and throwing him back like a lamb for slaughter (or in Somali, *sidi wanka laqalayo lodhigay*). When we heard the commotion we run to see what is happening and saw my brother on the floor ready to be killed. My mother and I ran through the crowd to rescue him. When we got to him he was begging for his life, denying his identity and claiming our mother's tribe. Another man who was one of them verified his relation and saved my brother's life. For me I consider that day as a *mucjiso*⁵⁷. The other *mucjiso* was in regard to the easy killing, hate and suspicion of one Somali against another fellow Somali in Mogadishu and Kismaayo. On our way to Kismaayo we saw dead bodies everywhere - killed by other Somalis. You can smell the dead and recognize some of them as your neighbours or family members who will never get the chance for a proper burial. If you try to pick up the bodies, people would kill you too. Both opposition and government groups were using dead bodies to see who would come and take them in order to kill everyone related to that person or tribe. That is *mucjiso* for me.

⁵⁷ A *mucjiso* in Somali is 'a challenge' or a 'surprise', based on the context and word usage.

Filson was from a Somali region that was fairly stable but troubled from time to time by internal political struggles. Filson began her journey as a member of a minority Somali clan in Djibouti who decided to seek safety in Northern Somalia when internal political struggles began in Djibouti. The fear and stress she expressed began with her experiences while in Somaliland, and corresponds to the time period when the Somali government began to attack civilians, and the fast-changing political situation that caused government collapse to begin.

Afraid for her family, Filson decided to migrate to Ethiopia where she had tribal connections, with the aim to secure a visa to the United States. In 2002, she arrived in Canada as a refugee. Filson never had the chance to go to school but now speaks both French and English to conduct her private business. She is a resilient woman who managed to travel, raise her children, and own and manage a small ethnic-specific store that is providing for her children's education.

During the follow-up interviews when I asked about her first migration to Somalia, Filson decided to tell me her early stories and the long journey toward her current life:

I left Djibouti in 1979 and moved to Hargeysa until the problem began in the 1980s and then I moved to Ethiopia with my children. We lived in Addis Ababa and I found myself not fitting there too because I do not speak the Ethiopian language. So I left again, this time alone, from Addis to the United States and then to Canada. I applied for refugee status in Montreal in 2002 and have been in Toronto for the past thirteen years. I hear others dealing with more illnesses than I do. So *Alhamdulillah* [Thank God] that I am okay. My life was more stressful when I was moving around Africa and afraid for my children, so I am okay now that it is just stress. When I was growing up death was rare, we used to say the year so-and-so died in order to

indicate an event. Now a lot of people are dying every year. We are losing count of how many are dying back home and in the Diaspora.

Although Filson never talks about the trauma of growing up as an orphan in Africa I could see the pain in her face when she briefly mentions those days and moves on to a conversation about her fourth stage of migration. For her, experiences in all stages of forced migration created her current physical health issues which she often credits more to the level of current stressors and unhealthy lifestyle changes. She acknowledges that the highly stressful life as a widow taking care of a large family and moving them across borders multiple times had effects on her health.

Van de Kolk (2014) has pointed out this connection between early trauma and later immune deficiency; the interviews with Hoodo, Bisharoo, and Filson reveal how survivors can develop difficulty in assessing the difference between danger and a safe situation, and how living in constant state of fear and stress can later affect health.

Re-Experiencing Initial Stages Of Migration Multiple Times

Gacalo, a participant from eastern Ethiopia, explains her multiple and traumatic experiences with all stages of migration, starting with her initial pre-flight stage when she was forced from eastern Ethiopia in 1977 during the Somali-Ethiopian war. Her story was filled with great emotions about traumatic events, including going through the first and second stages of migration while pregnant, and her experience with giving birth in schools and shelters.

When the regional war between Somalia and Ethiopia broke out, Gacalo was eight months pregnant with her first child and gave birth in a refugee camp located in the outskirts of Hargeysa, which is now known as Somaliland. She later transferred as an urban refugee to

Mogadishu and then back to Hargeysa, escaping to Borama city while pregnant again. Gacalo explains her ordeal during one of her second stage migrations:

The war between Ethiopia and Somalia was bad and the Somali-Ethiopians paid a heavy price. But no matter how bad it was we had Somalia, a place to run to when the oppression, accusation, imprisonment and forced migration was imposed on us by the Ethiopian government. We had the chance of being welcomed by other Somalis in Somalia. We lost that in this war, we did not know where to go to be safe. The worst was the war between Somalis, which made you question *ayaaad ka carari ayad ku carari* – or from whom are you running and to whom are you running to? It is like your two hands fighting each other or in Somali *labadaadi gacmood o ishaysta*. Where will one hand get support and safety when in war with the other? There is nowhere to go – nowhere to run - it was hard to trust people because the person you met on the road may be the one you are running from. That was my worst experience in life - running for my life and saving my children. It was constant fear.

Even though there are no reliable statistics about the death toll in northern Somalia where Gacalo was living at the time, before she left, according to her the streets were covered with bodies on certain days and most of the homes and infrastructure in Hargeysa⁵⁸ were destroyed by air raids. The Somali government's attack on its own civilians in northern region and the loss of her previous in Ethiopia home, became a source of great loss for Gacalo.

Coming from a tribal-based community means that losing the built-in social environment, safety and trust, has had longstanding effects on Gacalo's world view and on her general wellbeing. Studies show that the social environment functions as an "internalized social identity"

⁵⁸ also spelled 'Hargeisa'

described by Haslam et al. (2009, p. 1), and that its loss creates psychological conflict within community relationships and among individuals, impacting psychological well-being for all.

For Gacalo, the city of Hargeysa in Somaliland was the most logical place to escape to when the political situation in both her birthplace Eastern Ethiopia and in Mogadishu became too dangerous for her and her family. Gacalo's action was not uncommon. As mentioned earlier, Somalis always seek help from their close family/tribal members. According to van der Kolk (1996), this is established among some communities or ethnic tribes as "the primary protection against feelings of helplessness and meaninglessness; which is essential for biological survival." In other words, tribal connections or belonging among Somalis functions as a "protective membrane" from external dangers (p. 24).

For Gacalo, the most distressing and defining moment in her journey happened when she was caught in the 1988 war between the Somali government and tribal-based Somali National Movement (SNM) in Hargeysa (Somaliland). At the time SNM was a resistant group fighting to break away from the Somali Republic. Due to tribal connections, Gacalo viewed Hargeysa as her second home during her multiple migrations,⁵⁹ and violence there meant a loss of the 'protective membrane'. Gacalo recalls this moment:

We were living in Hargeysa again when one day a neighbour who I thought was my friend at the time came to me to borrow my beautiful rug/floor mats [*roog* in Somali]. She had guests coming over. At the time people did not trust each other and relied on their own people. There was a suspicious feeling all around the city especially from

⁵⁹ Remembering her flight from eastern Ethiopia to Hargeysa in 1977 then to Mogadishu (economic & survival) as an urban refugee in 1978 and back to Hargeysa in 1986 due to fear and search of safety only to leave again because of government attacks on northern tribes in 1987. She then went back to Ethiopia before moving to Egypt and her 1992 final resettlement in Canada.

those who were considered outsiders like refugees from Ethiopia. They use to call us '*habashas*', - Ethiopians or foreigners - but we were not afraid until that time period. There was a dislike or general association of certain sub-tribes to tribes in power and that was worse for other refugees from the '*darrood*' tribe who became victims by association. I was friendly with everybody, especially those who were my childhood friends in Ethiopia. We were not part of that tribe, but since I was friends with them they just assumed I was related to them. The Somaliland resistance groups fighting against the government kept getting stronger in Hargeysa and increased their door-to-door attacks. Before that night they used to come to the city at night to attack the government and those they consider collaborators. One night they came to our neighbourhood and started searching for collaborators. My neighbour told the resistance that I was the other group or "*Faqesh*" in Somali. So they just opened fire on my door -bobooobboobo [makes gun noise]. I was pregnant again and so was my sister who was sharing accommodation with me. We hid ourselves and the children under the beds in our little room- but they keep shooting at us. Luckily my other neighbour came out and started screaming at them saying that we were not '*darrood*,' that we were one of them from Ethiopia and she started reciting my tribal connections to them. She told the resistance group that my neighbour was lying because she hates Ethiopians. They went back and attacked the women for lying and almost killing her and her Issaq children.

During internal war, mistrust and betrayal are common among groups caught in civil disruptions and internal conflicts. Alastair Ager (1999), using a study from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina,

indicates that approximately fifty per cent of respondents in that study experienced: “betrayal by neighbours and acquaintances during the course of conflict in the region” (p.4).

After recounting that defining moment of betrayal, Gacalo continued explaining her ordeal of escaping two wars and experiencing multiple first stages of migration. Gacalo also remembered a particular and dangerous escape from the city of Hargeysa when she was pregnant and hidden in a transformed water tank belonging to her brother-in-law:

When it got worse, my sister’s husband who was driving an NGO water tank at the time saved us. He cut off the top of the water tank to hide all of us in it and drove us to Borama. We were welcomed there. They opened their schools as shelters and that is where I gave birth for the second time during escape - my first-born was also born during our 1977 escape from the Ethiopian war. In Baroma, I found a lot of support and help until the time we went returned to my home town and birthplace in Ethiopia.

Gacalo explained her experiences and loss of family members during those wars as being God’s will, getting solace from religious conviction. Her ability to see both good and bad human behaviours during war is explained by Papadopoulos (2006):

Having come so close to death or having experienced the unbearable anguish of substantial losses, people often emerge transformed, re-viewing life, themselves and their relationships in a new and revitalised way. This means that, paradoxically, despite their negative nature, devastating experiences (regardless of the degree of their harshness and destructive impact) may also help people reshuffle their lives and imbue them with new meaning (p.2)

This quote from Papadopoulos reminded me of my own struggles with multiple migrations, and how, at the end of each journey, my life became about saving my children and I took strength from this. Similarly this is what Filson and Gacalo did; they reshuffled their lives and started all over again.

Living Through The Dangers Of Border Crossings For Women And Children

After dealing with the challenges of loss, devastation, and witnessing the horror of human actions and triumphs, the last challenge before settlement that my participants discussed was the reality of border crossings and having the right documentation to prove status. Such events were remembered by the intense fear of not having or losing some of the needed documentation⁶⁰.

While hearing the stories of my participants, I also remembered this stress of multiple forced migrations accompanied by multiple border crossings. I remember the registration processes and the stress and fear of not having proper identification and its consequences. I recall the struggle to hold on to my identification and my children's, while, at the same time, undertaking multiple moves in search of shelter, food and safety.

The other challenge the women talked about, and that I still remember from my own experience, is the daunting task of remembering stories, dates and remembering/explaining the how when of the losses of family members that are often required at reception centers. Refugees and asylum seekers are asked to retell their stories at different border entry points in order to complete their registration, and the stories needed to be consistent. Remembering and making sure the children do the same, just in case they are asked, is a daunting task.

⁶⁰ Proper documentation of status of migration is required by urban refugees and those living in refugee camps in order to receive assistance from the United Nations, host country refugee centers, or other NGOs.

One of the possibilities for refugees and asylum seekers is spending, like I did, time in detention centres as each document is scrutinized by immigration officials and NGOs. Fearing rejection and deportation because of inconsistent stories is the most extreme stress described by almost all my participants. For some, this stressful, fearful stage and the human trauma they witnessed and experienced left them with questions about humanity. Hoodo explains:

We finally left Kismaayo heading to the border in Kenya. We had to go through a place called ‘a curse of a parent’ or *Habaar walid* in Somali. It is a muddy place and when you step, the mud comes up to your knees; there is no drinking water and the mud never dries. I think it is a place designed for cursed people, blessed people do not live in that kind of place. We were hungry and tired pulling ourselves from the mud, but one of the elders decided that we should continue walking. We then eventually left that place and headed to Liboi on the Somali side. Before we got there however, we saw people swallowed by the mud, eaten by mosquitoes, and dying of malaria and other diseases. We wanted to get to *Dadaab*⁶¹ but border crossing was difficult with a lot of dangers.

Hoodo then related stories of border crossings on her way to Nairobi and how she was confronted with a number of life-threatening situations as a very beautiful young girl with no documentation, who was trying to take her sick mother and 14 year-old brother to safety. A danger I am too familiar with as I was a young mother in my early twenties when I crossed multiple borders for the first time. Listening to her story was particularly difficult for me and I was holding back tears and emotions at the same time. I understood each word and gesture of this particular section of Hoodo’s story.

⁶¹ The closest, largest, and longest-standing refugee camp.

Third Stage Of Migration: The Introduction To Prolonged Toxic Stresses

For some of my participants, the third stage of migration was the most difficult. For those like my participant Hoodo, who did not have Kenyan documentation and did not speak the language, this devastating stage often included experiencing or witnessing gender-based violence. Struggling with the emotional and cultural restrictions around discussing gender-based violence, Hoodo shared her story, choosing her words carefully but still telling her traumatic experiences.

Using the word *tatabasho* or ‘mishandled’ she explained how soldiers used their hands to traumatize women. She talked about how she saved her life with her quick thinking by asking for help from fellow travelers, and reflected on the desperate attempt of those travelers who even lent their identity cards in an attempt to save her life, despite the danger to themselves⁶². She identified those experiences as life-defining and life-changing moments that continue to affect her health to this day.

Similar to Bishaaro, Hoodo also discussed the extreme attempts some people made to save a life, including mothers’ tragic actions to save their children:

The worst thing I saw while running was mothers throwing their children on the moving train cars to save them. These mothers were thinking that if the children were aboard these moving cars maybe they would have a chance to survive. Unfortunately that did not happen for some, and the cars kept going and children dying. Sometimes you would also see children as young as two travelling alone without a parent - you didn’t know the faith of their mothers, you just hoped for the best. You’d also see

⁶² Kenyans punished all Somalis suspected or accused of lending identity cards, despite citizenship status (Human Right Watch, 1990, 2013 and 2014).

mothers eaten by animals such as lions while they were defending their small children. I learned from that experience what a mother's love looks like and the reason I always wanted to be a mother.

For Somalis, religion and culture teach them that orphaned children should be taken care of by other mothers, and throwing their child to a place where other mothers might save them, represents hope for mothers who are forced to take that action. I remember leaving my children with other family members when crossing the border from Djibouti to Somalia, and what that felt like for me and for my children who still experience high anxiety over separation.

For Hoodo, those experiences were the most difficult ones in her life, as demonstrated by her anxiety level, body language and change in tone when she recounted these stories to me. Even though she never talked about personally experiencing gender-based violence, she often described being “*mishandled*” by Kenyan police when they searched for identification and money. She also described in the follow-up interview and other telephone conversations that these events are the source of her current isolation and trauma. She explained she used “prayer” and “self-denial” as a form of protection or an escape, which is connected to the cultural and emotional silencing of *hisaut*.

What Hoodo experienced in Kenya as a young girl without the customary tribal-based support was life-changing, creating an emotional pain that was visible during the interviews I had with her. Some of the effects of this pain are currently expressed in anger and obsession about the safety of her children, who were all born in Canada. She has developed over-protective behaviours, which include limiting her children's exposure to their friends and to media. There is no TV in her house, and her children, some of them in high school, share one laptop for school activities, which she closely monitors on the dining table. Hoodo credits her anxiety, obsessive

behaviour, and anger to the challenges she faced during her journey from Mogadishu, to Kenya, the Middle East, and then the long process she went through to get her Canadian permanent residency.

Feelings of loss, confusion, bereavement and anger are common responses among those like Hoodo and other participants who were forced to leave their homes and resettle in other countries. Alastair Ager (1999), a researcher in refugee studies, quotes the work of Eisenbruch (1990) on Cambodian refugees who have resettled in Australia and the U.S.A, describing their anger issues as one of the strongest and most widespread responses to forced separation from homeland. This anger and bereavement due to the loss of family and meanings of home is common even within successful flight and resettlement experiences.

Dealing With Xenophobia In Temporary Settlement Areas

For those like Hoodo who reached the Kenyan border after escaping the conflict in Mogadishu, the new challenge was to reach specific refugee camps and tribal relatives residing in the urban cities. This treatment of Kenyan-Somalis and other Somalis in Kenya, including refugees, is based on a long colonial history (Human Right Watch, 2013 & 2014). Northern Kenya was carved out of Somalia by the British during colonial times. It is an area inhabited by mainly ethnic Somalis who depend on pastoral living and culturally-based relational support with other Somalis in the region. With the influx of new arrivals from troubled regions in Somalia, the Kenyan government declared restrictive measures that impacted not only the refugees but also ethnic Kenyans with precarious status.

One of those measures was the declaration of a screening process in 1989. A process that, according to Human Rights Watch (1990, p.2), required: “All Kenyans of Somali origin and Somali nationals living in Kenya aged eighteen and above to carry a special identification card

(p. 2).” This screening process was justified as a protection from illegal aliens and refugees and was used as a method of controlling and deporting ethnic Somalis, including Kenyan Somalis.

Hoodo talked about her experience in Kenya, telling the story of how happy she was to finally talk on the phone with her sister in the Diaspora, who sent her some money. While waiting for what to do next, Hoodo also lost track of her brother temporarily after he decided to go to another camp just starting at the time. They were later reunited.

Not speaking Swahili, but relying on her ability with the English language, Hoodo decided to go to Nairobi and seek help from her mother’s tribe. She talks about this journey in detail. She particularly remembers, with pain on her face, what happened when she was searching for her brother and was caught by police looking for ID cards. In that particular incident, the police took her under the bridge, but she escaped by giving them the jewelry and money she was hiding. My observation of her telling of that incident was that it remains traumatizing; she was not willing to share many details of that experience.

The tragic event for Somalis is that two decades later, refugees continue to flee Somalia for camps in Kenya and Ethiopia and these camps remain dangerous and deadly places, especially for women and girls. They still show a lack of change when it comes to refugee protection (Weaver & Burns, 2001; Icamina, 2007, 2011; Human Rights Watch 2013 & 2014). Earlier mentioned Human Rights Watch and others support Hoodo and Bisharo’s discussion regarding their own experiences and those of other Somalis who lived in refugee camps. A majority of the participants link their final resettlement decisions and the destination of Canada as a choice for safety and a peaceful existence. However, as I will discuss below, some of them are still searching for that elusive safety and peace in their new country.

Fourth Stage Of Migration: Toxic Stress, Integration Barriers And Trauma

In this fourth, or *post-settlement* stage of migration, participants talked about the renewal of past traumas combined with present barriers from the stressful and toxic environments they live within. The women's responses at this stage of migration were different and often based on their immigration status. Some of them had applied for refugee status after arrival and others came through private and government sponsored programs. The majority of them, lacking the requisite language skills and basic education, and due to the absence of affordable housing, began to resettle in crime-ridden neighbourhoods, which started off a new life inundated with toxic stress (Danso, 2002; and Williams et al, 2003). Toxic stress in this study is related to internal experiences with prolonged trauma including current experiences with poverty, inadequate housing, racial/systemic oppression and lack of external supportive buffers. These lower-income, racialized neighbourhoods have underfunded schools that created additional stressors for mothers who value their children's academic achievement. Over two decades after initial arrival, many Somalis still reside in those neighbourhoods in both Toronto and Ottawa.

