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# "I Came to America, Crying": Rebuilding a Life, Redefining the Self—Ethiopian Women Refugees in Denver (Colorado) (2012–2013)

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"I Came to America, Crying:"
Rebuilding a Life, Redefining the self.
Ethiopian Women Refugees in Denver (Colorado) (2012-2013)


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# Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the challenges faced by Ethiopian women

in the Denver community to reach harmony within their new social and cultural space

and to examine what they feel they have lost and gained in their self-identity as a result of

their immigration. Refugees face a multitude of dilemmas when they are compelled to

relocate from their home countries to a new, foreign-host society. Ethiopian refugees

have been arriving in the US since the 1970s and feel the uprootedness of being away

from their homeland. Being uprooted is losing one's culture and ways of life. Therefore,

for these refugees to integrate into an unknown social space is highly challenging, as they

have to relearn how to live their quotidian life in a new cultural and social context.

Relocation requires an active negotiation of situations and behaviors; therefore, it is

paramount to understand the refugees' agency in the processes of integration and in

rebuilding their lives. By analyzing these processes we can learn about the struggles of

negotiating different cultural and social aspects ---that is, those from the culture of origin

and those of the receiving communities--in order to successfully rebuild continuities and

find a sense of belonging.

In this study, I use the terms refugee and migrant interchangeably because the

majority of first generation informants arrived as refugees, but after living for decades in

the US, many no longer identify as such, but rather as migrants. I examine three main

aspects of becoming a refugee/migrant: (1) the metamorphosis of the family structure, including the transformation of power relations between husband and wife; (2) the cultural differences between Ethiopians and their receiving community, which often fosters the idea that refugees and migrants represent a cultural and economic threat to the nation; and (3) the construction of the category of refugee/migrant, which provokes a loss of identity among these Ethiopian women.

I found that Ethiopian women refugees/migrants assert their authority through traditional gender roles rather than through western-centric worldview of success. Ethiopian women refugees/migrants' agency permits them to negotiate between the two cultures, enabling them to choose features from both cultures that bestow upon them power, and actively engage them in decision making in the household and in the community. This study results from fieldwork conducted from June 2012 until December 2013 among Denver Ethiopians who have constructed social spaces of belonging around perceived traditional family and religious values, and who congregate at the Tewahedo Kidane Meheret, *Kidane-Mehret* and *Medhane-Alem* Curches, and the now closed Ethiopian Community Center. This thesis contributes to the general body of literature on migration and fills a lacuna on anthropological research concerning Ethiopian refugees/migrants in the United States.

# Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have come to fruition without the cooperation and support of a number of people, and least of all the Ethiopian Community in Denver. I benefited enormously from the guidance and advice of professors and friends to whom I am very grateful.

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# A Poem by Lena Bezawork Grönlund

Spread and Illuminated

Spread and illuminated
under my desk lamp pages
of old and new letters, blue longhand staring fiercely at me where I sit in my gray swing
table chair into late night hours. —How long has it been since
you've been back home?
The hands who wrote these lines are my mother's and father's.
These words should speak to me,
but there is only silence here. I never learned my native alphabet.
These Amharic letters may as well be blots of ink to me,
and suddenly a forceful fluid form rush, like magma, to battle those solid words.
—All my life
I haven't been back.
As if someone poured coffee over them they are loose now in shape,
dissolving into oceanic ink pooling on my floor.
Up from there the words rise in petite tin forms, smiling and pointing at me.
—That's a long time.
With my mouth first I fall gently towards a dark surface, tasting warm fluids.
The rest of me rushing into a fluid form out of which I step out clean
as from a shower
for the first time as an Ethiopian,
—Too long
playing marbles in alleys
of city streets
in Addis Ababa,
running with my siblings
in between metal shacks
and big hotels.
Chasing cool shadow
sand clouds rise
in between and after us.
I stop to see dust
falling down like a curtain,
catching breath
and perceiving among people
a mother and a father
walking closer.

# Chapter 1

There is no greater sorrow on earth than the loss of one's native land.

(Euripides 484-406 B.C.)

I came crying, crying, all the way crying, but I came to America to be safe.

(Interview 2012)

## 1.1 Introduction

To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul.

(Weil 1987: 41)

Becoming a refugee is to be uprooted. The needs of the soul being perhaps momentarily the least important concerns, and certainly the least recognized. To have or take roots, and being rooted is to belong, both to a particular place, and to a community. Refugees are uprooted abruptly and forcefully, and their experiences are of homelessness. Not necessarily homelessness of lacking a physical abode, but of lacking a homeland. It is to be in limbo, as a refugee by definition does not belong anywhere. The social and cultural identification of self with others comes from being rooted. José Ortega Y Gasset affirms, "I am I plus my surroundings and if I do not preserve the latter, I do not preserve myself" (Ortega Y Gasset 2000: ***).  The metaphorical concept of having roots involves linkages between people and place (Malkki 1992: 24), and to become a refugee is to sever those intimate linkages. It is to lose all one knows; that is, the connections to one's own culture, because even "[the] idea of culture carries with it an expectation of roots, of a stable, territorialized existence" (Clifford 1988: 338). Hence, a refugee experiences uprootedness with deterritorialization, and a loss of self with the loss of place

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and of culture. To become a refugee is, therefore, to experience the dissolution of one's identity, and of one's way of life. How does one cope with those severances; how does one find continuity despite these sharp discontinuities? How does one preserve the self?