In the past five years, the community also began to face disproportionate levels of youth violence and increased school dropout rates, which has only added to the mothers' existing stressors. Participants Asli and Dalmar talked about their community's experience with drug addiction, higher rates of school dropouts and a lack of parental understanding of the Canadian school system. Bishaaro talked about the experience of one of her family members who is currently struggling with her older son's drug addiction: "This mother even tried to send her son back to Kenya to live with other family members to learn about culture and family respect, or *dhaqan celine* in Somali". Many Somali-Canadian mothers take their children back to their tribal homelands to learn history and ritual, including the art of storytelling and religion. Unfortunately

this *dhaqan celine* or “returning to culture” process, which is designed to bring back Diaspora-born children who lost their culture, religion and way of life, can create additional problems, including new addictions to *khat*, exposure to religious extremists, and renewed hate.

According to Bishaaro, her young family member came back with this additional issue of addiction. *Khat*, which is known in the west as “*catha edulis*,” is an addictive plant which includes a monoamine alkaloid called “cathinone” used culturally by Somali men as an entertainment or to pass time⁶³. This drug, also known as *qaad/jaad* has an amphetamine-like stimulant which, when chewed, initially causes excitement and language eloquence, which is useful for political or tribal debates between men. Unfortunately as with any drug it also has side effects, including exhaustion, loss of appetite, sexual dysfunction and lack of sleep. I grew up watching the destruction of families caused by this addiction as users spend their time looking for either a fix *xaraaro* or being in a high state called *mirqaan*. One of the participants, Dalmar, attributed the failure of her marriage to *Khat*.

Asli, Dalmar and Bishaaro talked about the impacts of *Khat* on the community and other participants Ladan and Mandeeq connect this plant to community responses to trauma. They said: the men are overwhelmed by what happened in the past and what is happening to them now in the resettlement country and began to self medicate with *Khat*. Somali men are also burdened by guilt and shame of losing the cultural based coexistence, their roles as the protectors of the family and being the breadwinners. In Somali culture men often take those roles which are now impossible for them due to the existing systemic barriers creating for them prolonged unemployment or underemployment leading to their withdrawal from family responsibilities by

⁶³ In some instances, *khat* also became the source of income for women who had the sole responsibility of supporting their families. During war when the economy and survival become dependent on Somali women’s ability for trade, a large number began selling this stimulant to generate income.

finding other venues to forget. Unfortunately for the women and the children *Khat* and other ritualistic behaviours such as internal control of family morality and excessive religious practice are introduced or used by men to numb the pain of those stressors. Dalmar, Landan and Mandeeq reflecting on the cause and effects expressed how the daily media representations of the community's involvement with terrorist groups is adding to both negative public perception of the community and adding to all the systemic barriers they face.

Living With Negative Media And Dealing With Existing Community Issues

Hoodo and Udubo talked about the range of their experiences at the settlement stage including the impact of 9/11 on their image, government lack of actions on their current issues and negative media reports regarding Muslim communities, particularly Somali-Canadians. They explained that exclusionist media sources often fed the 9/11 hysteria and public fear, which in turn did not help their healing process. Asli, Dalmar, Jamaad, Ladan, Mandeeq and Udubo also talked about how in the past two decades Somalis have been portrayed negatively in big screen movies such as *Black Hawk Down* (2001), which is based on the true story of the American war on Mogadishu's warlords⁶⁴.

When Somali youth issues come up in Canadian news media and internet postings, the focus is usually on Somali involvement with violence, drugs, and sending their children to fight overseas for Islamic causes, including al-Shabaab and ISIL (Aulakh, 2010; Brown, 2014; The Canadian Press, 2010; Siad, 2011). These negative stereotypes contributed to the stress and fear of the women I interviewed for this study.

⁶⁴ A second unflattering movie about Somalis is *Captain Phillips* (2013), which was about Somali Pirates in the Indian Ocean.

Dealing With Oppressive Systems And Stigma

Somalis are very familiar with the hierarchies of oppression, learning from their own culturally-based tribal hierarchy about access to economic and social well-being and political participation. In social work we understand these concepts but still believe in a just society where access to resources is open to every Canadian. However we also see and work with people who are excluded on a regular basis due to the colour of their skin, language ability (including accent), and/or gender. Because of these realities, we need to keep in mind how oppression works and the different ways it is used against those seen as ‘others.’ Some of these oppressions define general social hierarchy and then social hierarchies in turn contribute to who is able to access economic integration and prosperity. The research participants with school-aged children reported that these ongoing social and economic barriers were their greatest present-day trauma, impacting the future of the children they had struggled to save.

During the interviews, I was surprised by the women’s complex understanding of how systemic hierarchies work. Although dealing with current stressors, each woman was also aware of past and present internal and regional political situations in their regions, and in the Diaspora. Although the women talked about the old days, often reminiscing about the support and safety system lost, they also blamed tribal leaders, religious groups, and regional powers who worked [or continue to work] to eliminate unique cultural-based learning, identity, unity and belonging. Many of the women saw that Western social hierarchy, based on race, skin pigmentation, geographical location, and religious practices, was similar to Somali tribal affiliations, which determine power and the allocation of resources. All of the women agreed that these social hierarchies determined who deserves to “enjoy the Canadian life”.

A recent action by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) called the “Somali Task Force”⁶⁵ is described by Hoodo as just another form of hierarchy that effects Somali-Canadian youth. I noticed that none of the women I interviewed admitted to having an experience with the high school dropout rate mentioned by the TDSB Somali Task Force. They were willing to talk about negative life events, or ‘bad life’ in Somali - *nolol xumo, magac xumo iyo dhibatto* - as a community issue but not as personal experience.

Somalis are not alone in avoiding pain caused by traumatic experiences. Many individuals follow their culturally-based values to assess what to disclose and what to keep hidden in order to avoid stigma. I found that this fear of sharing personal feelings among Somali-Canadians was also strongly influenced by the social environments they live in, including level of education, religiosity, cultural adaptation, and susceptibility to cultural pressure. A recent study by Henning-Smith et al. (2013) compares U.S.-born and Somalia-born Black Americans with White Americans to shed light into the changing nature of cultural stigma around mental health. I learned from this article that Somali-Canadians are not alone with their struggle with cultural adaption and the challenge of the past and present. This is explained by Goffman’s definition of stigma as having a “deeply discrediting attribute in the context of a set of relationships,” (Elliott, 2010, p, 51) that may create barriers for those who are impacted by it.

For the Somali mothers I interviewed, stigma is closely related to the family’s overall health as well as the education or life successes of their children. I learned from my participants that although they came from different regions, tribal/political affiliations and experiences of

⁶⁵ On 21 November 2012 the TDSB passed a motion, to establish a Task Force to address the persistent under achievement and opportunity gaps experienced by Somali-Canadian students. They established a number of mandates including: identifying and recommending steps needed to increase the educational success of Somali students and working with partners to identify possible actions. The task force was led by board trustees Chris Bolton, Maria Rodrigues and John Hastings and Community members acting as co-Chairs (TDSB, 2012).

colonisation, they still share similar cultural beliefs and also to some extent, life stressors during the resettlement stage. A large number of them (five out of twelve participants) talked about how current stressors are contributing to their ill health. Asli, Dalamar, Hoodo, Jamaad, Kafia, Ladan and Mandeeg expressed sensing danger, fear, and feeling uncertain about the future of their children. They also connected these feelings with identity crisis⁶⁶ and shame.

The Struggle For The Second Generation: Cultural Identity, Belonging And Loss Of Self

Asli, reflecting on the identity challenges she faces personally as a mother and now as a grandmother raising a second generation in Canada, talked in detail about where current cultural crises are stemming from, for both mothers and their children. Her observations were echoed by Dalmar, Ladan and Maandeeq. These women talked about how focusing on their children helped them to increase their personal community involvement and advocacy for educational and labour market integration. The women also saw this parental involvement as a chance to learn about their history with colonialism and to gain a deeper understanding of the type of Islam currently being practiced.

When I asked these women what advocacy for inclusive education and systemic change would look like, each woman talked about how advocacy starts with unity and how only united people are heard. They perceived that a united cause would help our children and was a good beginning to make changes.

The women I interviewed also discussed how some mothers consciously and unconsciously resist, minimize or deflect past emotional pains. These deflections of pain can be demonstrated in isolationist behaviours such as clothing style or an excessive demonstration of

⁶⁶ Self-perception from past identities based on tribal location and access to resources, was challenged by now finding themselves identified as Black or labelled as African, Muslim – and at the bottom of the economic ladder.

religious devotion that promotes a certain self-image. It's a way to emphasise an Islamic identity, which some perceive as the only thing that cannot be denied to them. In the past two decades the Somali Islamic identity has been changing, mainly moving away from its original format of moderate Sunni or Sufi which was accommodating to Somali local or tribal based culture. New and imported teachings from Saudi Arabia are now having a greater influence and silencing all cultural practices including songs and dances. Those who understand the loss of this cultural abandonment are embracing this new change in religious practice as a form of power. Some are practicing this new change to hold on to their lost dignities through forced migration and as a symbol, a resistance or a memory of their lost identities. It is seen as a part of history that still functions as a symbol of hope when everything else is lost or becomes unattainable.

These forms of resistance are best described by Goffman's work quoted in Drew & Wootton (1988) as "constructed rituals" designed for the presentation of "private and public" social lives (p.46). These rituals are described by Goffman as "front stage" rituals presented for the public and "back stage" rituals conducted among families (Drew and Wootton, 1988, p.46-48). These public and private rituals add to community stress, fuelling confusion, division, disillusion and sometimes the creation of false or imagined memories. It can sometimes mean holding on tightly to a cultural dream or imagined memories of a past that no longer exists.

Bishaaro, commenting on pain avoidance and the private rituals for men said, "Men are either praying or chewing Khat while women are spending a large amount of their daily life on searching for news updates." Women's rituals also include telephone addiction, shopping, and catching up with local gossip. Hidden in that telephone addiction is the false information that is sometimes shared among women creating further family distresses. This false information include the quality of education in their tribal regions compare to the Canadian education. It is

also about the value given to the importance of taking their children/youth back to Africa and the tribal lands as a form of behaviour change or cultural rebirth in Somali “*dhaqan celine*”. For children or youth coming back to Canada after this intervention not only creates another layer of barrier due to the disruption of their education but also creates cultural dissonance. They often require a re-adjustment time to school curriculum and social integration. Dalmar and Asli described this education interruption as part of the causes for the higher school dropout rate.

Hoodo, talking about the new cultural changes, public presentation of rituals, and addictions explains that, “Some of us spend a lot of time focusing on fulfilling the responsibility of teaching children about Islam by going to the local mosque and we spend more money than we can afford on private religious tutoring”. She also acknowledges the impact this practice can have on children’s social interactions with other cultures and religious backgrounds. Some of the children in these environments, having no choice but to please their parents, follow these ritual instructions provided by their parents, who are limited by their past memories of trauma and pain, as well as fear and their desire to protect their children. Dalmar and Asli talked about the challenges these multiple changes and decisions based on word-of-mouth have on the second generation who are now adults with children of their own. My observation was the second generation are struggling with balancing their bi-cultural identities, values, religious pressures and are fighting for integration thorough higher education. These community narratives and the varied responses to pressures made me hope that the second generation, while embracing their cultural and religious identity, will also find a way to come together to share strategies for advocacy and ethnic unity, as well as develop an effective networking and a mentoring process for the coming generations.

What Does Not Kill You Makes You Stronger

I chose this as my subtitle because it was repeated by the women while talking about the multiple traumatic events that have happened in their lives, and used to describe their resiliency and hopes for a better future; a future that they all agreed relies on their children's successful integration. Asli remembers her past and expresses her hope for the future:

The other defining moment for me during resettlement was the realization of the dissolution of my marriage, the way it ended and how it affected me internally. When I came to Canada I immediately began sending money for my husband whom I left behind. I remember the last time I sent him \$500. That money has significance to my married life because immediately after a family member called me to let me know that she saw my husband shopping for female clothing, spices, perfumes and special wedding foods. My husband was buying food for his wedding party using my hard earned money with no regard to even telling me first. Later, another family member came back to Canada and told me she had a tape for me. Back then Somalis, mainly forced by illiteracy, used to send to each other voice recorded messages. I had spent money with lawyers to complete his family sponsorship and he basically told me in that tape he decided to marry a woman he met while I was away. He was asking me to forgive him for marrying another woman. Then I read my sister's letter. You know in life you pass through difficult times and I decided this is another difficult thing I need to go through. That affected me a great deal but I believe that '*what does not kill you makes you stronger*' and I am hoping that my children will not be dealing with what I dealt with.

For Bishaaro, resettlement barriers came during the long waiting time of getting

government assistance for those coming to Canada via family sponsorships. Bishaaro connects her current struggles to a history of multiple traumas and loss:

There were a number of defining moments in my life including my flight from Mogadishu, including seeing during my journey the human misery and what humans are capable of doing to each other. I lost my first husband and I think that is why I got breast cancer. All that pain became an illness for me. Even though I was finally coming back home to my family I became very sick with breast cancer and it came back again a few years later: so I survived death, destruction and breast cancer twice. In this journey, I also become diabetic but that is now under control because I just take a pill. Now I am really suffering from isolation - I cannot visit my friends, I can't even go to the mosque as much as I would like because I do not have transportation money, and I have to wait for ten years before I apply for government assistance. Since I am always by myself I started teaching myself the Quran from the Internet so prayers and reading the Quran helps me with my isolation. I guess this financial problem will pass too because I believe "*what does not kill you makes you stronger*" and my life and the lives of my children and grandchildren will be better.

This repeated quote shows the women's resilience and hope despite their past painful experiences. These Canadian-Somali women have survived by depending on their inherent resilience and traditional strengths, and these built-in survival skills. My hope is that this inherent character will help the second generation make a lasting change in individual and community healing.

Summary

Through outlining my participants' stories I revealed the traumas experienced in the different stages of migration and how they were carried into the fourth stage of migration. The resulting ill-health from coping mechanisms such as addictions, control, cultural isolation, and religious extremism in turn effect the second generation, adding to a cycle of trauma. However, I also began to outline how these women survived such challenging circumstances, and that this resilience is the foundation for change for individual, family and community healing, which begins with first understanding brain functions (the Neuroplasticity process), trauma process and healing which will be discussed in the following two chapters.

V. CHAPTER FIVE: Neurobiological Analysis

Refugees, Trauma And Clinical Social Work

In this study I found that for Somali-Canadian women/mothers, the experience of going through all the steps of migration or growing up in a stressful environment without any supportive systems creates what social neuroscientists call a toxic stress environment. For these women and their children, this stressful environmental condition is also extended by the combination of both internal and external factors. For Somali-Canadians, internal pressures come from combined factors such as: past traumas/current triggers, having to support family members (as single mothers) here and those left behind on a small income. It also comes from current community's change in cultural and religious practices and the pressures that come from either accepting the trend due to fear (family and community rejection) or rejecting the change itself and dealing with the consequences such as constant criticism(seen as not a good Muslim). External pressures come from: systemic factors including living in environmentally stressful conditions brought on by the silent violence of racism, low income, poor quality housing, food insecurity, unemployment/insecure employment and various forms of discrimination based on religion/Islamophobia, race and immigration status.

This is explained by social neuroscience and social work studies as sources that ultimately shape the neural and emotional structures of children and adults' (Matto et, al., 2014; Siegel, 2011). For the past decade, researchers using social neuroscience have uncovered a great deal about the brain mechanisms underlying past trauma, perception, cognition, emotion, memory and behaviour. Due to the paucity of neurobiological research on trauma and social work research on survivors of prolonged wars and civilian displacement, I must rely heavily on the few existing social neuroscience and social work literatures to explore both the impact of trauma and social

work practice (or intervention) on Somali-Canadian women/mothers. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the revelations that the women of my study have made about their past and present experiences including their perceptions, cognitions, emotions and memories which I presented in Chapter Four, and how they now impact their wellbeing and integration/resettlement process. I will also be exploring how those impacts are affecting some second-generation Somali-Canadians epigenetically⁶⁷ and the transference of trauma (Meaney, 2001; Meaney et al., 2010; Schwerdtfeger & Goff, 2007).

This latest development in social neuroscience research has created a great opportunity for me as a social work practitioner and researcher to explore both the understanding of self as well as individual responses to past and present traumas. It also allowed me to explore the response to one of my earlier questions of this study which is how Somali-Canadians get to where they are today. Social neuroscience literature informed my exploration on the impact of conditions of prolonged poverty has on the family. Studies show these conditions may now be passed on to the second generation (Meaney, 2001; Meaney et al., 2010; Schwerdtfeger & Goff, 2007) who are now dealing with high rates of high-school dropouts and who frequently come in contact with the justice system.

Understanding Trauma And Brain Functions

The traumatising and powerful stories presented in Chapter Four by some of my participants (Asli, Bisharo, Gacalo, Jamaad and Hoodo) explain their past and present life experiences. They also highlight what makes them vulnerable to possible emotional changes and its long term impacts on the family and the community without the availability of adequate

⁶⁷ A modification in gene expression that is independent of the DNA sequence of a gene often credited to toxic environment affecting early mother/child connections.

intervention (to be discussed in Chapter Six). For some of my participants going through multiple forced migrations including the many horrific events they shared with me did not leave them unchanged. I know from personal experiences and these women's stories that those experiences remain unforgettable for us as they are still constantly triggered during our resettlement processes.

Neuroscientists say the human brain's main responsibility is to sustain our existence through complex connections and neural communication that enable us to adapt to our environment (Cozolino, 2010; Siegel, 2011). This happens as each life experiences and sets in motion a bunch of neurons that send long chemical and electrical signals to different areas of the brain. This motion, as it happens, creates what they call synaptic connection that either strengthens or changes the functions for specific areas of the brain (Cozolino, 2010; LeDoux 1996 & 2002; Siegel, 2007 & 2011; van der Kolk, 2014). These scientists also say those changes - based on certain conditions such as environmental toxicity - at times can create gene activation and protein production that have behavioural consequences for children born in that environment during in their adults life. These neural expressions are what also sustain the human life as they either strengthen the person's capacity to survive or impact the quality of life based on life experience. As humans, nature gave us this fascinating ability for survival including the process of adapting to our environments from early life into adulthood. This adaptation process responds not only to trauma but to the availability of other basic human needs including adequate food, shelter and a nurturing environment. Nature also gave us an inbuilt warning system that alerts us to upcoming dangers to sustain life. Nature allows us to use these systems which are constantly adjusting themselves through life experience, making our brains what Daniel Siegel (2011) calls the "anticipation machine" (p.148) which has "user-dependent function" that is determined by

our experiences (van der Kolk, 2014, p56). It is a function that allows us to adapt to positive or negative environments at an early age (based on the quality of child and caregiver interaction) often changing neural connectivity and even gene expression that will have an impact on later adult life (McCormick, 2012 and Meaney, 2001). These scientists also explain how these brain adjustments based on early life experiences formulated by a process called “neurons that fire together wire together” (Sigel, 2011, p.148; van der Kolk, 2014, p56) which is a theory developed in 1949 by the Canadian neuroscientist Donald Hebb⁶⁸.

For my participants, these connections and functions continue to make the difference in their behavioural responses to either past experience or present resettlement and integration challenges. I know from my own family story and my participants that this natural survival ability as Somalis provided us with a built in resiliency that helped us endure the first three stages of forced migration. I believe my participants and I are still using those strengths and managing to live through the never-ending barriers, marginalization and religious/race-based isolating systems.

During successful resettlement our social brain allows us with each interaction to communicate and assess our connection, the value of that relationship and anticipate the outcome (Matto et al., 2014, p.48-49). As discussed in earlier chapters, relationships help us humans to flourish with good connections or to die without them due to disconnection and isolation (Cozolino, 2010, p.179). I believe that racism, inequality and marginalization in Canada are part of the toxic stress that create intergenerational and chronic or prolonged individual/community poverty. For survivors of wars and resettled refugees how it can happen to them is explained by Daniel Siegl (2011) stating that the human brain:

⁶⁸ Also known as Hebbian theory or Hebb's rule or Hebb's postulate or cell assembly theory

Prepares itself for the future based on what has happened in the past. Memories shape our current perceptions by creating a filter through which we automatically anticipate what will happen next. In this way the patterns we encode in memory actually bias our ongoing perceptions and change the way we interact with the world (p. 148).

For some of the women I interviewed for this study the never ending life of poverty, stressful family situations and loss of hope for finally resettling in a safe country like Canada creates a stress related to hormonal production that also affects their immune system and determines the quality of their health status (van der Kolk, 2014). Siegel (2011) explains this health risk as the secretion of stress hormones being responsible for stimulating the adrenals glands, which then releases the hormone cortisol. It is a system that mobilizes energy by putting our entire metabolism on high alert to meet these new life challenges (p.17). For my participants and now their children who still live in or were born in ghettoized neighbourhoods two decades after their initial resettlement, their life events create what social neuroscientists call toxic stresses that may ultimately shape the neural and emotional structures of their brains (Matto et al, 2014, p. 264 and Cozolino, 2010, pp.349-355). Trauma researchers like van der Kolk (2014) even go further indicating the long term impacts of these stressors on the health and wellbeing of those who are living with trauma (van der Kolk, 2014, pp. 126-7).

Listening to the women's stories and doing participant observation in their own environment, I also found how post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) persists for some and their families. For example within some my participants' narratives of resettlement (Asli, Bishaaro, Dalmar, Hoodo and Kafiya) I found PTSD symptoms which are supported by literature including having: intrusive dreams about their initial flight from their homes and their journeys through

different countries or cities are still relived on daily bases for some. They mention in their stories about the daily thoughts that occur when they experience similar events that scientists describe as triggers or flashbacks of the past (Cozolino, 2010; Siegel, 2011; van der Kolk, 2014).

Other symptoms of PTSD I noticed during my discussions with participants include social avoidance or withdrawal or emotional turmoil that social scientists say are all related to the anticipation of danger (Brewin, 2011; Farmer, 2009; LeDoux, 2002; Matto et al, 201, Nunn et al, 2008; and Restak, 2000). Some studies show how these symptoms also led to what they call emotional dysregulation, behavioural impulsivity, increased anxiety, quick startle responses, sleep disturbances, anger, hyper-vigilance and a restricted range of emotions (Cozolino, 2010, p. 284 and Farmer, 2009, p. 81). Some of the educated participants (Asli, Dalmar and Ladan) who have read about these symptoms and understand the stigma attached to them never claimed to experience those feelings themselves, but discussed the symptoms in context and relation to other life difficulties as experienced by their family or community members.

Some researchers even argue these PTSD symptoms are responsible for functions that involve memory capacity, sorting/evaluating and the content of memories (Brewin, 2011; Farmer, 2009). Traumatic memories and behavioural responses as implicit and explicit memories happen in the area of the brain known as the emotional, learning and memory centers such as the hippocampus and amygdale that are part of the limbic system. According to Siegel (2011) these areas - particularly the hippocampus - create several different forms of “memory-of facts, of specific experiences, of the emotions that give color and texture to those experiences” (p.18). For example, the hippocampus puts together the bases for emotional and perceptual memories creating factual and autobiographical recollections of those memories for future use.

These autobiographical recollections in the form of stories are also further strengthened or dependent on how the other areas of the brain are developed by those experiences (Siegel, 2011, p. 19). Experiences that are identified as either new learning or stored as memories from daily life experiences, have a profound effect on human behaviour, such as managing responses to traumatic events (Cozolino, 2010; LeDoux 2002; and Siegel, 2011). Areas such as the amygdale and hippocampus not only help us recall memories, but the emotions attached to those memories. Both the amygdale and hippocampus, using the relay center called the thalamus (Cozolino, 2010; LeDoux 2002; and Seigel, 2011) help us associate dangers of exclusionist systems such as the silent violence of religious, racial, geopolitical and other discriminations with past similar experiences. With each new experience, as mentioned earlier, our neurons connect and reconnect, storing the past and determining the future by creating neural networks (Siegel, 2011, p. 148). For example, for people who lived with fear for a prolonged time, each fearful event strengthens those past connections and in turn they anticipate similar devastating feelings that activate their fight or flight response or hormonal changes that affect the immune system. (Brewin, 2011; Farmer, 2009; LeDoux, 2002; Matto et al., 2014; Nunn et al., 2008; Restak, 2000; Siegel, 2007 & 2011).

The two brain areas that I am fascinated by are the close working relationship of the sea horse-shaped hippocampus and the almond shaped amygdala both located deep in the temporal lobe of the brain. They are the center of emotions, memory and manage our survival chances I mentioned earlier by constantly filtering past and present feelings, emotions and motivations (Cozolino, 2010, LeDoux and Nunn, 2008). For example, when past feelings such as racism are experienced by marginalized communities it is the implicit memory that unknowingly comes to surface triggered by amygdala's quick assessment and response, alerting us about the danger

and the need for survival. At the same time, through the thalamus those alert systems retrieve information from storied memories and the hippocampus makes the declarative memory available for use in predicting the future (Siegel, 2011; Applegate & Shapiro 2005). As Daniel Siegel (2011) explains, “A reactivated implicit memory is fully conscious; it just lacks the sensation of recall”. It functions from generalized mental models and past events, some of them repeated over time to form “one prototypical representation known as a schema” of past events. (p. 151-152).

Researchers say the hyper-sensitivity and over-reactivity of the amygdale in toxic stress situations is known to generate severe emotional responses seen in some of my participants who are still suffering decades after their initial trauma (Applegate & Shapiro 2005; Farmer, 2009; LeDoux, 2002; Matto et al, 2014, Nunn et al, 2008; Restak, 2000). Researchers also say some of these memories may not even be accurate coming from distorted memories of traumatic incidents that may be exaggerated, minimized or denied based on context (Brewin, 2011, Siegel, 2011; van der Kolk, 2014).

For some, these past and most recent emotions are re-triggered with the detection of the slightest hint of danger putting in motion a need survival. It creates a motion/plan for a series of mind, brain and body reactions including the secretion of massive amounts of stress hormones that I mentioned earlier which affect the wellbeing of the individual or community (van der Kolk, 2014). It is an unpleasant experience for some survivors I interviewed who are struggling with the outcomes of those sensations that may create intense physical sensations, impulsive and aggressive actions that they use as a form of protection.

No matter what the bases are, traumatic memories became a daily struggle for these survivors of wars who continue to combine their earlier traumas (forced migration and flight)

with current stressors (resettlement and integration) which affect the functioning of the amygdala, along with the hippocampus, both of which control emotions (Siegel, 2011 p. 19). Some say, over time, due to exhaustion from constant function and production of hormones, neural and synaptic connections also weaken or strengthen certain areas. For example, the decrease in amygdala sensitivity may trigger mental illnesses such as depression (LeDoux, 2002& 1996; Nunn et al, 2008 and van der Kold 2014).

Looking at current international politics, daily news, the expansion of wars, and the ever-increasing number of refugees in the world, stress is clearly part of global life. However, what distinguishes everyday stress from pathological stress is that those living with PTSD build their lives around a particular traumatic experience, in this instance war and loss of home, and as mentioned earlier, relive those experiences through certain triggers (Cozolino, 2010; LeDoux, 2002; Siegel, 2007 &2011; van der Kolk et al. 1999; and van der Kolk, 2014). Even though these experiences differ with each community member, for this small study, seven out of twelve women (or 58%) show resiliency and adaptation to survival while five of the twelve women (or 42%) show effects of long term suffering through their current daily struggles. Therefore, looking collectively at the impact of trauma at the macro level is important for social workers to initiate processes of social justice and advocacy in the policy realm. For Somali-Canadian mothers the impacts of prolonged trauma and existing toxic stress are now seen in the school dropout rates of their children and the number of the Somali-Canadian youth coming in contact with the justice system or death. My participants' stories, the living conditions I observed while in the field and the literature I read showed the process of trauma transference to the second generation (Abdi, 2012; Atkinson et al., 2010; Danso, 2002; Kaufmann, 2015; Matto, et al., 2014; Somali Youth Conference, 2010).

Acknowledging a specific issue impacting the service user is important for social work practice as it helps to assess and convey the message about how war related experiences and the resulting PTSD affect not only those who lived through them but others who are around them (Cozolino, 2010; Papadopoulos, 2006; Siegel, 2011; van der Kolk, 2014; van der Kolk et al., 1996). For example, one of the secondary aspects of trauma in the family is its extension to the second generation as well as the epigenetic process. Van der Kolk (2014) describes the secondary impact of trauma using veteran families as an example: “The wives of men who suffer from PTSD tend to become depressed, and the children of depressed mothers are at risk of growing up insecure and anxious” (p. 1). Exposure to parental PTSD symptoms at a young age also creates other vulnerabilities—*anxiety, attachment-related issues and social withdrawal*—making it difficult for younger members of the family to establish stable, trusting relationships as adults (van der Kolk, 2014, p. 1). Similar vulnerabilities were described by the participants as one of the reasons for the higher death rate and higher school dropout rate of Somali-Canadian youth.

Understanding Social Isolation: The Struggle For Belonging And Its Impact On The Social Brain

One of the major observational findings of this study is the presence of internal and external isolation in the lives of the Somali-Canadian. While there are a number of research studies regarding immigrant and refugee integration and wellbeing in Canada, there is a dearth of research focusing on this particular population. The few existing studies on Somalis I found explore the impact of past trauma on Somalis who have resettled in the United Kingdom and the United States, both of which have large Somali refugee communities (Bhui et al., 2006; Jaranson et al., 2004; Henning-Smith et al., 2013; Robertson et al., 2006). In one of the studies, the Oromo

and Somali communities in St. Paul, Minnesota were examined. It revealed that a high rate (47%) of Somali women previously exposed to torture and rape during the civil war became more prone to psychological problems over time (Robertson et al., 2006, p. 581). In the second study, which looked at trauma responses of 143 Somali participants living in the United Kingdom, a higher rate than other immigrant groups of common mental disorders (CMD) including PTSD was found. According to this study, the risk of CMD increased for those using *khat* as a coping strategy (Robertson et al., 2006, p. 400). The third and most recent study compared the gap between different generations of US-Somalis in reporting mental health issues, based on birth place and cultural change or bi-culturalism.⁶⁹ This study looked at meaning-making and the perception of CMD of two generations: US-born (second generation) versus those born outside the United States, and the challenges of reporting health/mental health and social issues (Henning-Smith et al., 2013, pp. 861-865).

These three studies explored not only the cultural limitations of the meaning-making process but the similarity of Somali refugee experiences when it comes to existing social stressors in resettlement countries. The Henning-Smith et al. (2013) study also identified a number of protective factors for those born outside the country that contributed to their resiliency including their “strong social ties and a sense of belonging to their particular ethnic group” (p. 861–862). This study found that having a strong tie to their community of origin remained an important, healthy aspect of their lives that continued to give them a sense of belonging. The researchers described this as the “healthy migrant” factor, and it continues to be an asset in first-

⁶⁹ Bi-culturalism refers to individuals who have embraced both Somali and North American cultures.

generation Somali immigrants' resettlement process (Henning-Smith et al, 2013, p.861).⁷⁰ A finding from this study also credits the centuries-old Somali pastoral tradition of belonging, self-help, survival and resiliency. It is a tradition that is still used by older Somali refugees who have resettled in the west, including some of my participants who talked about the supportive aspects of this system for their health and wellbeing.

Understanding The Function Of Exclusionist Systems, The Social Brain And Somali Resilience

In resettlement countries such as Canada, social groups can provide their new members with a sense of identity in their environment, in that a new identity of belonging can be fostered that comes from the validation/recognition of their education and culture. It is this social integration aspect of community development that also fosters belonging and integration for communities like Somalis (Danso, 2002; Galabuzi, 2001; Hyman, 2011). However for some immigrants, such as African groups like Somali-Canadians, the issue of recognition and belonging becomes a challenge. In the past few years the global political, economic and geopolitical changes have brought social changes that are now determining the level of belonging based on geopolitical inclusion. These changes ease the process of integration for some Canadian communities while they continue to enhance the poverty level of other non-European immigrants, silently imposing selection criteria that are marginalizing, oppressive and exploitative of these groups.

Some studies, for example the work of Judith Jordan (2010), seek to explain the social impacts of group stratification within marginalizing systems on the individual's and

⁷⁰ First-generation immigrants are often healthier than second-generation immigrants of the same ethnic or racial backgrounds (Simich, 2008 a & b and Galabuzi 2002)

community's wellbeing. Jordan (2010) details this process and explains how group membership and belonging diminish or enhance individual health based on the inclusive or supportive functions. Louis Cozolino (2010, p. 177) also explains the impacts of exclusion detailing how the human brain is a social organ that is enriched by unity and positive interaction and how it diminishes with isolation. In multicultural and multiethnic Canadian communities, this knowledge is important for planning community development programs.

In these Canadian communities these needs for fostering connection and integration in community development are rarely discussed, or are generalized, or, at worst, silenced. Since the Western tradition of science believes in the "individual as a single, isolated organism rather than one embedded within the human community" (Cozolino, 2010, p. 178) the need for group connections and integration is not studied in many disciplines. Recently, some researchers began to point out the need for supportive group membership and environments to enhance the social and economic integration of societies at the macro level (Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Galabuzi, 2001, 2005, 2006; Hyman, 2011; LeDoux, 2001; Siegel, 2007, 2011 and Wilkinson, 2010). These researchers found that group dynamics and power differences can either support the group's healthy social development or disempower them, turning them into a disconnected, silenced, isolated or ashamed community that ultimately affects not only individuals or communities but the society's wellbeing (Cozolino, 2010; Jordan, 2010; Cozolino, 2010; Siegel, 2007, 2011 and van der Kolk, 2014).

Supporting this description, other researchers say the impact on health not only comes from feelings of isolation and disconnection but also from living with constant fear and toxic stress, feelings that come from always being seen as the "other" instead of being accepted as part of an "us" (Haslam et al., 2009; and MacDonnell et al., 2012). According to Haslam et al.

(2009) groups who feel they are acknowledged for their contribution to the society or belong often report better health because:

Groups that provide us with a sense of place, purpose, and belonging tend to be good for us psychologically. They give us a sense of grounding and imbue our lives with meaning. They make us feel distinctive and special, efficacious and successful. They enhance our self-esteem and sense of worth. These effects can buffer well-being when it is threatened, and can also help people cope with the negative consequences of being a member of a devalued group (p.2-3).

There are also differences among individuals with similar experiences based on existing internal supportive systems. Ager (1999), quoting the classic study of trauma by Freud and Burlingham (1943), points out the importance and necessity of those supportive systems to overcome past adversities, re-adjust to new environments, and nurture the next generation. Other studies such as Papadopoulos, (2002 & 2006) and Potocky-Tripodi (2002) also identify how the social context of healing from traumatic experiences is based on the availability of systems in host countries to foster social cohesion among ethnic groups and existing internal relations. Such support systems are not available for the Somali-Canadian women I interviewed and their children, as the external is unwelcoming and the internal is isolated, divided and stigmatized by past traumas. Goffman's (1963) lecture notes on stigma and the impacts of Othering further explain how psychological stigma is felt by those who experience these internal and external exclusions. In these notes, he emphasises how Othering stigmatizes and labels individuals and communities, defining the quality of their social interaction and the roles they play in it (Elliott, 2010, p. 51).

Canadian academics recently began to argue that Canadian multiculturalism in its current context contributes to the formation of these labeling, stigmatizing and compartmentalizing communities. Canadian researchers such as Grace-Edward & Teelucksingh (2010), Reitz et al. (2009), and Hyman et al. (2011) refer to how the forces that bond individuals at both the community and the national level, or the lack of bonding, can affect the future of current Canadian multicultural policy. This argument is explained by the latest “Policy Horizons” publication on these issues by the Government of Canada (2013):

Social cohesion comprises a set of social processes that include common values, civic order, democratic participation, equal opportunities and a sense of belonging. Social fragmentation is linked to negative population outcomes (e.g. ghettoization, poor health outcomes, and crime), whereas social cohesion is linked to positive population outcomes (e.g. healthy, educated, and productive communities).

Currently in Canada, as each community creates its own silos within the country, identity, diversity, and social cohesion converge, creating further divides that perpetuate marginality and inequality (Hyman et al 2011, p. 2 and Reitz et al 2009, p. 8). Quoting Dewey and Leman’s (2006) publication, Hyman et al. (2011) explain Canadian multiculturalism is a concept designed to celebrate diversity where ethnic groups:

...leverage support to achieve their aspirations. In Canada, multiculturalism most often refers to a set of ideas and ideals celebrating our nation’s cultural diversity. At the policy level it refers to the “management of diversity through formal initiatives in the federal provincial and municipal domains. It is a term that has recently taken on negative connotations, being seen as a divisive force rather than as a platform for mutual benefit and co-existence” (p.1-2).

Canadian sociologist Jeffrey Reitz (2013) follows this up by saying:

Increased diversity has the potential to influence society in two ways. Ethno-racial diversity, in particular, can affect the sense of fairness and inclusion in a society if it produces inequality. Diversity can also call into question common values, commitments, and social relations among groups and individuals. Diversity, therefore, has the potential to strengthen or weaken social cohesion (Policy Horizons Canada, 2013, p.1).