## 1.2 Background

Refugees have been arriving in the Denver metro area since mid to late 1970s, uprooted from their homeland and cultures, in search of safety and better economic opportunities. Men, women, and children have been resettled in new environments, and to a culture that they may not understand. Their sense of self and of belonging is often altered and harmed. My research project explores how Ethiopian women cope with the experience of becoming a refugee, and with the consequent losses, and discontinuities that this experience entails. I seek to understand processes of rebuilding continuities from the discontinuities they, and their loved ones, experienced. Furthermore, I analyze strategies Ethiopian women refugees have adopted to repossess what they feel they have lost, including their Ethiopian identity that was central to their sense of being before experiencing refugeness, a personal identity that had a shared culture, and a collective history rooted in Ethiopia; an identity that began long before their resettlement in the United States and was transformed by their migration to a new and foreign space. I inquire throughout my research study what the processes are to regain such identity. How do these women reconstruct and maintain their sense of self? How do they cope with being uprooted? What are their strategies to a newfound identity?

To reconstruct and find a new identity ensures belonging and continuity, and, therefore, a properly harmonious lifestyle in the United States. Hence, in my thesis, I focus on issues of refugees/migrants' resettlement experiences, drawing upon research

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centering on themes of identity construction, globalization, and transnationalism. My primary research question focuses on how Ethiopian women redefine their understanding of self in a new social and cultural space. I am interested in their views on womanhood, motherhood, and sisterhood based on their cultural values. Hence, I employ African feminist approaches, alongside postcolonial theories, to analyze local values and standpoints that represent the belief system of these particular African women. I explore the spaces of agency Ethiopian women derive by their cultures, and lived experiences that are locally and contextually relevant (Chilisa and Ntscane 2010).

This is important to do because a sufficient body of work in dealing with issues of refugees, and particularly women refugees coming from patriarchal societies, represent them as lacking in agency, passive, and helpless individuals, needing outsiders to plan for them. Such problematic ways to characterize refugees as victims are directly linked to the words defining refugees and refugeehood found in the 1951 Geneva Convention, and still widely used today in refugee centric studies, and assistance programs' writings (Harrel-Bond 1986; Daniel and Knudsen 1995; Marfleet 2006). These writings concentrate on refugees' desperate plight, defining refugees as insurmountable difficulties, and daunting problems, without ever considering them as potential assets. Moreover, studies observe that the often protracted encampment of refugees leave many men, women, and children living in limbo dismayed by their dependency on inadequate aid. As a consequence of their prolonged encampment, and inability to better their situation, refugees, particularly men refugees, experience a loss of self-worth (Harrel-Bond 1986; Daniel and Knudsen 1995; Prendergast 1996; Steiner et al. 2003; Marfleet 2006; HRW 2010). These states of affairs spur numerous studies to inaccurately write about refugees as victims per se,

instead as of people being victimized by circumstances. This discourse is reinforced further when the subject turns to the writing of women refugees. At this point, the implicit assumption is that women are weak, vulnerable, and lacking in psychic drive toward rational and secular achievements (Harrel-Bond 1986; Daniel and Knudsen 1995; Young 2002; Freedman 2008). Thus, the writings coming from humanitarian relief agencies, and the discourses arising from western gender theories, reduce non-western women to powerless victims oppressed and victimized not only by the experience of becoming refugees, but by their societies and male relatives (Chioma-Steady 1985; Harrell-Bond 1986; Oyĕwùmí 1997; Daniel and Knudsen 1995; Young 2002; Okome 2003; UNHCR 2003; Freedman 2008; Chilisa and Ntseane 2010).

This is so because the '"non-Western woman"' as a trope of feminist discourse is either nonmodern or modern; she is seldom perceived as living in a situation where there is deeply felt tension between tradition and modernity" (Ong 1988: 86). This tension between tradition and modernity is acutely felt among my Ethiopian informants, who despite adhering to the canon of their traditional non-modern values, are modern, tremendously active, and have ways to resist patriarchal power. Regrettably, western gender theory and research fail to recognize nonwestern ways of resistance to patriarchal oppression, because they do not allow nonwestern points of view to emerge. This failure results in inaccurate points of analysis that categorize nonwestern women as non-modern, oppressed, and victims of patriarchy. As a consequence to those inaccuracies, I align my analysis with postfeminism and African feminist theories, which instead recognize localized resistance.

For example, one way patriarchal power is contested, but is not recognized by a

Western gender theory is within the role of mother. Mothers, as African feminist theorists

argue, within indigenous relational worlds, are celebrated, and their roles respected in

ways that are not taken into account by Westerners. Most often in African societies, and

in patriarchal societies as Ethiopia, mothers are revered, and motherhood is perceived as

a great achievement. Indeed, the majority of my study participants emphasized the

centrality of motherhood in Ethiopians' households, and the reverence children, and

young adults, have for their mothers. Abey[1] while illustrating how mothers are loved and

viewed in Ethiopia told me: In Ethiopia, fathers are feared, but mothers are loved and

revered, that is why my daughters don't mind her [his wife]. I am the authoritative parent

I have to be. My wife, their mother, is the one they love (Interview 2013).

Medhanit, a 1.5 participants woman participant commented:

> Ethiopian mothers are the greatest, it seems that they go that extra mile. (...) They
> are the keepers and organizers of the family. In my family it was the women that
> organized and structured our lives. Even though our father was the patriarch, the
> king of the castle, as all Ethiopian men are, our mother and the women of my
> family were in charge. (...) Dads are so strict that they are disconnected from the
> kids. (...) My parents are still together, and now the tables are really turned, now
> my dad tells us: ask your mom, now he always asks advice from her (Interview
> 2012)!

Furthermore, many of my study participants commented that though their mothers

were not employed in the public sphere per se they were, however, engaged in economic

productivities that benefitted the economic well being of the family. Hence, here again, I

align my analysis with postcolonial theories that recognize African women's position

over their productive resources in both the 'domestic' and the 'public' economic spheres.

As my informants commented, throughout Ethiopia, most women work in occupations

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[1] Abey is the pseudonym of a first generation Ethiopian man refugee. No real names have
been used.

that make them an integral part of the cash economy. From the Northern areas where

many women work as farmers to the South and Southwest areas, where they are self-

employed as craft producers[2] and traders, women demonstrate their authority over

feeding their families (Brantley 2003; Weedman 2008). However, as I argue, the

centrality nonwestern women historically have occupied is obfuscated by a western-

centric feminist discourse that does not recognize African women's authority and

localized power. That is because western feminism bases its discourse on the distinction

between the public, and the private sphere. Women being self employed, or to borrow

from Sudarkasa (1981) by working "on their own account" (Sudarkasa 1981: 55) are

located in the domestic sphere, and thus, their power is unrecognized by western

feminism. The western feminist discourse conceptualizes power within the public sphere

where men reside. Whereas, the domestic sphere, where women are placed in their roles

as mothers, feeders of their families, and as agriculturalists, or crafters and traders, is

deemed void of real power.

Although I do not negate the patriarchal barriers Ethiopian women face, I

continue to argue that western feminist discourse fails altogether to recognize nonwestern

women's contribution to society. For instance, among the Gamo of Southern Ethiopia

women are the sole pottery producers, and as such they are highly valued. Pottery making

is economically crucial since Gamo potters do not own land. Women potters and their

families rely exclusively on pottery production for their family's income, and often times

mothers and daughters work together to economically sustain the family (Weedman

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[2] See the Konso women of Southern Ethiopia. The Konso are the only known Ethiopian society where women are the primary stone-tool producers and users for the purpose of processing hides (Weedman 2008).

2005; Arthur 2013). Hence, pottery making is a crucial source of income that stimulates economic wealth for the society. Notwithstanding, that Gamo women are as important to society as Gamo men, there is the tendency among western scholars to consider this sort of work as craft making, and as such, unimportant and unrecognized as a concrete bearer of wealth and power (Sudarkasa 1981; Weedman 2008; Arthur 2013).

Moreover, western feminist theories have the tendency to locate a universal subordination of women based on "reproduction, the sexual division of labour, the family, marriage, household, patriarchy, etc.," (Mohanthy 1988: 209). In doing so, and by abridging local, cultural, and historical contexts, western scholars disrupt and damage African women's role and status in society. Consequently rather than empowering nonwestern women, western studies negate a priori their agency, power, and autonomy, which exist in loci, and within the context of patriarchal societies. As a consequence to these inaccurate representation of black women, and failure to draw relevance to African situations and realities, I decided to distance my study from their theories.

As I develop my study using nonwestern and postcolonial theories, I first illustrate (a) how migrant Ethiopian women express their agency and resistance to patriarchal oppression. I do this by refraining to universalize male dominance and female exploitation, and by according patriarchal practices cultural and historical contexts; (b) I demonstrate Ethiopian women's historical status quo as major contributors to resource production, and I argue that their status quo is negated by Western ideologies. Furthermore, I demonstrate (c) that during the integration process, Ethiopian women refugees/migrants re-possess their autonomy by changing traditional gender roles, however, without disavowing their cultural identity, but by forming a hybrid identity; and

(d) that the negotiation of the two cultures, enables Ethiopian women in America to attain merits located outside their traditional beliefs.

**1.3 Contextualized traditional power**

The gender division of labour establishes women as the keeper of the family, which is in Ethiopia, and remains in America, one of the most important values of the Ethiopian culture. This value endows women their status. The responsibility women carry for their children is rooted in their cultural and religious beliefs. All women and men participants emphasized the importance of family relationship. Several African theorists from Ifi Amadiume (1987) to Oyĕwùmi Oyĕrónké (1997, 1998, 2003), Filomina Chioma Steady (1981, 1985), and Niara Sudarkasa (1981), to name only a few, when writing about African women's status and accomplishments, emphasize the importance of black women's perspective on motherhood, and as keepers of the family. In Ethiopia, as in other African societies, the family is considered as the most basic unit of social organization that carries out vital tasks, such as the socialization of children. If there is no harmony within the family unit, then society cannot have harmony either.