What is missing in the equality and multiculturalism debate is the impact of this silent division and stratification based on geopolitical belonging and the marginalization of communities that leaves some ethnic groups like Somali-Canadian and others from continental Africa on the lower end of social and economical mobility. For Somalis who are familiar with the impacts of Othering and marginalization, their sensitivity to this silent violence committed by systemic oppression often traumatizes them further or triggers past pains.

One of my participants Jamaad, who came to Canada as a child, was educated here, and is currently working in her professional field, talks about this issue of identity and belonging:

The idea of belonging is difficult for me. I came as a child and never have a country to belong to before my family's arrival in Canada. This is the only country I know and spent most of my life. I do not have an accent except my identifying brown face and the first thing people want to know is not my name or profession but where I come from. Since I look like other immigrants from another continent knowing my identity as an African changes their perception of me immediately as they began to see me in another category. I used to wonder why they do not ask that classifying

question to White immigrants until I learned about colonialism, racism belonging in school. Now I wonder why they start accepting other immigrants who look like me, but not me. I really hate the question “where are you from?” They are just telling me ‘you are not one of us.’

Some of the study participants, remembering experiences from their past including xenophobic hate and violence, compare those experiences with current racism, religious discrimination and Othering in Canada.

The day I went to Hoodo’s place for the second interview, she asked me if we could first go to a nearby Tim Horton’s coffee shop, which was located in a plaza near her home. Since it was on the next block, I suggested that we could walk there, to get fresh air. I was surprised by her reaction to my suggestion as she quickly turned to me with an anxious face and said, “it is not safe to walk.” She then went on to tell me how one summer evening when she was walking some teenagers driving a big car threw empty bottles on her, calling her a “terrorist.” She said: “I drive everywhere which is not helping for my high blood pressure and weight problem. I need to exercise I can’t afford female only Gyms and I can’t walk on the street or park because of fear.”

When I asked her how that felt she said: “I really felt cornered, like the day the police men cornered me under the bridge.” Now, joined in her memory, are the experiences of walking towards home and being attacked in Kenya as a refugee during one of her migration experiences. That past trauma is now connected to her current feeling of helplessness on Canadian streets. The human brain as Siegel (2011) calls it is the “anticipation machine” that prepares us for future events based on past learning (p.148). Those images of Hoodo’s past are stored in her memory, coming back as soon as she hears the suggestion of walking on the street. It is a memory system

that is alerting part of her brain to a sensation of fear and impending danger. For Hoodo, feeling safe seems to evade her as she re-experiences her past with these sensations of danger every time she feels fearful or unwelcome. Othering and unwelcome gestures that are often demonstrated through exclusionist systems silently, but sometimes loudly felt as in Hoodo's case, do not promote feelings of safety or acceptance for most of the participants I interviewed. They create chronic stress and ill health contributing to other existing issues, adding another layer of toxic environment for both mothers and their children.

Understanding Mothering For Somali-Canadian Women: The Challenges

While some of my participants were explaining to me about their stressful life, I noticed how these stressors affect not only the women but also their families. For example, my participant including Dalamar talked about social stressors related to family disruption coming from Khat and Somali-Canadian male coping-mechanism mentioned earlier. She identifies this perspective not only as her problem but also a problem for the families she works with as a service provider. She said: "Mothers are left dealing with raising the children, dealing with their own nightmares, and surviving other daily stressors,"(Dalamar). Others including Asli, Dalmar, Kafiya, Ladan and Maandeeq also spoke about these issues while mentioning the missing role of fathers who are consumed by this dependency or participate in exaggerated religious rituals which keep them away from dealing with the real family issues and the various impacts of their toxic behaviour.

Hearing these stories and others, I argue that as social workers we need to understand how trauma is also re-enacted in the brain at the micro level, through behavioral changes that may include drugs and other emotional stimulants to seek calmness in the middle of a chaotic life (Cozolino, 2010, p.279). This enhanced understanding of trauma and memory requires

exploring individual thought processes, adjustments and health related issues that are based on both the structure and function of our society, stressful environments, individual brain development and trauma responses. The impacts of toxic stress during child development and later adult responses to those stressors are studied by researchers who detail how brain wiring is shaped by those environments and experiences, having an impact on the second generation (Siegel, 1999, 2007 & 2011; and Wilkinson, 2010).

In order to understand this further, I will discuss how social neuroscience provides insights that can be applied to social work, and in turn be used as intervention within refugee communities who struggle with recurring trauma. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the use of social neuroscience in social work is beneficial and mentioned by researchers explaining its contribution to our knowledge for understanding the human brain process and behavior (Farmer, 2009, p. 3-9). It also allows researchers and practitioners to share information with other disciplines and contribute to the practice based knowledge (Matto et al., 2014,p. xiii). During my field work I found how this prolonged trauma during forced migration is now affecting the community as each individual I interviewed discussed either their physical or emotional pain and their concern over accessing appropriate and safe services. They also talked nostalgically about the supportive systems and healing mechanisms they lost in this prolonged war. There is a need for social work intervention that looks at our current Western- based model of intervention and creates a new way of practice. For example, for communities like Somalis, a holistic approach of social work that includes indigenous knowledge and culture, such as storytelling, will benefit the community at micro and macro levels of intervention. Throughout my practice, I use storytelling as a form of self-understanding including promoting mental health issues using brain function and healing processes. I use mental health as an example for

communities that are stigmatized or have a cultural restriction in naming illness. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the use of social work and social neuroscience knowledge is now a new addition to clinical social work practice. Taking advantage of the recent development of social neuroscience research (LeDoix, 1996 & 2002; Meaney, 2001; Meaney & Ferguson-Smith, 2010; Siegel, 2007 & 2011; van der Kolk et al., 1999; van der Kolk 2014) a few social work researchers have begun to write about its benefits for creating an alternative model to clinical intervention (Applegate & Shapiro, 2005; Frammer, 2009; Matto et al., 2014). These social work researchers show how traumatic memories reappear in later life or get transferred onto the next generation. This insight contributes to both the understanding of trauma in social work practice and the needed steps for healing.

Using Social Neuroscience For Social Work Clinical Intervention

As mentioned earlier, due to a current lack of social work knowledge in the areas of prolonged trauma and displacement of civilian survivors of wars, I strongly rely on social neuroscience knowledge and explanations on brain function/changes during trauma and trauma treatment. In my past professional experience as a clinical social worker and in this current study, I found stories of trauma process and brain functions applicable to overcome cultural restriction and barriers of self understanding. Over the years I realized the importance of the combination of culture/science related stories in social work intervention in order to avoid the further stigmatization of service users by naming physical and mental illnesses. One of my participants, Ladan, who works in the community, shared her experience in the field and how for example, she uses stories to explain diabetic education session such as sugar control, food intake and food choices using stories of a battle ground. This interesting format of her intervention is using a language and a story that is familiar to service users. She does health

promotion sessions using similar stories about health and disease as enemies fighting against each other to get control of the land, which is the body and the mind. While this type of story may not make sense to some it has meaning for her clients and increases their understanding of the health issues. I also found that it is important to introduce the impact of trauma using research findings from other disciplines to fully explain past experience and present struggles with poverty, marginalization, and the possibility of transferring trauma to the next generation. In the following section I outline the social neuroscience findings that relate most to my study and my participants' lives.

Persistent Trauma: It's Implication For Intergenerational Transference

For the mothers I interviewed the stories in their resettlement narratives were based around the persistent environmental stressors including living in ghettoized neighbourhoods with high crime rates and low economic integration, which are reminders of their previous stages of forced migration. It is a life event that was now becoming more visible as they began to witness its impact on their children. During my multiple conversations with the participants what did not leave each woman's face was the concern for their children as they worried about the future. What makes these mothers concerns different from other mothers is that these women have been through extreme trauma rooted in tribal hate, xenophobia and displacement. Their current struggles are connected with past traumas. Current environmental stressors which include a changing cultural and religious climate, contributes to the alteration of their social brain and by extension the developing brains of their young (Cozolino, 2010, p. 18-19; Matto et al., 2014, p. 265-268; Meaney & Ferguson-Smith, 2010, p. 1313; Weaver et al., 2004, p. 847). Cozolino (2010) explains this further emphasizing the impacts of environmental stressor on the brain:

The brain is not a static organ; it continually changes in response to environmental challenges. Because of this, the neural architecture of the brain comes to embody the environment that shapes it. You could also think of our neural architecture as a tangible expression of our learning history. The early research on neural plasticity began by exploring the impact of different types of environments on brain development. In these studies done primarily with rats, enriched environments took the form of more diverse, complex, colorful, and stimulating habitats, while impoverished environments were relatively empty monochromatic enclosures (p. 19).

In past decades researchers focusing on this and the intergenerational transference or epigenetics began to propose the connection between environmental stressors on mothers and the activation of certain neurons in children raised by those overstressed mothers that can have lasting consequences (Horstman, 2010; Meaney, 2001; Meaney & Ferguson-Smith, 2010; Weaver et al., 2004). There are now a number of researchers showing how the process of stress transfer from mother to child through the role of epigenetic processes alters the child's DNA by changing the transcription of the genes during early mother/child interaction with a toxic environment (Bhui et al., 2006; Cozolino, 2010; Hackman et al., 2010; Weaver et al., 2004).

Siegel (2011,p. 277) quoting Canadian researcher Dr. Michael Meaney's epigenetic research, explains how during the early years of mother child attachment some functions of neural firing can be changed due to lack of nurture by overstressed mothers turning the epigenome of certain genes on or off based on caregiver relationship cues. As a result, the structure and function of the child's brain could be changed, based on positive or negative early experiences. This latest research sheds a light on the participants' fear for their children's future adding to the debate over nature versus nurture and how marginalized children such as Somali-

Canadians who are dealing with stressful home life, neighbourhood and educational systems could be affected for generations to come (Siegel, 2011; van der Kolk, 2014).

These researchers also began to observe the benefit of what they called “cross fostering,” an emotional surrogacy process that can compensate for past maladjusted emotional experiences at later life (McCormick et al. 2012; Meaney, 2001 and Meaney. & Ferguson-Smith, 2010). For children bad early life environment can be compensated by having at least one supportive/nurturing adult in their lives (Siegel, 2011). This can come from another family member, teachers and social workers who are working with children. It is giving an emotional support which functions like a life line against those negative childhood experiences (Matto, et, al. 2014; McCormick et al. 2012; Meaney, 2001 and Meaney. & Ferguson-Smith, 2010). Researcher emphasize how important it is for a child to at least have one relationships that is attuned to the child’s emotional need in what Siegel (2011) being held “within another person's internal world” Siegel, (2011, p. 167). This functions as the outcome of what others call “cross fostering” that has been done by animal testing proven to be important for humans too (Buchheim et al. 2013; McCormick et al. 2012; Meaney, 2001 and Siegel, 2011). For example, this supportive environment can come from a supportive social worker, teacher or mentor that gives an attuned or a nurturing new environment/relationship to the individual (Weaver et al. 2004, p. 847). Other researchers even go further saying, the same changes can be achieved by practice models that promote healing and enhance adaptation (Buchheim et al. 2013, pp. 1-5; Farmer, 2009, p.38; Siegel 2011, pp.145-67; van der Kolk, 2014,pp. 203-330). For Somalis this was a system available and well functioning prior to the war. As explained in Chapter Two this was a support system built in within the structure of the clan family. Due to the prolonged

regional war, displacement and scattered the families around the world this internal system is less and less available to them

Based on emerging themes from the interviews and reviewing these other studies I began to realize how living in a toxic and stressful environment is impacting the health of my participants and the overall health and wellbeing of the next generation (Cozolino, 2010, p. 239-241). This is evident in the stories the service providers (Asli, Ladan and Maandeeq) told about other community members or those they had met in practice settings but never admitted to this happening to their own family members. Siegel (1999, p.67) points out that the protection of the next generation depends on the quality of attachment children develop with their families and the interpersonal communication they have with caregivers such mothers and community members. For example, a strong mother/child attachment in the early years enhances the development of environmental adaptation and consciousness for children, including the enhancement of “autobiographical memory,” self-reflection, and creation of positive narratives that contribute to wellbeing. For a community that views their own wellbeing, success and integration on how their children are doing, this becomes a necessary aspect of life that keeps evading most Somali-Canadian mothers. My study participants, Asli, Dalmar, Hoodo , Bisharo, Jamaad, Kafiya, Ladan, all said (in Somali):, “*caruur nolol xumo iyo rajo laan ku kortey rajo laan unbay arkaan.*” Or, “children who grow up in a bad life lose the sight of hope”. Daniel Siegel (2011) talks about how early this negative life experience begins when environmental stress alters the caregiver child relationship through epigenetic process.

Early trauma can change the long-term regulation of the genetic machinery within the nuclei of neurons through a process called epigenetic. If early experiences are positive, for example, chemical controls over how genes are expressed in specific areas of the

brain can alter the regulation of our nervous system in such a way as to reinforce the quality of emotional resilience (p. 42).

This is also explained by the “epigenetic principle,” which indicates both the positive and negative outcomes for the next generations are both based on early caregiver and child interaction and outcome of toxic environments. Even though this principle is still debated among many disciplines (social psychology, social work, ethics, etc.) along the lines of the nature vs. nurture debate, it also presents most of the issues impacting the majority of my participants and their children. As I mentioned earlier, current epigenetic findings, which have only been tested on laboratory rats, do show the benefits that positive and nurturing environments have on both mother and child, presenting implications that making changes at societal, policy and individual family levels can impact the brain and behaviour development of the young (McCormick et al., 2012, Meaney & Ferguson-Smith, 2010, Siegel, 2011 and Weaver et al., 2004).

This recent development in social neuroscience research and the few social work texts based on these studies add to the argument indicating if social justice-based change does not happen for those currently living with toxic stress, it will have lasting implications for children and their developing brains (Applegate & Shapiro, 2005 p. 147-150; Cozolino, 2010, p. 342-343; Farmer, 2009, p. 38). For Somali-Canadian mothers who are living in fear and stress of becoming part of current tragic community stories, these findings and solutions become an urgent need. As Louis Cozolino (2010) says:

Each of us is born twice: first from our mother’s body over a few hours and then again from our parents’ psyche over a lifetime...the organization of the social brain is initially sculpted via parent-child interactions. These interactions shape the

infrastructure of our moment-to moment experience of other people and of the world (p.286).

Understanding the impact of environmental stressors, epigenetic process and early life on both mother and child helps to further decode the multigenerational effect of trauma during social work intervention. In social work intervention it all begins with attuned listening and effective planning which will be discussed in Chapter Six. Attuned listening works as Siegel (2007), notes when:

Mirror neurons ...alter limbic and bodily states to match those we are seeing in the other person. This attunement creates emotional resonance...Mirror neurons link perception and motor action directly and interact intimately... to make behavioural imitations...empathy draws on these bodily and limbic shifts in a process called interoception... or what we call sixth sense (pp.167-168).

With the help of mirror neurons, we now understand more about the prevention of trauma from mother to child and changing behaviours that are learned through what Siegel (2011) calls the “priming”. This is a human response to welcoming environments or adversities that determine social interactions, social relations and ultimately integration (p.150). It is a preventative processes that begin at the family level to manage trauma responses to or a feeling about the value of societal interaction which is important for Somali-Canadian women/mothers. It allow both mother and child - in this case the second generation - to stop living in what Margaret Wilkinson calls the familiarity of traumatic events and behaviours or living in “the old present” (2010, p,4). In social work practice, mirror neurons are what establish our connections to others when we are working with service users or when we are and helping them to rebuild their lives. It is a connection that is important to a good working relationship with our service users to

develop a more attuned process based on mutual respect and understanding starting with service user's self understanding of behaviour changes, thereby initiating neuroplasticity and healing (Siegle , 2011, 138 and Matto et al. 2014, p.26-33).

Neuroplasticity according to Siegel (2011, p. 5) is the term he uses to describe the capacity for creating or changes that happen by growing new neuron connections responding to a life experience. It is a process that is not only available in parent child relationships and early years experiences but one that occurs throughout the lifespan from other positive relationships or interactions (Cozolino, 2010; Siegle , 2011; and Matto et al. 2014). For example, in social work practice as I mentioned earlier, that can come from by simply using attuned listening and talk therapy intervention which will be discussed in Chapter Six. This beneficial process is aligned to our core professional practice based on empowering the individuals we are working with. This ultimately functions as a process that contributes to the personal power and a behavioural change through the power of Neuroplasticity. I often have a hopeful conversation with service users, while explaining the healing process and how Neuroplasticity restarts and repairs currently damaged neural connections which were created by past traumatic experiences. It is a process that allows those whom we are working with to develop new and stronger connections that are proven by the 1949 Hebbian theory or principle of associative learning repeated positive experiences change responses of negative past experiences (Cozolino, 2010; LeDoux, 2002; Siegel, 2011). Through this process during our conversation with service users and for the duration of talk therapy a new neural connection that allows the brain to re-establish a more satisfying pattern of behaviour in everyday life develops. This process takes social work intervention from clinical, dispassionate conversations to a more attuned, social care and social justice-based intervention. A conversation helps service users to recognize current self-

destructive behaviors and learn more about the possible causes of their despair, helplessness and past traumas and means of reparation and new growth.

Summary

In this chapter, I explored issues of belonging that are contributing to Somali-Canadian's struggle with poverty, marginalization, incarceration and existing youth violence. I discussed the effects of past and present traumas on the social brain and their implications for the health and wellbeing of the individual, their families and the community. In combination with the previous chapter, I also lay out the ground work for future studies regarding the impacts of prolonged trauma, social isolation and barriers to integration. I lay out how in the past two decades some of my participants have been keeping their traumatic experiences inside unable to share with others due to the many levels of emotional, social, cultural restrictions and social isolation. Their bodies continue to carry forward those feelings in silence and continue to be terrified for the future of their children. Conducting social work intervention based on anti-oppression, social justice and social care requires an active role of searching for new ways of unlocking those hidden silences.

One of the ways to unlock those hidden silences I believe is awareness of current community issues and providing culturally acceptable interventions such as sharing informative stories with Somali individual service users and communities. The purpose of taking up the connection of social work intervention and social neuroscience in this chapter is to understand how the stories told by my participants impact on their children. It is intended to create a basic understanding of current issues and the importance of this knowledge in social work intervention. At the individual level it will help to establish relationships with survivors and find ways through conversation to unlock the hidden silences mentioned in the previous chapter.

This chapter lays the initial steps for understanding the impacts of prolonged trauma, behavioural responses and their implication for survivors of wars.

In this chapter I presented social neuroscience knowledge that has been used in the past decade by researchers such as: Cozolino (2010), LeDoux (1996 & 2002), Siegel (2007 & 2011) and Wilkinson (2010) to show both the impact of trauma and healing-based on supportive systems and talk therapy benefits. This new knowledge will inform current social work practices, educational knowledge building and will inform future research that is related to survivors of forced migration and resettlement studies. It will inform social justice-based advocacy projects and policy initiatives outlining the long-term impacts of social exclusion, isolation and oppression on the human brain and the need for intervention methods. This chapter gives an overview of the trauma process, explaining service users' daily dealings with overwhelming triggers and responses that create further stresses and a life of living in a constant state of emotions filled with being in the fight or flight mode.

Using this knowledge, in the next chapter I will explore social work interventions that will benefit these populations at the individual, family and the community level. I believe this knowledge is aligned with social work's professional practice and its roots in implementing anti-oppressive, social justice and social care-based practices. As I have stated throughout this study, my interest in this search for new knowledge comes from looking for ways of unlocking the hidden silences in women's stories and finding solutions for ultimate community healing.

VI. CHAPTER SIX: Bridging

Neurobiological Knowledge Of Trauma For Clinical Social Work Practice

In this concluding chapter, I examine social work's role in understanding and implementing a talk therapy process for survivors of prolonged wars during their resettlement. In this chapter, which serves as a bridge between social neuroscience and social work intervention, I explore what the process of healing would look like during the intervention using academic literature and my own personal and professional experience as well as the learnings that this study contributes to our understanding of social work intervention. This chapter contributes to a knowledge exchange between professions including informing other disciplines in the helping professions about the impact of past and present trauma during the resettlement and integration processes.

Throughout my educational training in undergraduate and graduate social work studies, social neuroscience was a particular interest of mine as it increased my understanding of my own and my children's emotional state following traumatic experiences of forced migration and temporary or permanent resettlement. While practicing as a clinical social worker in the field, I continued to search for new ways of finding acceptable or accommodating methods of intervention. Even though my intervention method for this study is connecting culture with acceptable methods of social work intervention and neuroscience, I am also aware of this study's limitations, which is at an initial stage of connecting social neuroscience knowledge with social work practice.

I learned in graduate school that our brain is a wonderful organ that is capable of continuous growth and lifelong adaptation to the sometimes stressful and changing

environments. Psychotherapists using the softer side of neuroscience have demonstrated in the past decades how the changed brain can be rectified by what Cozolino (2010) calls:

... the application of skillfully applied techniques in the context of a caring relationship. Thus, in our ability to link, attune, and regulate each other's brains, evolution has also provided us a way to heal one another. Because we know that relationships are capable of building and rebuilding neural structures, psychotherapy can now be understood as a neurobiological intervention, with a deep cultural history. In psychotherapy, we are tapping the same principles and processes available in every relationship to connect to and heal another brain (p.305)

Therefore, I strongly believe in starting trauma intervention by accommodating service users' needs, which includes an understanding of interpersonal and biological changes happening in their lives. PTSD flashbacks, or emotional storms as I call them, caused by experiences such as my participants described, have lifelong implications for them. This is the result of prolonged trauma that not only creates social changes for the individual, but also creates psychophysiological reactions and distorted interpersonal thoughts that continue to affect those who experience it. In my own community, I have witnessed how these changes and emotional storms are dealt with silently through emotional violence and gendered addictions. Through my interpretation of the stories of the women I interviewed, I have come to believe that using simple and understandable social neuroscience and social work language will enhance the lives of community members at both the micro and macro levels. It will also help service providers design, implement and monitor changes in collaboration with service users.

With the latest development of a softer side of neuroscience, social workers and others in the helping professions have begun to use this knowledge in their fields (Applegate & Shapiro,

2005; Cozolino, 2010; Farmer, 2009; Matto et al., 2014; Siegel, 2007, 2011; van der Kolk, 2014). In social work it is a form of rethinking about our current clinical social work practices with diverse communities and finding applicable as well as adaptable interventions. It contributes to an open discussion about issues related to fear, anxiety, PTSD and the emotional or physical responses to those feelings.

I use the word “rethinking” to indicate that existing clinical intervention based on a one-size-fits-all Western-based practice model has, for the most part, little room for cultural or social variation. I use the phrase “for the most part” because the value of cultural competency and multiculturalism has been questioned by a number of academics. While both are controversial, they are still used as the norm of practice and education because of the lack of any other alternatives to accommodate current multi ethnic, culture and religious communities in Canada. This vacuum has created problems in intervention ultimately resulting in the use of a generalized understanding of implementing culture-based interventions.

Based on the stories told by the participants, I found there to be a lack of intervention for communities like the Somali one which is not considered the norm for programs created for economic migrants and refugees. Social work intervention requires starting with a practice of flexibility that embraces difference. This flexibility includes looking at the service user’s history and experiences of migration and being open to acquiring new knowledge and collaborating with service users. This flexible helping process, along with the professional social work values based on empathy, understanding, social justice and advocating for equality, is why I chose social work as my new profession after losing my old one as a journalist because my non-Western education as a newcomer was not valued.

We came to understand how immigrant/refugee poverty and marginalization in Canada (Folson, 2004; Dei et al., 1997; Danso, 2002; Danso & Grant, 2000; Galabuzi, 2001, 2002, 2005 & 2006) impact new communities particularly those coming from areas of prolonged war. We have also come to understand how prolonged material and social deprivation of those living in marginalized communities, brought about by the transference of trauma, continues to prevent successive generations from reaching their full human and societal potential if proper intervention is not in place (Matto et al., 2014).

In Canada economic and social marginalization follows global and local political discourses that determine the economic inclusion or exclusion of groups based not on ethnicity but geopolitics (silent economic, political, social inclusion and exclusion criteria based on current economic geography/politics and foreign policy). An example of these changes are seen in the economic/social and political integration of some Canadian ethnic groups who are now on benefiting from it. This allowed those groups to pass the line of economic deprivation while others like Somalis still remain at the bottom of the Canadian economic and social ladder. Countries like Canada deny having those issues based on the Canadian “Cultural Mosaic” argument but still silently follow the Western trend that systematically excludes some Canadians especially those coming from continental Africa, like Somalis. Here I use an example of my own professional history. One can see the number of years I have worked doing multiple jobs to make ends meet while raising my four children. I often lost my job through the elimination of my position, which was explained at the time as a funding criteria issue. I came to understand over the years that I am losing jobs, not because of a lack of hard work, education or experience on my part but because of implicitly determined qualifications that excluded me based on my race, inability to speak certain ethnic specific languages and geopolitical origin.

This chapter contributes to practice-based intervention for those working with individuals, families and communities impacted by accumulated injustices like I have experienced and for those open to the advances in social neuroscience that can help promote grassroots changes in the communities they are serving. By grassroots I mean intervention that will look at the service user's past during stages of migration or trauma transference for second- and now third-generation Somali-Canadians. As described by some of the women who arrived as adults and went through every stage of migration their journey resulted in a neurobiological change that may have an impact on the second generational unless they themselves receive the needed intervention.

In these cases, a social worker's role should begin with the supportive aspect of intervention where talk therapy is seen as a process to increase the individual's ability to cope with stressors and decrease her level of anxiety keeping in mind that chronic fear and ongoing living in survival mode and in a toxic environment may have had deleterious effects on the structural integrity of the service user's brain. Such focused intervention creates, first for both the service user and the provider, an understanding of an existing issue such as poverty, health or mental health. Second, it allows the service user to better understand herself and to develop/learn a method to control intense emotional eruptions and establish a measure of control over other implicit trauma-related memories. It allows her to understand something about her feelings, cognitive responses (thoughts) and emotionally related physiological responses, such as hormonal activities, that may be impacting her health (van der Kolk, 2014). This type of intervention further benefits service users by rebuilding their capacity for resiliency and re-establishing their emotional regulation that gives them the chance to restrain their anxiety and fear (Cozolino, 2010; Siegel, 2011).

This type of social work intervention provides the first step of planning or carrying out an intervention based on cognitive restructuring or biofeedback. This process, as described by van der Kolk et al. (1996, pp. 491–505), involves teaching service users how to control their physiological responses to traumatic memories including unexplained physical tension or the rise of their heart rates. As part of talk therapy, including the learning of biological responses to trauma, this process promotes relaxation during those experiences decreasing the responses to environmental stressors. As described in Chapter Five, areas of the brain that control emotions and learning in response to past and present traumatic events such as the amygdale and hippocampus, remain active (firing, connecting and sending messages) for those living in toxic environments during their resettlement. This constant firing not only has an impact on mental health but also on the physical health (van der Kolk, 2014).

Social work clinical intervention, focusing on reducing PTSD, should begin with the service user's history and present reality to assess the person in their environment, to determine the existence of PTSD symptoms and their impacts on the service user's quality of life. Service users often describe their environmental living conditions and PTSD symptoms not in detail or order but in their stories. Using attuned listening skills the details of those symptoms can be explored further with the development of a collaborative working relationship between the service provider and service user. For a social worker these skills and processes are important in intervention as survivors are afraid but seeking help for their distressing feelings. Working with social justice base intervention requires not only understanding how power, representation and distribution of resources function but also understanding they have on the individual service user.

In my practice, I have found that biofeedback therapy combined with educational, informative material, relaxation techniques as well as mental exercises reduces the stress level of

women suffering from environmental stresses or PTSD (van der Kolk et al., 1996, p. 499). I have used mind-changing conversations that explore, and ultimately change, the impact of cultural, religious and social pressures. I have focused on changing the expectations service users have of themselves in their social roles by putting at the center the strength, resilience and survival skills they have accumulated through their personal histories. This practice-based intervention format has helped them to acknowledge triggers and implicit memory responses that are evident in the fourth stage of migration.

Appropriate social work intervention will incorporate those above mentioned skills and understanding as well as the use of talk therapy. This type of clinical intervention not only promotes healing but also functions as a “cross fostering” relationship for the service user (Siegel, 2011, p. 167) that I mentioned in Chapter Five. This later benefit for the service user is part of our role as empathic professionals, providing attuned intervention to promote social care. I use the phrase “appropriate intervention” to indicate pre-understanding of their issues as discussed in Chapter Five and earlier. Cross fostering can be provided by a person (e.g., a service provider, neighbour, educator, employer) who acts as a safe point for someone who has been navigating life in an unsafe world (McCormick et al., pp. 2–12; Meaney, 2001). This support gives individuals like me and the participants I interviewed a shelter from emotionally stormy feelings by giving us the help they need to survive our past and present traumas and contributing to our often unacknowledged but very real internal strength and resilience (Siegel, 2011, p. 167). These are aspects of refugee resilience that are not often detailed in social work literatures but explained in recent social neuroscience research and practice-based interventions.

For example, cross fostering has been widely recognized in recent years in social neuroscience as helpful in the healing of marginalized communities dealing with economic and

health disparities creating an environmental toxicity. Other social researchers have presented their findings about current Canadian ethnic, race relations and the barriers to the Canadian multiculturalism process and benefits explaining environmental contribution to persistent or generational poverty (Galabuzi, 2001, 2005 & 2006; Hyman et al., 2011; Reitz et al., 2009). Similarly some social work researchers also began to look into the impact exclusionary systems have on the healing process when cross fostering is used (Applegate & Shapiro, 2005; Farmer, 2009; Matto et al., 2014). Cozolino (2010) explains this further:

We are born into relationships and come to our individual identity while resting upon social connectivity. We know that neither the individual neuron nor the single human being exist in nature. Without mutually stimulating interactions, people and neurons wither and die. In neurons this process is called apoptosis, which is a function of neural damage or pruning, while in humans it is called anaclitic depression that comes from dysfunctional social and emotional relationships in early years. (pp. 178–179)

Social work and social neuroscience allow us to look into the possibility of healing neural damage and abnormal hormonal production brought on by prolonged toxic stressors (Matto et al., 2014; McCormick et al., 2012; Siegel, 2007, 2011; van der Kolk, 2014). Rosemary Farmer, (2009) using this knowledge for social work, claims that “the brain continually accommodates the environment, and this gives parents, practitioners, and the entire community hope for recovery, rebuilding and lasting healing with the help of appropriate interventions and education” (p. 27). This is a process widely recognized as neural networks and how they are involved in cognitive restructuring, thought process, which is useful for social work intervention. It is also important to remember that this type of intervention can only happen with attuned

social work talk therapy. It is a process that, when cautiously planned and used, increases the re-connections or replacement of old neural structures as well as functions by creating new connections that promote healing through neuroplasticity (Seigel, 2011, p. 5). It is a process that is also described by LeDoux (2002):

The self is the essence of who you are, reflects patterns of interconnectivity neurons in your brain. . . . People don't come pre-assembled, but are glued together by life. We all start out with different sets of genes, another is that we have different experiences . . . which mean both nature and nurture contributes to who we are at any point in your life (p. 2).

I believe in this process and use it. Since existing talk therapy interventions are often focused on micro-based interventions, knowing about the above process of brain function and healing makes a difference in therapeutic settings/sessions. It can also be transferred to other situations needing social work intervention, as we all know that in social work practice we often work with individuals, couples, families and communities that are dealing with multiple issues. This method of social work intervention is particularly important because during practice we come to understand that working with individuals and families becomes further complicated at times. The complication goes further when the service users are members of a large community that has a culturally complicated history of violence and trauma and is currently marginalized and socially oppressed.

I learned that our intervention requires not only knowledge of brain processes, but awareness of how each policy or program directed at a particular community impacts individual members and the community as a whole. In this case social work's multi-level interventions and a search for changes in the community require not only focusing on micro interventions, but also

working toward macro-level changes. It requires a macro-level changes that will take a community development approach where healing begins with the designing of collaborative and community based projects for change. Such a project will invite those impacted like the Somali-Canadian women and their children who are now adults. It will consist of groups who are concerned or thinking about the impacts of internal fractures, mistrusts and external marginalization have on them.

When I began working for community health clinics, I designed and tested intervention methods based on the stories of trauma I heard during individual meetings. I created informative/group therapy sessions and presented about health, mental health and the impacts our past traumatic experiences have on our individual feelings. I explained how our past functions when we are confronted with sometimes openly hostile and on other times silently and systematically functioning violence against us. To explain how that works I used educational storytelling disclosing all my issues and inviting them to talk if they wished about similar issues without any self disclosure. Sharing my own personal stories and how I understood my feelings and my children's stories gave some of the women in the groups the courage to tell their own stories. That is when I first came to realize the level of trauma the women in the groups had experienced, the extent of their resiliency and survival strength and the need to find a means of healing. I list resiliency before survival as I saw among the women I was working with and in myself an internal resiliency and determination that in my case at least, saved my children and me.

I discovered over the years and as I was conducting this study that it is difficult yet at the same time advantageous, to start a therapeutic conversation when you share ethnicity, history and experiences of trauma with the people you are interviewing. For me, during my practice and

while in the field for this study, beginning with my own story and then asking them about stories they had heard about that were similar to mine often served as a conversation starter. This format itself also became the initial stage in restarting the healing process and creating new synaptic connections. It became the basic structure I used for attuned communication because it decreases the emotional alarm bells that alert individuals to impending danger, which is the behavioural outcome for trauma survivors (see Chapter Five). Having these steps in place also helped me to connect with community members as a number of women often approached me after each community meeting to arrange individual and private conversations. I noted then how attuned communication and my own format encouraged people to seek help. It decreased their stress about meeting service providers and their fear that they would be forced to disclose and revisit past traumatic experiences. These fears are not unfounded. Just look at the assessment forms of the helping professions that ask for detailed accounts of service users' lives and environments. For survivors of prolonged civil wars and multiple forced migrations, this is intrusive and a trigger point because in their pasts they have completed forms that were designed to identify them in ways that later endangered their lives.

Initiating a positive environment promoting open and flexible communication not only fills the spaces for the missing nurturing environments but also starts the process of establishing a social justice-based community development process of our field. It allows both the service user and the service provider to share the Somali-Canadian community needs, such as the process of changing what is currently not working for them. In other words changing their minds, their narratives and their individual brain processes that currently function only in response to fear alerts is challenging and takes time. It needs working on changing thought processes coming from medial temporal and frontal structures of the human brain where fear

related thoughts are unconsciously sensed and processed (Cozolino,2010; McCormick et al.;2012; Siegle,2007&2011 and van der Kolk, 2014).

This practice-based model not only recognizes past and present trauma and does not stop with just changing brain connectivity and functions but also determines the quality of life each community member will have in the future. As t my reveal, communication, discussion and transformation of community narratives from negative to positive stories is the only durable solution I found during my field work and study for the Somali-Canadian community to be rebuilt at the micro and macro levels.

Researcher Joseph LeDoux (2002) notes how that happens for individuals and communities explaining the importance of healing the community from within, defining this process as he calls it “the puzzle of how nature and nurture shape who we are” (p. 5). My understanding of this process is that through intervention and self-understanding, social work clinical talk therapy function by promoting synaptic connections that then expand the brain’s capacity for behavioural modification. This is especially beneficial knowledge for the second generation who are now struggling with both external and internal barriers. Daniel Siegel (2011) adds to this argument of brain changes throughout life:

Strengthening synaptic linkages between neurons is how we learn from experience.

And one reason that we are so open to learning from experience is that, from the earliest days in the womb and continuing into our childhood and adolescence, the basic architecture of the brain is very much a work in progress. (p. 40)

Service providers can work toward repairing and rebuilding the damaged areas of the brain through talk therapy or psychotherapy increasing the promotion and self-understanding of service user’s capacity for healing. Margaret Wilkinson (2010) describes this process as the

connection between environment, brain, mind and body, which are inextricably linked. She says particularly “the development of self and mind reflect the developing brain and body; and both affect their development just as their development affects the mind” (p. 1). This idea of healing during intervention and brain, mind and body change at any point in life is supported by other researchers I have cited earlier who define the process itself as an exchange of life between the past, the present and the future that can only be healed through effective intervention that links the functions of all those processes (Applegate & Shapiro, 2005; Cozolino, 2010; Farmer, 2009; LeDoux, 2002; Matto et al., 2014; Siegel, 2011; van der Kolk, 2014).

Neural-level healing through talk therapy is a fascinating process that begins with established relationship between service user and service provider “cross fostering”. It continues as I mentioned earlier attuned listening, education/awareness and learning new strategies of coping. Siegel (2011) calls describes this as learning the chances of survival from life’s obstacles by healing both the mind and the brain as Siegel (p. 45). Somalis have been traditionally using a form of talk therapy - often received from elders and religious leaders - to heal both the brain and the mind. It is a healing process that is created through the act of storytelling often performed in consultation with elders and religious leaders who still teach those skills. Unfortunately, most of those stories and skills are now at risk because of the silently divisive tribal and religious intentions. Cozolino (2010) presents a helpful framework on how the process of the mind and the brain work in her description of the “triangle of well-being” involving three parts of healing based on the functionality of the mind, the brain and their relationships to wellbeing. Both Cozolino (2010) and Siegel (2007 &2011) explain the importance of focusing on those areas during talk therapy intervention. These are the essence of the human social brain as the flow of energy and information are shared during talk therapy

based on attuned listening and mindful connections. Mindfulness allows us to share “how we see and shape energy and information as it moves through our bodies and through our relationships” (Cozolino 2010, p. x).