The Ethiopian family structure is formed and includes the nuclear family, consisting of three generations, --- that is, grandparents, parents and offspring, --- and the extended family, which includes cousins, aunts, uncles, neighbors, and friends. Within the family and neighbors, women form female-centered community networks, where through solidarity, they reveal local standpoints of strength, and assert their power in the community. An example of these women-centered community networks are the daily gatherings for coffee. If those gatherings are viewed as merely mundane activities to the western eye, to Ethiopian women the gatherings are venues to discuss important matters,

including family, social, and economic matters. In the United States those gatherings, though no longer a daily affair, are still an important factor for women socialization, because they remain an expression of power within the Ethiopian communities women have rebuilt in resettlement (Yedes et al. 2004). Through these community networks, Ethiopian women refugees/migrants create, as they did in Ethiopia, intimate and life-long associations that are indispensable sources for rebuilding belonging in host societies.

## 1.4 Resistance to Patriarchal Oppression Power and Merits located outside traditional beliefs

Additionally, Ethiopian women refugees attain merits outside their traditional values and beliefs by pursuing higher education. All the women I interviewed underlined the importance of education as an asset of social upward mobility, and as a door for their daughters to attain opportunities that they never had. Because of the emphasis attributed to education, mothers, as well as fathers, encourage their daughters to pursue higher education, which reflects, (a) a resistance to the socially constructed subordination of women; (b) and it reflects how Ethiopian men are experiencing changes of local values as well. All interviewees articulated the value attributed to education. Abey confided that he was always "ahead of time," making sure that his daughters attained higher education. Lilliet, a first generation participant, saw education as the opening of opportunities to her daughters that she, an Ethiopian woman of an older generation, never had the ability to obtain. She stressed that all of her 13 children were given opportunities to go to school. She proudly underlined that one daughter is a successful business owner, another a lawyer, and one more a successful academic. Although education for both boys and girls has also become a priority in Ethiopia, there is still the tendency, and the expectation, for

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girls to marry young and have children. As a consequence, the number of girls in Ethiopia receiving higher education still lacks beyond that of boys; while, among my Ethiopian sample group, the number of girls pursuing higher education surpasses the number of boys.

Thus my hypothesis is that when Ethiopian women refugees/migrants relocate to the United States, they choose to mimic particular ways of the host society, assuming a hybrid identity. By doing so, they assert their agency, deconstructing boundaries of subordinate spaces within the dominant society, as well as, within the patriarchal norms of their culture. As Homi Bhabha (1984) postulates, "[m] imicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 1984: 126). The effect of mimicry "has profound and disturbing" effects on "the authority of colonial discourse" (Bhabha 1984: 126). The use of mimicry can disrupt and displace not only colonial authority, but societal domination as well. Through mimicry, patterns of behaviors are changed by the agency power expressed by the individual, who consciously chooses what to mimic, and to what degree alter her/his behavior (Giddens 1984).

**1.5 Examples of Mimicry and Hybrid Identities**

There are numerous ways to mimic and assume a hybrid identity, such as incorporating particular sayings or introducing slangs of the host society into one's own language. Also, by mimicking and mixing the cuisine, art, and fashion of the host society with one's own cuisine, art, and fashion. Finally, mimicking behavioral patterns instigate the formation or alteration of individuals and or group identity, and this identity alteration occurs through conscious, creative action. Here I offer a couple of examples that, in my

opinion, illustrate how Ethiopian refugees/migrants by mimicking American popular art, and certain behavioral aspects, transform their own identities. In turn, the new identity creates a culture, which is a hybrid of the two cultures (Bhabha 1994). For instance, during the Taste of Ethiopia festival, which for the first time took place in Aurora, Colorado last July, one stand show casing garments caught my attention because it illustrated mimicry, and how the act of mimicry results into hybrid identities. As the festival was promoting Ethiopia's cultural heritage, there were various stations displaying Ethiopia's cultural forms. Traditional foods were cooked, buna, or Ethiopian coffee was brewed, and Ethiopian photographs, jewelries, religious items, and clothing were displayed.

One stand displayed teeshirts with Tigrigna and Amharic words written in Geez Fidel, the Ethiopian alphabet; the people operating the stand wore the same teeshirts. When I inquired what the phrase meant the answer was "Got Milk?[3]" Although milk is an integral part of the Ethiopian diet, the use of the phrase was not intended to promote the drinking of milk, but a reference to the American ad, Got Milk, which is highly representative of American's pop culture. The "Got Milk" ads parody popular culture incorporating famous American athletes, top models, and movie stars. As the day progressed, I noticed several youths wearing the same teeshirt. Older generation Ethiopian refugees/migrants, though not at the festival, display hybrid identities by mimicking the American way of dressing, and by incorporating English words into their language. One informant, for instance, told me that wearing American-style clothing has

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[3] Got Milk? is an American advertising campaign encouraging the consumption of milk, which was created in California in 1993 (milkinggotmilk.com/).

become common among Ethiopian women refugees/migrants, because wearing western clothes is practical, and allows Ethiopian refugees/migrants to easily blending with the people of the host society. That is done as a form of disavowal to the host society, but not to their own cultural style. When Ethiopia women refugees/migrants incorporate slacks into their wardrobe, they do so by choice, and, through this conscious action, they destabilize the social hierarchy the host society imposes upon the receiving group.

Refugees/migrants are classified, categorized, and located by the dominant society as belonging to inferior social strata. The racial categories are imposed upon incoming populations by means of identifying them ethnically through religious practices, cultural differences, and style of clothing (Shiller 1995; Moussa 1993). Clothing, thereby, become a signifier to culturally differentiate the host society's population from the received or subordinated one. The mimicking of western styles of clothing that Ethiopian women assume, rather than disavowing their culture, is an act of agency that gives way to a cultural hybridity "that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha 1994: 4).

Another articulation of mimicking takes place when Ethiopian women refugees/migrants gather during coffee ceremonies. The latter, which are an integral part of the Ethiopian culture, signifiers of togetherness and intimacy, are no longer a daily activity, as they were once in Ethiopia, but have become a commonality celebrated on the weekends. The act of socialization on the weekends reflects a western or American behavior. While Ethiopian refugees/migrants mimic this behavior, there is a group alteration, and a blending of the two cultures.

The blending of the two cultures is highlighted in the similarities and differences taking place while the celebration is unravelling. In Ethiopia, women get together for coffee while attending to their daily routines. Nevertheless, in the host society, the coffee ceremony mimics the American life style of getting together on weekends; thus, becoming an activity entertained during times of leisure. During my fieldwork, if the interview was held on weekends, and in the home of the informant, a stream of friends and family members would pop in for a cup of coffee, which would burn on the stove all day long. Moreover, women use the coffee ceremony as an opportunity to wear traditional garments, or shemma, long white cotton dresses with borders of colored embroidered woven designs. When I inquired if it was a requirement, or a tradition, to wear shemma during coffee gatherings, they replayed that no, it is not necessary, nor is it a tradition. However, since they have relocated, the participants expressed strong feelings about wearing it. The coffee ceremony represents a negotiation between the two cultures. On the one hand, it asserts an Ethiopian tradition reinforced by the wearing of traditional garments; on the other hand, it assumes an American behavioral pattern: getting together on weekends. Thus Ethiopia women refugees/migrants celebrate their tradition of being together on weekends reflecting an American norm, but wearing traditional garments, thus, reinforcing their Ethiopian identity. My overarching hypothesis is that Ethiopian refugees/migrants women's fluid negotiation of the two cultures, (a) enables them to navigate between the values of both cultures;(b) enables them to attain merits located outside their traditional beliefs, and (c) imbues them with a strength missing in their spouses. Unlike their male counterparts, they repossess and claim honor through education and upward mobility. It is important to note that the agency Ethiopian women

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demonstrate in their resettled lives is an agency that was already present in Ethiopia, but because their local agency power is not recognized by a western concept of power, then it is not recognized as such. However, by analyzing Ethiopian women's agency power through an emic interpretation, or through the respondents' perspective, I can locate in loci their agency power (Quisumbing 2003).

## 1.6 Ethiopian Women's Success versus Ethiopian Men's Decline

The reason women are able to gain strength, whereby their male counterparts seemingly do not, is complex. Very few studies have examined in depth the discrepancies in integrating strategies between women and men, or the reasons why women and men refugees respond in such different manners. For the most part, the answers provided are purely based on hypothetical suppositions. Helene Moussa's (1993) research of Ethiopian refugees in Canada is the study that aligns more aptly to mine. As she observed among her interviewees, my study participants commented that adjustments for men is more difficult then for women, because of the loss of status men experience once uprooted from their lands and culture. Women do not experience this kind of loss, because they do not have a status, per se. Moreover, Ethiopian people are proud of who they are, where they come from, and of being the only African country that was never colonized. As a consequence to the latter, the majority of my informants, who, for the most part, are Tigrigna and Amharic, had never experienced racism.

However, when they resettled in the US, they faced downward mobility, loss of status, and were subjected to racial discrimination. This situations trigger negative reactions in men that are heightened by the changes in women's roles. Those changes threaten men's authoritative position in the family as head of the household, which, in

turn, triggers a feeling of loss of their pride as male (Pedraza 1991; Moussa 1993; Pessar and Mahler 2003). These points are corroborated by several psychological studies that examine exile, traumas, and refugees' reactions to traumatic events. Psychological studies reveal that the rupture of refugees' social, cultural, and geographical environment causes clinical depression. Lilliana Munoz (1980), a psychologist who studied the socio-psychological appearances of Chilean refugees in England, comments that exile imparts, "[m] assive deprivation of positive reinforcements [replaced by] prolonged negative reinforcement" (Munoz 1980: 231), such as racism, underemployment, and downward mobility, which are detrimental experiences for the well being of individuals. Munoz continues by underlining that refugees feel a profound sense of loss of security, emotional support, family, friends, and culture (Munoz 1980).