All my life and more so during my traumatic journey through forced migration and now clinical social work practice, story-telling became an important aspect of the culturally based healing I often use. It is an intriguing ancient concept for Somalis which is proven by social neuroscience studies (Applegate & Shapiro, 2005; Buchheim et al., 2013; Cozolino, 2010; Farmer, 2009; LeDoux, 2002; Matto et al. 2014 and Siegel, 2007&2011). There is a need for social work intervention to consider the mind as an embodied part and relational process that regulates the flow of energy and information within the body and brain promoting healing (Applegate & Shapiro, 2005; Cozolino, 2010; Farmer, 2009; LeDoux, 2002; Matto et al., 2014; Siegel, 2011; van der Kolk, 2014).

Based on this knowledge during my research I focused first on how attuned intervention can happen within social work. This led me to read the works of neuroscientists and social workers using this new found combination of knowledge. Later, listening to the participants’ stories and comparing these with my own personal and professional experience added to a further layer of understanding of the women’s present issues and how the brain manages the emotions behind traumatic experiences. As discussed in Chapter Five, the human brain is primarily concerned with survival, and sometimes as a protective measure, it distorts painful memories and encourages the development of new memories. Researchers have shown how traumatic memories can be inaccurate and exaggerate or minimize the events that took place in order to deny or hide past memories (Brewin, 2011; Siegel, 2011; van der Kolk, 2014). After multiple conversations with my participants and when I compared what I heard with what I know

about particular events, I found evidence of denial. I also realized that there is some benefit to this protective aspect of the brain/mind process as I witnessed how these new story lines told in context sometimes help survivors in their recovery from their past unimaginable horrors and contributes to their survival and resiliency.

Despite the intersectionality of their suffering at each stage of migration, some of the participants of my study (Asli, Dalmar, Hoodo, Gacalo and Jamaad) re-contextualized their experiences as positive stories they told about themselves. They focused on their newfound economic freedom as women and what they were able to do for their families by taking a major role in family support. Others mentioned the extensive travel opportunities that they never had before as women restricted by patriarchal and religious rules. In these stories, what is not discussed and is still hidden from public discussion, but at the same time visible through observation, is the emotional pain of their past and present lives.

Social Neuroscience Knowledge For Social Work Practice

In my own life and in working with other traumatized individuals, I have found that recovery from past trauma begins by having a safe space in which body and brain sensations causing pain can be discussed. We now understand through the latest findings of social neuroscience how these hidden pains from past and present trauma and daily interactions act as reminders of the trauma and disturb emotions. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) can now also show the affected areas of the brain and the healing that takes place during intervention.

In my first job as a psychotherapist following graduate school, I soon discovered the challenge of providing ethnic-specific service when working with marginalized women. My training was based on Western intervention methods that had proven results with Western service users. In my practice I found that for individuals and communities I was working with

these interventions, including trauma-focused cognitive behaviour therapy (TF-CBT) and eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), did not make sense or work for them.

For example, EMDR, is an effective psychotherapy technique that is used to eliminate or minimize human suffering from anxiety, panic attacks and disturbing memories related to PTSD or flashbacks. It entails a simple combination of hand and eye movements to bring quick and lasting relief for emotional distress caused by PTSD by integrating traumatic memories (van der Kolk 2014, pp. 255–256). TF-CBT, on the other hand, is based on establishing a collaborative relationship with the service user, including using attuned listening to discuss irrational fears, harmless realities and exploring the meaning-making process of traumatic events (Turner, 2011; van der Kolk, 2014; van der Kolk et al., 1996). TF-CBT treatment often uses exposure, anxiety management techniques and other techniques that may be seen by some cultures or survivors as intrusive methods.

The limitations of these intervention methods add to the barriers faced by service users who are already dealing with their own cultural and historical background and the service providers and their good intentions. Intervention steps requiring detailed information of survivors' histories challenge those who have had past negative experiences with such intrusive questions or those who are not ready to share their life history at the time of the intervention. As I mentioned in earlier chapters, information sharing regarding certain topics such as gender-based violence is hidden by cultural restrictions. Healing for Somalis often comes from clan-based support systems where difficult topics are discussed as life skill training sessions, privately discussed (close family members only) with elders in a nonintrusive way and using stories, songs/poems. Therefore, TF-CBT comes across as an uncomfortable and intrusive conversation with outsiders that digs into culturally restrictive topics and uncomfortable memories.

Other practice barriers are created when Western-based interventions are used that require detailed information about service users including the identification of the critical issues that brought them to seek help, symptom specification, such as detailing psychological or emotional issues and mandated reporting. All of these requirements trigger anxiety for someone like myself and the participants of my study who became, during their multiple migrations, familiar with fear, learned to answer questions based on memorized responses to which stories often change depending on the context. It is a valid concern that we need to consider when a practice model clashes with a service user's understanding of healing or their meaning-making process of their changing environments. We need to consider how the need for collection of information based on our assessment forms and their requirement for in-depth information distresses, scares and isolates some service users who are already isolated by many multidimensional and multilevel issues..

Through the years I have been rethinking how best to work with fractured and traumatized ethnic groups like Somali-Canadians, trying to find new ways to explore current issues, some of which are not discussed publicly, with community members. I started by asking if there is a way to present the issues in a format that accommodated both cultural communication and silenced topics in the conversation.

During practice, I began to experiment by explaining the brain process itself, first creating an atmosphere of self understanding and then encouraging others to share stories they heard about mental health and health within their community without disclosing the personal or tribal identity of the individual they were talking about. This gave me the chance to collect the information needed for their initial assessment highlighting the family or community issue, plan an individual intervention and build community trust.

This form of initial assessment also began to reveal to me how the community is now fully aware of the impact of the prolonged war in Somalia, but is always being silenced by opportunistic internal groups that are benefiting from a fractured community and isolated members. I came to realize the benefits of respectful culturally-based interventions for this community and the importance of providing Somalis with a safe and neutral space to begin the conversation. I use the word “neutral” to indicate mainstream agencies, such as the community health clinic I was working for, as opposed to ethnic-based agencies that isolate those who do not have tribal relations or share the most recent cultural or religious views or relations with the agency’s management team.

I am also aware of the marginalizing aspect of some mainstream agencies due to existing structural, systemic and the most recent geopolitical based preferences that create barriers for some communities. The social work clinical practice or community development challenge is asking: who can better reach some communities and establish better relationships with them. Looking at existing services and interventions available for Canadian-Somali mothers that are offered by mainstream social service agencies, the barriers that arise for them from the monocultural, biomedical Western model are clearly evident. These existing services, including the health care system, as Degan, one of the participants described, do not benefit her or other Somali-Canadian mothers who are dealing with multiple barriers because they do not address the needs of the current multiethnic, multicultural and multi-issue population. The question remains, what does such ineffective service provision mean for a fractured community? Who is running these services and who is benefiting from it? Given the fractures and the changing political/national identity and tribal relations within the community, what does a cultural- and religion-based ethnic identification mean for the divided Somali-Canadian communities?

Even though I was aware of community divisions when I began my fieldwork, the surprising and hidden issue was how fractured the community had become. Mistrust, even between members of the same tribal group or those with close relations, is dividing Somali-Canadians and further increasing the silent suffering of each member. I saw firsthand how community members and some of the participants struggled with the reactivation of their past that surfaced during the recent debate between Canadian-Somali community members and the Toronto District School Board (TDSP) 2014 Somali Task Force. Instead of coming together for the common cause of addressing the issue of the high school dropout rate of young, mostly male Somali students, tensions erupted based on past history and implicit emotional fears. This is a role reversal in that in the past boys were the ones sent to school and most likely to finish, whereas now in Canada girls have equal opportunities and are more likely to finish high school. After lengthy conversations with my participants Hoodo and Asli who were involved with the Task Force meeting and other participants who were aware of the issues, they all agreed on the lack of community agreement on this issue and what steps were needed to find solutions. I also discovered from these participants, during our discussions regarding this topic, that there is a large scale mistrust between community members as each blame the other for what happened or what is currently happening. This internal barrier comes from the individual, family fears and community mistrust that are now heavily rooted in Somali relations impacting some of the second generation's world view too. Those internal barriers further reach the second generation Somali-Canadians when they look for culture based and ethnic specific services. For example, most Somali community service agencies are managed by the first generation of immigrants and most of them are male and active in Somali politics. This has contributed in my view to the multi-layer barriers Somali-Canadians face. The increased tribal-based mistrust and the changing

nature of gender dynamics and internal social interaction within the first generation mean that these services may not be safe for members of some Somali ethnic groups based on their bicultural values or gender and religious practice. Second-generation women who may be open to discuss issues with service providers from any Somali ethnic group face another issue. They may feel unwelcome or retraumatized by unwanted advice and criticism targeting their bicultural Canadian-Somali identities and their differences from first-generation Somalis who provide the services. Furthermore, these agencies may not have the capacity to provide the needed intervention for second-generation Somalis or others who came when they were young and grew up in Canada. For example, the cultural difference between first- and second-generation immigrants may create discomfort for both groups because they are now unable to understand each other. This is especially relevant for the young who as second generation in their 20s and 30s are dealing silently with disconnection and isolation. Some of the participants who are also service providers (Asli, Dalmar, Ladan and Mandeeg) spoke about these issues as barriers that are now limiting community members in accessing and receiving services.

While working as a service provider in an ethnic community health centre serving marginalized women of colour (not just Somali women) and other mainstream agencies trusted by Somali community members, I also saw how some interventions benefit those who are using their services. These agencies hire Somali-speaking service providers (like me) making it possible for them to reach a large number of underserved Somali women by providing health promotion and education on such matters as mental health, diabetes and other health related issues in a language they understand. Secondly, community members have an option to choose the services of a Somali-speaking service provider. If they feel uncomfortable using the services of a Somali-speaking staff member, their service provider has the option of consulting the

Somali-speaking staff for guidance. During this time, I came to understand the gaps in health care that exist for Somali women because they are either isolated and afraid to seek help or lack information on the availability of services. For those who accepted my help, I was able to design interventions and educational workshops based on the brain/mind/body connection in trauma response. I was also able to share my knowledge with my colleagues.

Working Toward Strengthening Individuals, Families And Communities

As social workers we need to develop a system or a program that will respond to the needs of specific groups. From the multiple conversations I had with the twelve participants in my study and with other community members, I have come to understand the current disconnect between service needs and existing resettlement related services. There is a community crisis happening within the second generation born and raised in Canada who are now in their early twenties. It is a generation seen by their parents, including the twelve women I interviewed for this study, as the reason for their struggle to survive as well as a source of hope, resiliency and healing. All twelve participants described their success through the success of their children. However, this is now becoming an even greater concern because of the multiple barriers their children are confronted with on a daily basis. In social work research and practice we need to identify these barriers and search for new knowledge that creates lasting social justice and equitable interventions that will contribute to the healing process for the Somali community and other communities with similar past and present history. .

Spending time with research participants in face-to-face interactions and follow-up phone conversations, I realized the importance of strengthening their fractured communities. As supported by social neuroscience and the function of the social brain, the root of a strong community lies in the strength of social networks and social support systems that determines its

level of connections that promote integration. The following focussed interventions are seen by my participants as the ones that are currently necessary to overcome internal and external pressures in the Somali communities.

Eliminating Toxic Environments: Policy Changes, Advocacy And Changing The Narrative Of Internal Hate

As social workers going back to our roots of fighting for social justice, equality and humane treatment, we need to advocate for better funding allocation, community programming and resettlement policies to ensure successful integration. This is a social work concern when we as frontline workers serve new communities arriving from recent war zones like Syria.

For survivors of civil war, after the initial euphoria of being saved from horrific environmental and life endangering threats to themselves and their families, the reality of rebuilding a new life sets in. Establishing this new life requires social, emotional and economic support, which is difficult to find for those dealing with the Othering they experience during resettlement like Somalis coming to Canada did when they arrived. Since part of the cause for their displacement was internal tribal war, which is based on internal tribal Othering, it continues to affect them during resettlement refueling old wounds. It contributes to a tribal hatred, which Bulhan (2008) calls a new development of “tribal neurosis” (p. 237) and I call “tribal fear,” which persists among Somalis, wherever they are functioning, as social/cultural destruction and a poisonous venom. This a situation that at times turns deadly or damaging to the individual community member’s health, with no cure in sight. I would like to note that tribal fear is not an isolated behaviour affecting only Somalis. It comes from the emotional wounds inflicted by prolonged trauma and the need for survival (Papadopoulos, 2002, 2006). Van der Kolk (1996) explains: “many neurotic symptoms are not the results of some mysterious, well-nigh

inexplicable, genetically based irrationality, but of people's inability to come to terms with the real experiences that have overwhelmed their capacity to cope" (p. 4).

The fear of this venom is expertly used by interest groups to gain power or economic advantage over those affected by tribal narratives and their poisonous thoughts at home and in the Diaspora. For Somali-Canadian women, fear of this venom determines their use of services especially those provided by Somalis from the same tribal base. For outsiders who are looking in and see ethnic, religious and the commonality in gender related issues, this is confusing because the hateful narrative and tribal fear takes precedence in the Somali life rather than similarities or working together against common problems. This fear makes difficult the communication needed among communities in order to dismantle existing internally isolating and damaging systems. An example of this is the community disconnect raised during TDSB's Somali Task Force (2013–2014), as discussed above.

The focus on planning new social work interventions should not be based on ethnic similarities but on the abilities of the service provider and the openness of the service user to receive help from their own community members. The second generation brings hope for change. They may well be able to provide the needed services after completing graduate studies in the helping professions or after receiving help from other Somali professionals who understand their cultural, social, internal needs as bicultural Canadians and Somalis.

With the requisite knowledge, we need to rethink resettlement funding and service provisions for survivors of civil wars, making the most of limited government resources. Services for second-generation Somali-Canadians will allow them to rework existing narratives and create their own community-based bicultural and self-help interventions to decrease current

dropout rates and youth violence, which will also decrease the stress levels of the first generation.

Advocacy For Funding Policy Changes

We have seen how in the past two decades neoliberalism and its attendant resource allocation has affected communities that were already economically deprived and dealing with ongoing internal conflicts by exacerbating their poverty, isolation, and lack of cooperation (Raphael, 2011, pp. 35–36). As a result of mismatched funding or lack of any funding at all, Somali-Canadians, including the women I interviewed for this study, remain destined to live in absolute poverty as described by Raphael (2011):

All conceivable evils are heaped upon the poor. . . . They are exposed to the most exciting changes of mental condition, the most violent vibrations between hope and fear. . . . They are deprived of all enjoyments except sexual indulgence and drunkenness and are worked every day to the point of complete exhaustion of their mental and physical energies. (p. 6)

Somali-Canadians have their own internal struggles that make them more vulnerable to poverty. Somalis came to Canada with their past historical trauma where survival as pastoralists depended on having access to water holes. In pastoral cognitive thought processes, this translates into access to political and economical security in urban settings. Having access to “water holes” is used by community leaders as a powerful analogy shared by stories of tribal and religious belonging, narratives that keep Somalis further isolated from each other and their host communities. The following are additional sources of internally based barriers I found that have an impact on the Somali community.

Community Conversation: Talking About Internal Barriers To Integration

Based on my data and the many conversations I had with the participants of my study, both internal and external barriers to integration exist. Firstly, some cultural and religious teaching, restricts some individuals from interacting with non-Muslims as they are based on preconceived idea or thoughts of Othering. Secondly, the lack of education is a barrier as some of my participants had difficulty in understanding social interaction due to the level of education and lack of communication coming from not knowing one of the Canadian official languages. Most of the participants education was interrupted with the prolonged regional conflict and multiple migrations and resettlements they experienced. A third internal barrier is the fear and need for self protection from perceived harm or threats brought often by triggers and implicit memories.

I believe integration is a bi-dimensional act on the part of those who are trying to integrate and those who are welcoming them to their existing society and one that depends on flexibility. 9/11, which coincidentally happened around the time when a majority of Somalis resettled in Canada, contributed to inflexibility on both sides. Social theorist Herbert Blumer (1969, pp. 78–89) explained the value and benefits of interaction based on the symbolic meaning people assigned to those interactions. After 9/11 his explanation of interaction and its subjective meanings came to make more sense for individuals from marginalized communities based on religion. After that horrific date in September 2001, Muslim communities experienced a change in social interaction based on fear, causing unwanted isolationism in communities like Somalis that continues to affect the community at both the micro and macro levels.

Current Health Care System Usage And The Generational Gap

Every immigrating community brings to their new country their own beliefs and culture and help-seeking process. For Somalis, especially in the past sixty years, they have been adapting the use of medical-related services for all health-related help and using emotional support systems from their own elders, family members and religious leaders. Seeking emotional help or sharing family secrets outside of those circles is a foreign concept for them.

When it comes to health seeking behaviours, there is a generational divide as evinced by the women I interviewed for this study. While Jamaad and Dalamar, who arrived at a younger age, adjusted to the Canadian health system, the remaining participants, because of age and educational barriers, kept their traditional ways of seeking help from family members and religious leaders.

I also found that the second generation or those who come at a young age like Dalamar and Jamaad did know about those services and were open to using them when they needed help. The major complaint of the two young women when they arrived in Canada was they needed counselling or advice as they called them on how to handle or maintain the tradition of caring for family members which includes extended family members based on tribal relations and carrying for themselves. This includes the demanded request (often seen as obligation) in sending remittance money back to family members in tribal regions and offering extended hospitality to family members who often arrive unannounced. This is a responsibility that does not make sense to second-generation Somali-Canadians who grew up in a Western context of individualized care. As explained in Chapter Two, this historical kinship interdependency has its own benefits for promoting health, providing individuals with economic and social security. But added stressors come from the differences between the expectations of first- and second-

generation Somali-Canadians. These differences add to the environmental pressures for Somalis as both generations struggle with issues of belonging to the family, to the tribe, or in the case of the second generation, to the larger Canadian community. For the second generation, this is an internal emotional struggle that has a pull–push effect on their sense of belonging. The push comes from transferred and environmentally learned fears that come into play when they feel unwelcome or are navigating invisibly hostile systems. The push effect functions similarly, providing support systems when they experience external systemic marginalization. Unfortunately, this pull–push effect becomes a further source of stress when powerful groups use it a pressure tactic to increase mistrust among Somalis and between Somalis and outsiders (tribal or religious).

Overcoming The Suffering Of Religious And Cultural Silencing

I began my fieldwork holding on to my well-established, moderate Somali religious traditions. What I found, as I mentioned in earlier chapters, is that in the past two decades a lot has changed in terms of Somali-religious practice. The strength of the more extremist version of Islam and its teachings are now evident. Some moderate Muslims and religious leaders told me that these new teachings are based on a narrow interpretation of Islam that restricts gender-based interaction.