Women facing these issues, as I observed in the Ethiopian community, cope better than men, because they are able to rebuild a sense of community by helping each other. Moreover, they gain enormous strength in rebuilding, and reestablishing stability for their families. The family, according to all of my informants, is their number one priority. It is a source of stability and support, and for this reason, their primary goal is to build a loving and supporting family where they offer and derive support. According to the women I interviewed, a stable caring family and a family with strong relationships is of paramount importance. It is more important than anything else, including work and careers. The family is also important for Ethiopian men. However, men derive power, strength, and status, as the financial providers of the family, and thus, careers are more important than the family per se. Ethiopian men, as the comments from Abey and

Medhanit above illustrated, serve as the authoritative figures of the family, but they do

not participate in housework, or as emotional providers per se.

As I discussed these issues with my informants, first generation participants

emphasized that men are bounded to the Ethiopian male image; an image that cannot bear

to be seen doing house chores. Lilliet noted that unless Ethiopian men are socialized in

the United States from a very early age (her emphasis), they feel utterly ashamed entering

a woman's domain, such as the kitchen. She continued by pointing out that for men it is

hard, very, very hard, because besides having to contend with so much loss, they have to

learn to do so much more. The pressure imposed on refugees from the host society to

adjust without, however, offering adequate opportunities is frustrating, and results in men

feeling a sense of uselessness.

## 1.7 Study Development

The study developed as an ethnography and tells the story of a group of Ethiopian

women who became refugee/migrants in the greater Denver area. The ethnography

balances past life narratives recounting the women lives and experiences before resettling

in the United States with current life histories and experiences post-resettlement in the

Denver metropolitan area. The advantage to integrate past and present life experiences

was that it enabled me to examine the totality of the women participants' lives. As

Armstrong (1987) argued, and Morrice (2011) explains, a life history approach enables

the researcher to "[r] elate individual lives and social events to social contexts, to explore

how personal experiences are woven into the social fabric" (Morrice 2011: 7). As

Morrice (2011) suggests, I believe that to understand an individual's experience the

researcher has to take into account, the inheritance of the individual's past; "[the]

cultural, social and economic structures in which they grew up" (Morrice 2011: 8). Hence, I took a holistic approach to analyze how Ethiopian refugee/migrant women conceptualize their new lives, as well as, to examine how they cope with the inevitable changes that resettlement brought into their lives.

To answer my primary research question: how do women redefine their self-understanding, or the sense of who they are (Brubaker 2000: 17), vis-a-vis the socially-constructed category of refugees/migrants, the study explores the following secondary or subquestions: what are Ethiopian women's strategies to integrate in the social/cultural context of the United States? How do they handle gender roles changes and consequent changes on child rearing mechanisms and habits? Finally, how do they describe their experience as women building a life in a new social and cultural space particularly considering how they negotiate their sense of identity with the new surroundings? To reach a holistic view, I strived to understand their quotidian lives and what problems they conceal since, as Appadurai tells us "[t] he work of cultural reproduction becomes a daily hazard" (Appadurai 1996: 45). That is because, as Appadurai reminds us, displaced women have to negotiate between a cultural image demanding the maintenance of an unchanged 'familial heritage' while finding themselves in realities very different from the one they have left. This situation produces unstable images of who they are. The media further aggravates refugees/migrants' sense of reality by bombarding modified images forged as cultural reproductions. On the one hand, displaced individuals take upon them traits of cultural reproductions, and on the other hand, refugees/migrants strive to maintain the "family-as- microcosm of culture" (Appadurai 1996: 45).

This tension about cultural reproduction and maintenance of culture is observable in the Ethiopian community in Denver; for example, in the style of clothing many younger generation Ethiopians wear, such as baggy jeans and miniskirts, much to the chagrin of their families. Bombarded with an American popular culture of style derived from rap artists, Ethiopian/American young men embody rappers' styles to identify what they perceive as being the American way. Hence, they gravitate toward hip hop as means of expressing an American identity, embracing a fashion characteristic of rap's fans: baggy jeans worn below the waist displaying boxers, floppy teeshirts, caps, and electroluminescent space-age Nikes. Young Ethiopian girls similarly, though not as overtly, wear styles of clothing that can create tension in the family, because they are often too tight, and revealing, or simply do not comply to what first generation Ethiopians deem appropriate. According to Appadurai culture's decentralization through global circulations produces anxieties about cultural reproduction. Hence, as cultural bounds become less bounded and concrete, but more fluid, the reproduction and reification of culture becomes for refugees/migrants a daily concern and a daily hazard.

**1.8 Introduction to the problem**

Appadurai's (1990, 1996) analogy of cultural reproduction as daily hazards can be first glimpsed when Ethiopian refugee/migrant women resettle in host societies, which have divergent values and beliefs from their own. The different cultural values cause dramatic alterations particularly in the synergy of their family structure, bringing external psychological distress and a surge of family imbalance and conflicts. To understand the disruption and imbalance in the structure of the family experienced by Ethiopian refugees/migrants, one needs to know the Ethiopian's traditional household. Ethiopia is a

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patriarchal society where gender roles, for the most part, are defined by male domination and the submission of women. Gender roles are strict; males earn the salary whereby women are usually confined to the domestic sphere and the rearing of children.