One of the surprising commonalities among community members I found is that most of them follow traditional teachings and practices in addition to the new teachings. As mentioned in Chapter Two, since its introduction to the Horn of Africa, Islam has been the pillar of teachings on morality, rule of law, social relations and family tradition for Somalis. Islam is a religion and a tradition that Somalis use to define gender roles in society. For example, Somali boys are destined to become either a warrior (*waranle*) or a religious man (*wadaad*) in the family

hierarchy. Both bring to the family a respectable status. These positions are now used by powerful and self-appointed leaders who demand others follow them. In these roles those who are warriors become political defenders and representatives of the tribe while the religious man takes the defensive role by upholding the moral compass of the community.

In talking to women who proudly define their husband's or son's roles, I came to understand the message being sent to the young that they become one or the other. A son who has failed in school and has had behavioural problems can easily gain status within few days or weeks by taking on one of these roles. I often wonder what drives these boys to choosing death on the streets and in war zones?.

Contribution To Neuroscience, Social Work Knowledge And Future Research

I identify two key outcomes in linking social neuroscience and social work intervention while working with communities like Canadian-Somalis. First, this research will contribute to building a deeper understanding of the impacts of war on women and the transference of trauma to their children. If social workers keep in mind the cultural, religious and health-seeking behaviours of different communities, the interventions I have described can help service users reduce stress brought on by their exposure to the internal and external toxic environments that isolate them. Somalis, with their background in communal living, have social brains that are constructed within relationships of family, community and the larger society. As explained earlier, the prolonged war and forced migration not only fractured their existing support systems, but continue to shape them when they interact with invisibly hostile new communities here in Canada. For the participants of my study, it is a situation that is not only affects them but also, through transference, endangers the future of their children. My research contributes to the understanding of these existing issues, alerting service providers and policy makers to the need

for intervention at micro (individual and family), mezzo (community, service program) and macro (policy, funding) levels.

The second key outcome of this study is the use social work and social neuroscience in intervention approaches as a new way of thinking with its unique explanation of mental health and health in terms of how the human body is affected by and heals from trauma. Social work intervention becomes accessible to everyone by providing acceptable language to describe otherwise stigmatizing health issues such as PTSD. Using social neuroscience and social work knowledge, I have explained how trauma affects different brain systems that interact and influence each other, ultimately affecting the behaviour of the women I interviewed, and through transference, the behaviour of their children. This is an approach that emphasizes the process of overcoming silence and understanding community issues, labelling problems and searching for healing methods. Using a combination of social neuroscience and social work practice provides the steps needed for prolonged trauma intervention in the context of resettlement. I elaborated on what that intervention should look like by describing the needed steps for healing. I explained the roles of the service user and provider in the potential neural re-growth and positive healing. These explanations redefine community narratives, changes needed for both personal and community growth.

Finally, the use of life history research and social neuroscience analysis of past and present trauma allowed me as a new researcher to explore current community issues and their impact on the brain as it pertains to the next generation. My intention is to provide information that can be used to empower the community by bringing in their collective voices via individual life history and autobiographical stories of war and survival. This type of research, which is conducted by someone like me who is a community insider and an educator that shares both the

traumatic past and present, will encourage future research to start a conversation and search for further methods that promote collective healing. My wish is that it will enable stakeholders to collaboratively address the current resettlement barriers that impact both mothers and their children. I am hoping that it will generate practice-based social work intervention that can be used for trauma treatment as well as improve the settlement process of communities that are dealing with similar barriers. I see social neuroscience as being part of a new way of knowing, filling the missing link in practice-based research. As Rosemary Farmer (2009) has written:

Our non-medical background makes it unlikely that we will ever be specialists in the area of neuroscience, but the social aspect of human behaviour have always been a large part of the social work approach to human problems (p. 11).

Neuroscience can play an important role for service recipients and communities in learning and self-understanding about a traumatic past and the lifelong impact it can have at the individual, familial and community levels. The brain processes discussed above, including epigenetic, mirror neuron function and neuroplasticity, help explain the little-understood inheritance of trauma and how certain intervention methods are needed to rewire the brain for individual, familial and community healing to happen.

The direction of future social work and social neuroscience research may be derived from the limitations of this study. Further studies are needed to fully understand the impact of historical trauma especially for those who are still living with triggers. To fully understand the trauma and the healing of people who have been impacted by prolonged war and gender-based violence, a comparative study using various communities from different parts of the world is needed. This type of study would shed light on whether or not the Somali-Canadian experience with past and present trauma is different from other immigrants with a similar history of

prolonged war. This would inform how conditions in the homeland, cultural, and religious and gender relations add to, limit or support current community issues. Similarly, data from clinical interventions during individual talk therapy using current technology would contribute to the existing literature regarding healing and the human brain.

Summary

As explained in this chapter, there are long-term implications for Somali-Canadians, both first and second generation, who do not have access to the needed interventions. In the coming years, as more and more refugees from war torn areas arrive in Canada, we need to think about ways to understand these communities' pasts and accommodate their current needs to ease their social integration and entrance into the labour force. In clinical social work practice, we need to rethink our current outdated and exclusionary "White settler system" when the majority of the people we are helping will be non-White immigrants or refugees from diverse cultures. We need to acknowledge that we are living in a globalized era where people and capital are constantly moving, creating ongoing desperation and conflict especially in Africa and the Middle East. As a member of a community with such a history, advocating for social justice, equality and integration motivated me to look for answers about the issues and healing methods. I feel I have finally found community healing that does not create stigma since it is based on self-understanding, prevention and the healing potential of cultural storytelling.

VII. CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion

Connecting Personal And Professional Experiences With Research

In this study I explored not only the internal factors (family, culture and religion) that cause stress for Somali-Canadian women/mothers but also the external ones such as social and systemic pressures and their impact on the mind and body. I drew on social work values/ theories and social neuroscience knowledge to explain the impacts of toxic stressor on the participants' minds, bodies and the possibility of further intergenerational effects. I outlined social work interventions that I see as necessary steps that have to be taken into account when promoting wellbeing and rebuilding social relations within the Somali community and between it and the wider society.

Since my children and I share much with other Somali Canadians in terms of a traumatic past, this study forced me to look back and remember events I had kept well below the surface. It gave me the chance to reflect on my own journey of multiple forced migrations and resettlements, and raising four children on my own. I also became aware that what differentiates my family from some of my fellow Somalis with similar past experiences is my educational training in understanding the impact of trauma and behavioural changes. By exploring trauma for this study, I came to better understand my own experiences and reactions as well the challenges of being responsible for others while dealing with emotional turmoil. Thinking back I have come to realize that what helped me the most was telling stories of survival and healing to my children who I now see passing those stories onto their own children. Telling my story helped my children to understand their own experiences and helped in their adaptation to life in Canada. It also reminded me of the benefits of cross fostering in the healing of traumatized individuals. Along the way there were people who provided my family and me a cross fostering shelter from

emotional storms. I learned from the positive impact that some of the service providers I encountered during my journey had on me. What they did for me and my family provided us a cross fostering aspect of social work intervention. This helpful service could be incorporated into guidelines for social work practice. While I was one of the lucky ones who met the right NGO and other helping organizations, I also believe story telling strengthened my will to survive and it contributed to building resiliency in my family.

Over the course of this study, I came to acknowledge that I am one of the fortunate Somali community members who still remembers and retains ancestral teachings on survival, building resiliency and pride. Telling my children stories of hope, survival and a better tomorrow, passed on to me by my parents who also experienced colonial and postcolonial repressions and forced migration, eased my own emotional distress and helped me transmit resiliency to my children who were very young at the time. My early recognition of these factors helped me remember my own early learning from ancestral stories told to me by my parents and extended family elders. Over the years witnessing the healthy adaptation of my children to their new home country of Canada, I began to understand the power of stories in healing and surviving the harsh environments of a refugee camp or becoming an urban homeless refugee where starvation and risk to life were ever present.

Escaping From Emotional Prison: Trauma, Memory and Recovery

In this study I discovered how some of the participants are locked in their past traumatic memories that still determine their current actions. I learned that during traumatic experiences the brain's alarm system, or danger response, is turned on. It is a system that stays on in resettlement and interaction with toxic environments. This system designed for survival and genetic sustainability stays on in response to the new threats such as the experience of silent

violence based on race, religion and other forms of Othering. The downside of this genetic sustainability system is it affects more than just the human brain; during prolonged trauma this translates into the continuation of hormonal production and shut down of the immune system, ultimately affecting health.

This has ongoing negative effects for survivors of prolonged war and trauma if they do not receive appropriate intervention. For example, my research participants Hoodo and Dalamar continue to re-experience trauma here in Canada. For both of them, it created maladaptive behavioural responses and actions that only increase their anxiety, fear, frustration and hidden sadness. Their sadness is hidden in that they do not talk overtly about this as their own sadness but explain it using examples of community issues.

Hoodo fits into what Horney (1937) calls having a blind spot when it comes to her own life and her children's integration. She desperately wants her children to be good Muslims who are productive members of Canadian society but her actions isolate rather than help integrate her children. She considers herself to be a liberated woman but she is conservative in her religious practices, following strict rules of the new to Somalis Islamic teaching under Wahhabism. Other mothers who are still raising children (Gacalo, Jamaad, Kafiya, Ladan, Maandeeq) also continue to struggle with maladaptive emotions they developed in their past and never received help with. Each day these women are confronted with internal pressures, which demand self protection, and external barriers, which are designed to exclude them.

Fear stemming from the initial stages of migration and stressful conditions are silenced by additional cultural rules, such as *hisaut*, or modesty, that veil gender issues and reinforce the "maleness" of authority at all levels that determines which stories are told and which ones remain hidden. *Hisaut* still makes it immodest to talk about, even forbidding any talk of, existing

family or community issues. It keeps the veil on gender-based violence and other family secrets that remain covered under this rule.

Second Generation: Dealing With Culture And Attachment Issues

Furthermore, I found the confusion the participants have with the new cultural and religious rules mean that they are resorting to a new method of self-protective, isolating actions⁷¹ that are affecting indirectly their bicultural children. I notice the stress level on the children's faces who are now adults and the second-generation Somali-Canadians. These youth - most of them born in Canada - continue to suffer dealing with the daily internal or external demands and pressures. It is a stress that affected three of my participants who arrived in Canada as children (Dalmar, Hoodo and Jamaad) who mourn the loss of each place they have been in while dealing with resettlement. For these young women, each new "home" they have had during their multiple forced migrations resulted in some degree of attachment thereby making it difficult adjusting to their permanent resettlement country.

Studies show (Cozolino, 2010, LeDoux, 2002 and Siegle, 1999) such children needed an intervention at some point in their lives to create emotional healing. For them and others with similar experiences, healing begins by finding transformative ways of dealing with current issues contributing to their existing stressors. This type of intervention, I believe, removing toxic stressors including toxic environments will benefit both first and second generation Somali-Canadians.

⁷¹ Fear of each other takes over making them ignore old and culturally established relationship and collaboration building among tribes that has been sustaining them through generations. Self-isolation rooted in fear is now normalized among Somalis and increasingly adapted by the second generation who are learning this avoidance act through trauma transference.

For the second generation, current internal pressures and external exclusionist systems undermine the development of secure attachments with others and their environmental adaptation. I believe for this generation and even the third generation the continuation of these stressors makes them vulnerable for inheriting a life of poverty from their parents and grandparents, a misfortune of past traumas and present triggers that function through silent systemic violence.

Additional Losses: Changes In The Cultural/Traditional Way Of Somali Social Life

The most damaging factor for both first and second generation Somali-Canadians is that in recent years past versions of Somali history are being replaced by divisive stories that come from misguided religious interpretations presented as the most recent or new knowledge about Islam. Old, moderate practices are discarded as new imported practices from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states replace traditional, flexible versions of Islam. Similarly, old teaching of healthy social relations and ethnic pride are being replaced by suspicion and Othering, often measured by the appearance of religiosity and a membership in a particular mosque or tribe. In the last two decades, especially since the Islamic Courts Union came to power in Somalia in early 2000, certain cultural practices that fostered enjoyment, relaxation, healing and learning have been shunned, for example music, dance, inter-gender play, communication and close contract are forbidden. Similarly, past teachings about social relations, which were transferred through songs and poems are now forbidden and listed under *haraam*.⁷² These new restrictions eliminate some of the most valuable Somali cultural teachings about dignity, pride, family, marriage, way of life and other social relations.

⁷² Haraam is an Arabic term meaning sinful. In Islamic jurisprudence, haraam is used to refer to any act that is forbidden by Allah, and is one of five Islamic rules or commandments.

These new religious teachings and reinforced individualistic, tribal-based practices, both understood as “awakenings,” are reminiscent of a Somali past (see Chapter Two). Somali historian Said Samatar (1982, 1991) has demonstrated how similar divisive and dangerous religious teachings have been used to promote religious awakening and cultural change in the past, for example, Sayid Mohamed Abdulle Hassan waged a war against non-Muslim colonialism and fought to change religious practices creating conflict and division among tribes.

Loss Of Identity And Isolation For Second-Generation Somali Immigrants

What the multiple interviews and conversations with my participants have shown me is that this new awakening, and the concomitant control of women’s bodies and minds in the name of religion or tribal loyalty, is becoming prevalent in the community. As a result, women’s social interaction is being threatened which in turns affects the integration for them and their children. A Somali Sociologist As Abdi (2007) writes, “when the nation, group, tribe, or clan is in crisis, women’s social roles and modes of embodiment become the focal point of male identity constructions” (p. 185). Women are forced to wear certain religious attire and follow a restrictive observation of prayer or face the consequences of both verbal and silent violence. In the past two decades, women’s roles within the community and their cultural practices have caught the attention of self-appointed religious leaders who continue to implement the changes in women’s clothing and monitor and restrict their behaviour.⁷³ Women’s clothing becomes not only an indication of religious adherence but a symbol of an ethnic group, in other words, a devaluation of Somali ethnic culture. On the other hand, men still wear their Western/traditional Somali

⁷³ These restrictions minimize and even eliminate religious flexibility during travel and emergencies.

urban attire, they still actively socialize and seek out entertainment such as chewing khat and still engage in traditional storytelling and poetry albeit behind closed doors. For Somali men, the only cultural adjustment they have had to make is to strictly and regularly observe religious prayers.

Most Somali-Canadian women are now forced to accept these practices that were not previously a part of their culture and tradition. For example, during social gatherings, women used to entertain themselves with songs and *buraanbur*, a form of poetry for women, but this has now been replaced by either readings of the Quran, tribal politics or gossiping which adds to the emotional stress. It is a change that has deprived the young from orally shared traditional life skills and their history and has had a long-term impact on the second generation's identity formation. What surprised me the most during my data collection is that, even the participants who I know have the ability as members of families of poets did not share those skills with me due to fear of breaking the forbidden religious rule or *haraam*. The most saddening cultural loss I observed was when participants who wanted to express themselves in the traditional way of communication such as the above mentioned *buraanbur* were unable to do so due to the latest fear of anything cultural such as dress, songs or other forms of Somali entertainment. There are internal powers groups who are trying to eliminate Somali cultural connections, by labeling those acts as *Xaraam* or un-Islamic condemning those who participate in them.

I also found how these new cultural and religious expectations are easily managed and reinforced by the new religious edicts and narratives shared through social media. Due the literacy among the first generation Somali-Canadian women there is a greater acceptance of these changes without realizing its long impact on the coming generations. The expansion of phone communication, media outlets based on tribal affiliation and social media gave an

opportunity for fast contact and communication that extends from one corner of the Somali regions to the other as well as the Diaspora.

Social Work Practice: Understanding Needs Cultural Consideration

These new relations and easy communications have a wider implication for individual, family and community health when used negatively by some interest groups. What is lost in this new social relation is the traditional support system that contributed to women's health where modern medicine was not available. Health in Somali culture in the past has been dealt with in a holistic fashion that is now forbidden from open practice. Before the spread of religious extremism, women used cultural healing practices or they used aroma therapy (*wadaado* in Somali) to deal with stress or situational depression. The culture-healing methods I grew up with to heal headaches and other health complaints are now used only in secret. With this loss of an internal support system and lack of understanding of using Western-based health interventions the women I interviewed seem at a loss.

I observed during my data collection how these losses are expressed in the women's stories while talking about certain traumatic events such as rape which is not permitted. Instead of dealing with the issue in the traditional support system, aroma therapy or group talk therapy the women are left hiding their health issue or expressing them as somatic symptoms. It became a common conversation of the women I met to talk about their multiple health issues including shoulder and neck pain, headaches and joint and stomach problems, which I saw is probably caused by overeating the wrong food and obesity-related health issues. The women also expressed how due to fear, stigma, language barriers and systemic issues they are unable to use Canadian health care services for their issues. Some participants described the alternative new

emotional treatment they use as overspending and excessive traveling. I see this as a form of resistance against religious rules and patriarchal rules or as a cry for help and a self-treatment choice in a context where men view their behaviour disparagingly and who use it as another way to blame women for the increasing level of family disintegration.

This dissertation is the first step of looking at the internal and external barriers impacting successful integration for Somali-Canadian women and their children. It provides much needed initial data regarding the personal stories of war survivors who struggle in their resettlement country (Canada) because of pre-existing racist and exclusionist systemic barriers. As social workers, we need to be mindful of the issues discussed in the previous chapters and use cross fostering methods in each step of social work intervention. We need a practice that effectively incorporates the use of both biological and cultural understandings of traumatic experiences to develop holistic interventions. As discussed throughout my dissertation, having a more comprehensive understanding of the range of refugee and post-migration experiences is needed to create the collaborative relationships or climate essential in this type of therapeutic intervention for Somalis.

Clinical social workers with an understanding of the biology of behaviour can also convey knowledge based on anti-oppression and holistic frameworks by understanding how priming (explained in the previous chapter) works. As social workers, we need to bring social neuroscience into social work intervention so that we can provide client care beyond the biomedical model and promote long term healing for survivors of war and their children. Our understanding of the value of mirror neurons, the benefit of cross fostering and the function of neuroplasticity, help explain the little-understood inheritance of trauma, and how certain intervention methods are needed to rewire brain functions. This research is based on first-

generation Somali-Canadian mothers who are struggling with language and cultural barriers and for some the first-hand experience of multiple traumas. Future research is needed to look into how trauma transference creates specific barriers for the second generation's economic and social integration.