Traditional gender roles are almost impossible to reproduce in the United States in the same terms of Ethiopian values and traditions for two main reasons. First, once Ethiopians resettle in the United States, they face economic difficulties; and, thus, women are compelled to enter the workforce, assuming in part the role of provider. Second, no longer in an African patriarchal society, both men and women, have to come to terms with a more egalitarian society, where women participate outside the domestic sphere as almost equal partners to their spouses. The American's traditions and economic realities, therefore, bring a destabilization to the traditional Ethiopian husband-wife relationship, and a power struggle often ensues. It is important to note at this point that these gendered roles when transported to western societies emphasize the victimization and submission of women to patriarchy since the domestic sphere is deemed void of power.

However, several of my informants pointed out that although in the United States women have more freedom than in Ethiopia, and enjoy a relative equality with men they, nevertheless, lack support; and, they lose their traditional form of powers. When I asked what they meant by that, they expressed that in Ethiopia, women receive help and support from family members, and women community networks, thereby, they are not faced with the entire responsibility of raising the children, working, and fulfilling housework, which does not allow them time to participate in community matters as they did in Ethiopia. In the US, they lamented no one helps! Tibelete, a young woman who came to Denver with

a Diversity Visa for economic reasons, captures perfectly this paradox when talking

about her experience as a single mother in the US[4],

> I came with a Diversity Visa. You get the paper you fill them up and then you
> send it to the American Embassy and wait. I filled them up when I was a
> kindergarden teacher. I was young, and I did it with my friends, without
> expectations more as a game. But after several years my name came out, and I
> came to make money. Here I have to clean offices, I can't teach kindergardeners.
> When I work, I have to leave (---), my son, and I have to pay, can you believe it?
> It is no like at home that you get help. Here you pay for everything. In (----) [her
> town in Ethiopia] other women        help you. . . . It is easier in my country, at
> home there is always someone helping, your mom, grandma, unties, neighbors.
> Back home they help each other. In Ethiopia everyone helps with children, you
> have the family. Here there is nobody, nobody, you are lonely, and you pay; there
> you receive help, and you don't pay (Interview 2012 emphasis in original).

The problems arising in the family structure when Ethiopians resettle in The

United States are caused in part by this relative gender equality. However, several women

informants commented that the jobs they attain in the United States, often times, are not

commensurate to the skills and education they had attained in Ethiopia, as in the case of

Tibelete. Thus, the apparent opportunities and gender equality Ethiopian women enjoy in

the United States, which cause the destabilization of husband-wife relationship, and

trigger conflictual relationships, are not always recognized as opportunities, or increased

power by Ethiopian women. Power has to be contextualized and localized to reflect an

Ethiopian value system, or, for that matter, a value system reflecting the majority of

African cultures and societies. Euro-American scholars need to take into consideration,

the presence of factors that, "[s] et the black women apart as having a different order of

priorities" (Chioma Steady 1981: 22-23).

## 1.9 The Refugee-Immigrant Construct

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[4] Her husband remains in Ethiopia where he has a good job. Here, as she pointed out, "he
would only drive a taxi"

An additional problem that this study examines to reach a full understanding of women refugees is the constructed concept of refugee/immigrant vis-a-vis a more fluid self-identity. I need to note here that the use of terms refugee, and, or migrant throughout the thesis is used interchangeably, because, though, a vast number of Ethiopians came as refugees after more than a decade living in the US, the majority do no longer identify themselves as refugees, but as migrants. Furthermore, not everyone entered as a refugee, but some came as immigrants, and others, particularly in later years, as Diversity Visa holders. However, notwithstanding the term used, both labels are problematic, because, as Zetter (1991; 2007) postulates, the constructed concept of being a refugee, or a migrant, maintains the individual labeled in a static space, with a fixed identity, as the following comment from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) infers "[a] person does not become a refugee by virtue of recognition . . . but is recognized because he or she is a refugee" (UNHCR 2005:4). Furthermore, terms and images such as waves, floods used to describe refugees/migrants are problematic, because they cause receiving societies to feel threatened by a plague. When host communities feel submerged by desperate and needy people, a series of problematic assumptions are set in motion. (a) It conveys erroneous images to the dominant society; (b) which perceives refugees and migrants as problematic, and as burdens draining the host society's economy, instead of being possible assets to society; (c) concretizes refugees identity and categorizes individuals in conceptualized boxes: refugees, aliens, legal aliens, illegal aliens, immigrants etc. These imposed identities are resented, and disputed by individuals experiencing refugeness, who conceive their identity in much

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different terms from those bestowing the label as empirical evidence illustrates (Harrel-Bond 1986; H. Malkki 1986; Daniel and Knudsen 1995; Zetter 1991, 2007). Indeed, during my ethnography, informants commented that they resent being considered only as refugees because it takes away from who they are, stripping them from their Ethiopian identity that is rooted in their collective history and cultural forms.

**1.10 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of my thesis, therefore, is to examine how women handle these difficult situations. How do they redefine their sense of selves? How do they live their new reality of wife, mother, and equal partner to their spouses? What compromises do they face when all they have known has changed? How do they reframe their selves? These targeted questions are explored during my study to understand Ethiopian women's strategies to integrate into their new American lives.