Throughout the multiple conversations I had over the course of my data collection, what worked best for these resilient women was creating a new narrative of war and individual identity by integrating both their tribal stories and their own survival stories. Another factor is the support each woman received from individuals and service providers. It is important to understand that integration is inextricably linked to the individual's and family's historical past and later resilience and survival. (See the stories of Bishaaro, Dalmar, Filson, Gacalo, Hoodo, Jamaad and Kafiya in Chapter Four.) At each stage of their forced migration and resettlement, these women not only drew on their resilience, reminding themselves of who they were and what was important to them, they also focused on saving their own and their family's lives. Even though it is forbidden now, women privately with friends and family talk about how they still remember and share their oral/traditional of songs and other entertainments. I believe this underground use of traditional knowledge in some families is working as a healing base/format that not only increases their strength and resiliency, but also gives them a positive outlook on life, enhancing their individual ability to preserve their culture and history.

By collecting women's stories for this study, I hope to bring their silenced voices to the forefront in community and societal discussions at the micro, mezzo and macro levels. It will enhance social work intervention by giving a format to design interventions based on community dialogue such as support groups who are willing to share their experiences including healing songs and poems. At the individual level the intervention will start with building connections,

sharing stories, attending and organizing forums. These discussions will not only respond to current resettlement issues based on my participants' concerns and their implications for future generations of Somalis-Canadians, but also will inform what is needed or missing from current practice-based interventions. I came to realize this form of intervention requires complex social work practice-based on our social work values: embracing new knowledge and focusing on compassion, social justice, human rights and advocacy.

This research also contributes to the healing process and provides social workers with knowledge that can be used to assess, educate and explain the complicated lives of the people we serve. This, along with the preventative methods discussed in the cross-fostering process that shelters people from environmental adversities, provide a hope for healing to the Somali-Canadians social brain and epigenetic outcomes for second-generation.

The Somali-Canadian women/mothers I interviewed for this study often discussed their concern for their children who are now beginning to isolate themselves because of internal and external barriers that are creating fear in them. Confused and caught between the two worlds of their parents and their own as Canadian born, they are now dealing with the impact of systemic economic isolation and following their parents into a life of abject poverty. Understanding the differences in birth culture and language ability and how the impacts of internal and external barriers affect both first- and second-generation immigrants is needed to provide social justice-based, equitable services and interventions.

Study Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is neuroscience for social work is new and studying neuroanatomy for clinical intervention is not easy. Lack of knowledge, funding limitation and accessibility for getting fMRI imaging for laboratory tests are going to be difficult. However, as I

discussed in the previous two chapters the importance of neuroscience knowledge for trauma intervention is undeniable. My hope is that social work education and knowledge seeking will follow its known historical roots of integrating knowledge from other disciplines with their own. Clinical social worker's history in integration of knowledge began in the 1920s when they adapted Freud's psychoanalytic theory (Applegate and Shapiro, 2005). There is a limited research on war related civilian trauma. Past research of trauma has been done mainly on war veterans who differ in their experiences of trauma from civilians (van der Kolk, 1996). Other limitations included the limited knowledge or theoretical framing of continental African women in refugee resettlement and integration studies. There is also a limited knowledge within clinical social work intervention that informs ways of addressing mental health intervention for first and second generation Canadians impacted by war. However, in exploring my own personal and professional background and interacting with the twelve courageous women I interviewed for this study, I learned from my participants how each woman over the years developed multiple identities and endured multiple sources of trauma. The limitation, in this study is that while focusing on documenting their stories I did not get the chance to explore in detail how this multicultural identity and multilayer trauma affect multiple generations.

For me it always has been working on self-healing and sharing my knowledge with others in similar situations. What I discovered during this study and in neuroscience/social work graduate school is how this combined knowledge will benefit the field of clinical social work intervention. I see neuroscience beyond its current limitation, allowing service users especially those restricted by cultural form mental health discussion, getting the chance to participate, hear and learn trauma related neuroanatomy discussions. This will not only normalized unspoken

mental health and health issues but it will allow participants to name and talk about personal or family distresses in a neutral space.

It also accommodates storytelling, explaining what happens to the human brain during survival. It makes it easier telling great stories about race relations, poverty, brain changes and the rebuilding process needed to heal the brain. I am hoping that with this knowledge together with further studies we will embark on developing effective healing methods for survivors of wars like that which Canadian-Somalis have experienced.

Further Research

While my research explored the effects of migration, immigration and trauma on first generation Somali-Canadian women, I acknowledge the tremendous amount of hope placed on the second generation. However, due to time limitations and research goals, details of the second generation experiences were not investigated, requiring further study such as doing a comparative study looking at the integration process of first and second generation Somali-Canadian women.

From my community observation, my own personal experiences of self-healing and working with others in similar situations, I also see recent social neuroscience advances and social work's practice-based knowledge benefitting clinical interventions. The knowledge from the two disciplines helps to explain the past and present issues and their impacts on the wellbeing of the individual and community in a non-intrusive and culturally acceptable conversation/information sharing manner. It will give the second generation a starting point through self understanding, research and knowledge creation using what we know about functions of historical trauma, brain changes through epigenetic transference and the healing/neuroplasticity that can be achieved. I see myself and the community I belong to, being a

resilient, competent, courageous and resourceful with the capacity for change given the right intervention based on cross fostering process.

My knowledge as a survivor of multiple wars, dislocation and resettlement and working with communities has helped me gather stories of these inner strengths and their struggle for survival. I am hoping that with this knowledge together with the further studies I mentioned above we will embark on developing effective healing methods for survivors of wars like that which Canadian-Somalis have experienced.

Recommendations

Such in-depth exploration can be further strengthened by doing a comparative study of first and second generation Somali-Canadian women. This type of study will highlight issues related to intergenerational experiences of internal and external oppression, as well as new healing methods and community development ideas.

However, my first recommendation is to use this study as a starting point to continue exploring barriers to integration for this particular community through second generation Canadian born Somalis. These second generation adults, with Canadian education and bi-cultural views, will be a great resource for doing an in-depth exploration of barriers to integration such as transference of trauma and finding sources for healing.

I believe that future studies should include a method of collecting stories of the second generation Somali-Canadians and bringing to the forefront their voices in search of durable solutions. I will be interested in finding from the second generation what it was like to be born and raised in the environments I discussed in this study. Questions regarding how it benefited or hindered their integration processes in the larger Canadian society will also inform our understanding of their experiences. The exploration and openness in using new knowledge that

makes accessing and understanding new information about existing issues and intervention processes is also important and needed for this community.

The second research recommendation is to ensure that future Somali studies do not generalize Somali issues or needs and include in detail regional tribal-based experiences. Current Somali studies of culture, history, social and political issues are based on shared ethnicity, language and religious practice. However as seen in Chapter Two pre and post colonial experiences, prolonged regional wars and displacements created fractured identities that have an impact on the individual, families, communities or tribes. Research taking into account those differences will not only contribute to the deeper understanding of these existing issues but will inform how that will play out in the process of healing, knowledge development and establishing valid Somali research.

Finally, forced migration and religious and ethnic conflict, like that experienced by the Somali-Canadian women of my study, are becoming more common in the Middle East such as the current Syrian refugee crisis (UNHCR, 2016). Since Canada claims to be one of the countries taking in the largest number of refugees (Government of Canada, 2016), we need to develop better resettlement services that will promote healing, encourage economic contributions, which I believe will ward off the continuation of pain and economic dependency that Muslim refugees with similar experiences like Somalis are subjected to after their arrival.

In refugee studies, funding needs to be increased for research involving refugee resettlement and healing that will promote social integration. In Canada, we need to increase our involvement with refugees' past and present trauma, healing, race relations and research to create a safe, effective, and holistic resettlement for those who are forcibly removed from their countries and homes. We need comparative studies that look at the degree to which refugee

communities are either integrated or isolated from the larger society with solutions that involve changes at the micro, mezzo and macro levels and the creation of a just society.

Summary

As mentioned earlier the word “Somali” is used to generalize a group who are today even further diversified in ideology, culture and changing religious practices. It is an ethnic identity that I experienced and believe presents limitations on research. In this study, my aim is also to make clarification of experiences, meaning and ethnic belonging that will give Somali-Canadians and others living in the Diaspora an opportunity to explore differences and common issues in resettlement barriers. This study will allow Somali-Canadians to rethink internal barriers and rebuild their lives in their new communities by sharing information, supporting each other and securing better opportunities for their children. It will also give the second generation a chance for accessing accurate knowledge about their history, culture and bi-cultural identity. This will inform the cultural genocide that is happening currently as some religious interest groups are destroying the basic Somali methods of communication, crisis intervention and mediation . It will allow the second generation to learn about their ethnic identity and rethink their tragic history giving them the chance to make different choices.

It will also contribute to the community’s self-recognition as an ethnic group rather than a tribal group with isolated identity. It will assist in increasing self-esteem especially for the youth giving them the chance to enjoy community pride as their parents did before the war. Furthermore, it will give the second generation a chance to receive information and strength from others like them to overcome or fight race-based external barriers. This process, I believe, will create a space for second generation Somali-Canadians to start a dialogue about Diaspora living and cultural building working collaboratively with other like minded Somali-Canadians

without tribal demarcation. It will open doors for ethical conversations on the bigger issues affecting the community such as poverty, inequality and systemic injustices. It will allow the second generation to seek help without fear and suspicion and to trust other community groups. This perspective will provide opportunities for both generations to work on healing, to seek help and to create and share community-based guidance and resources.

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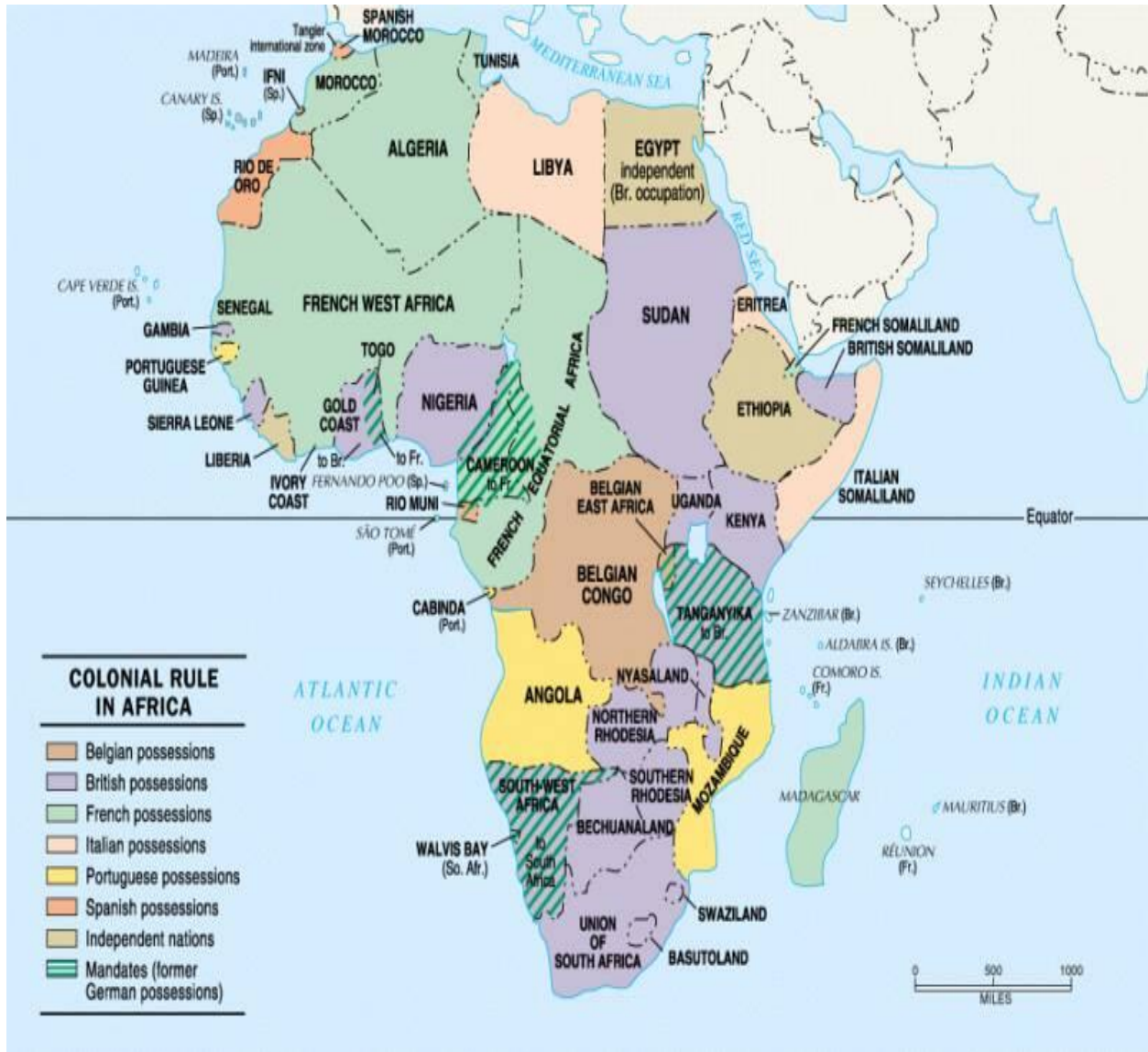
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IX: Appendices
Appendix A: Demographic Data

Name	Birth Place	Arrived	Status of Entry	Language Ability	Housing	Income Source
Asli	British Somaliland	1990	Refugee	Good	Social Housing	Part-time
Kafiya	British Somaliland	1990	Sponsored	English	Rental Sharing	Employed
Maandeeq	British Somaliland	1993	Sponsored	English	Social Housing	Part-time
Udubo	Italian Somaliland	2001	Refugee	Basic English	Senior Citizen	Unemployed
Ladan	Italian Somaliland	1993	Refugee	English	Rental Sharing	Employed
Gacalo	Eastern Ethiopia	1992	GAR	Basic English	Social Housing	Employed
Hoodo	Eastern Ethiopia	1995	Refugee	English	Social Housing	Unemployed
Jamaad	Easter Ethiopia	1989	GAR	English	Rental Sharing	Employed
Dalmar	French Somaliland	1990	Refugee	English/ French	Home Owner	Unemployed
Filson	French Somaliland	2002	Refugee	English/ French	Home Owner	Business Owner
Bishaaro	NFD_Kenya	2007	Refugee	No English/ French	Rental Sharing	Unemployed
Degan	NFD_Kenya	2008	Refugee	No English/ French	Rental Sharing	Unemployed

Appendix B: The 1884 Colonial Scramble For Africa

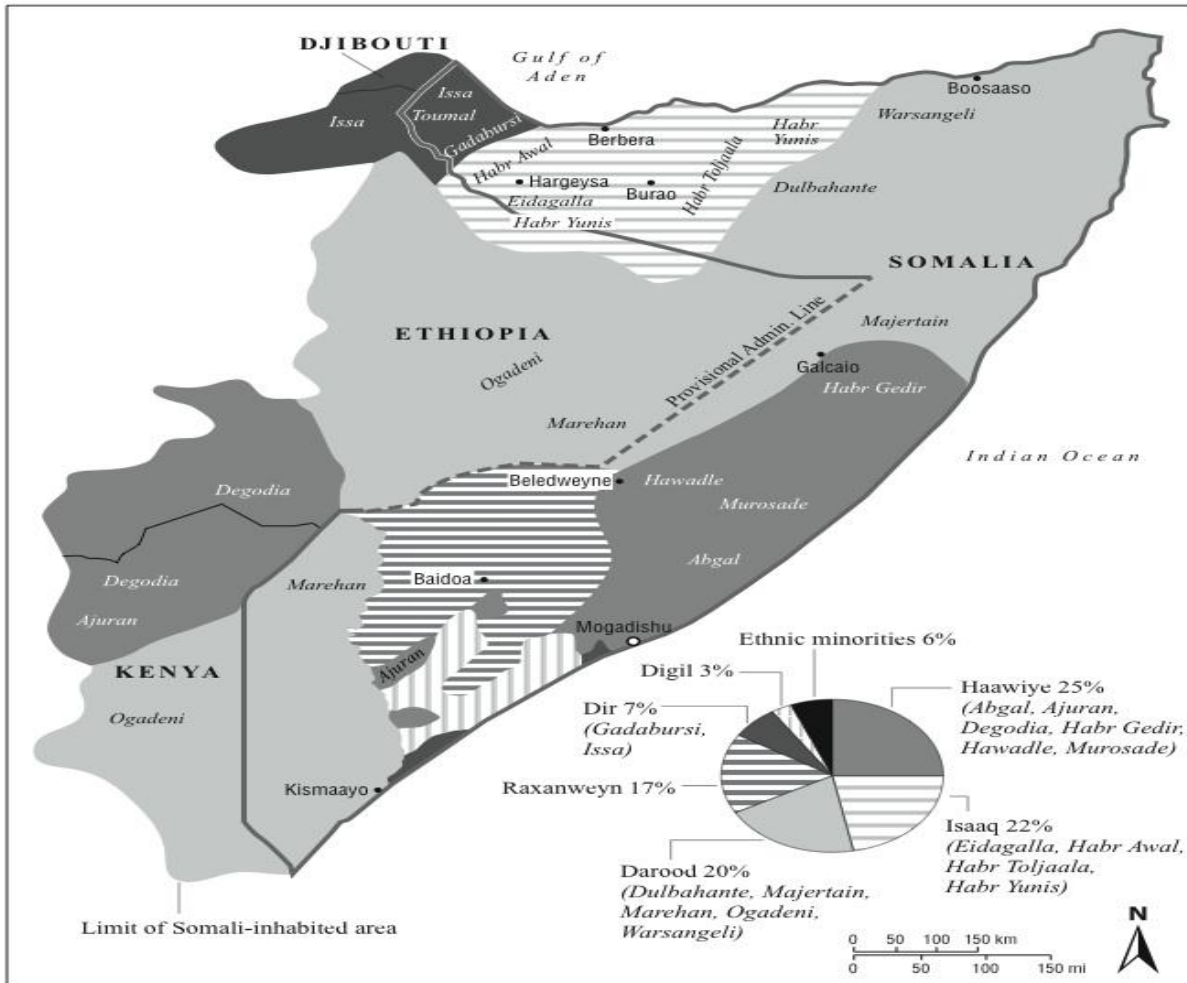


Courtesy of Civilization Past & Present - Illustrations

Retrieved from: http://www.cabinda.net/Africa_Colonial_map.jpg

Appendix C: Somali Tribal Land

8.1



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Appendix D: Stages of Migration

Stages of Migration	Critical Variables
Pre-migration and departure	Social, political, and economic factors departure Separation from family and friends. Decisions regarding who leaves and who is left behind Act of leaving a familiar environment. Life-threatening circumstances. Experiences of violence Loss of significant others.
Transit	Safe journey of short or long duration Refugee camp or detention center stay of short or long duration. Act of awaiting a foreign country's decision regarding final relocation Immediate and final relocation or long wait before final relocation Loss of significant others.
Resettlement	Cultural issues Reception from host country Opportunity structure of host country Discrepancy between expectations and reality Degree of cumulative stress throughout migration process

See: Potocky-Tripodi, 2002, p. 18 and Drachman, 1992, p. 69