My study sample group includes first, 1.5, and second-generation Ethiopian refugees/migrants. First and 1.5 generation groups form my core sample, while second-generation immigrants of Ethiopian heritage represent a smaller sample. The latter are defined as those who were born in the United States and have one or both parents relocated in the United States. The 1.5-generation is identified as comprising women who fled or immigrated with their parents to the United States when they were less than twelve years of age. Both 1.5 and second generation Ethiopians helped redefine my analysis of acculturation vis-a-vis the concepts I borrowed from Homi Bhabha of mimicry and hybridity (Bhabha 1994).

**1.11 Study Participants**

The focus of the research is primarily about past and presentEthiopian women refugees/migrants' experiences to discern their adjusting and coping strategies once they resettled in the United States. However, as the research developed, I determined that to reach a holistic understanding of women's experiences, I needed to garner information from their male counterparts, as well. Thus, a number of men were invited to participate in the study and contributed to inform my findings. During the process, I closely engaged with Ethiopian community members living in the Denver Metro Area, in particular with community members attending the Ethiopian Orthodox Church located on Sixth Avenue and Pennsylvania. The formal Ethiopian name of the church is Tewahedo Kidane Meheret Curch; Tewahedo, a Ge'ez[5] word meaning 'being made one' or 'unified' is cognate with tawhid meaning 'monotheism'. However, it is referred to by the majority of its parishioners, as the Tigrinya Church, or simply the Church on Pennsylvania Avenue. Because my research was conducted primarily at this particular location, the majority of my informants are from Tigray and refer to themselves as Habesha, or Habasha, a term used to identify Ethiopians from the northern regions, and particularly Tigrayans, and Eritreans, who claim as their progenitors Queen of Sheba and King Solomon. The term Habasha refers to the South Semitic-speaking group of people whose cultural, linguistic, and ancestral origins trace to the Axumite Empire, which imbues them with a sense of exceptionality. Historically, the term Habasha refers to the offspring of Hamitic-Semitic

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[5] Ge'ez is an ancient South Semitic language that originated in the northern region of Ethiopia and southern Eritrea. It later became the official language of the Kingdom of Aksum and Ethiopian Imperial Court. Today Ge'ez continues to serve as a liturgical language in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Weldeyesus 2009) Ge'ez was introduced as an official written language during the first Aksumite kingdom when the Sabeans sought refuge in Aksum. Ge'ez was developed from the Sabean's alphabet, or fidel, and is still used by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church today . The Semitic languages use the Ge'ez script, which consists of 33 letters, each of which denotes 7 characters, making a total of 231 characters.(info@kidanemeheretchurch.com) (Marcus 2002)

peoples, or Sabaean traders from South Arabia, who intermarried with native populations, and the term originally referred to and meant "people of mixed blood." Both Tigrinya and Amharic refer to themselves as Habesha, but Oromo people do not.

## 1.12 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church

At present, the Denver metropolis houses three Ethiopian Orthodox parish churches and several smaller ones. In 1980 there was only one Ethiopian Orthodox Church and only a few hundred Ethiopian refugee/immigrants resided in the metropolitan area. The establishment of several churches, however, was not due to an increased number of refugee/migrants settlements in Denver, but was triggered by disagreements between members of the church. The disagreement was caused by political discords in Ethiopia, which in turn caused the church to split. Later ethnic groups divided and established the existing three separate churches. The three parish churches differ in their affiliation to a synod in Ethiopia, *Kidane-Mehret* and *Medhane-Alem*. However, in the diaspora, *Medhane-Alem* has become *Kidist-Mariam*[6] (Engedayehu 2012).

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[6] The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) has gone through a turbulent period of existence during the last three decades and a half, especially since 1991, when the current regime took over the reins of power from a Marxist military junta that had toppled the government of the late Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974. The most dramatic outcome of this tumultuous period has been the official split of the Patriarchate of the EOTC into two Holy Synods— one exiled in North America, and the other in Ethiopia. The Church encountered this unheralded turn of events immediately following the 1991 seizure of government by a coalition of rebel movements, known as the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Immediately after seizing power, the Tigrean People Liberation Front (TPLF), the dominant faction in the EPRDF coalition, removed the then-incumbent Patriarch of the Church, unceremoniously, and replaced him with an Archbishop originally from Tigre and who at the time was residing in the United States. However, critics assailed the government's action as a politically- and ethnically-inspired action intended to politicize the Church, while contending that it egregiously

The split in the church can reflect the split between different ethnic lines, which can be problematic, since the Ethiopian community in Metropolitan Denver risks to be divided. Furthermore, as a side point at this moment, the politicization of the church can risk alienating the younger Ethiopian generation, who, as the vast majority of second-generation participants noted, have chosen to join evangelical churches, commenting that they participate at Orthodox sermons only during festivities. Notwithstanding the divergence, members of the parishes commented that before the establishment of the Ethiopian churches, there was a severe lack of cohesion and community membership. Since the establishment of the Ethiopian churches, refugees/migrants have built a community, and they feel that worshipping in their own church reestablishes continuity, and a sense of belonging.

Indeed, the Church plays a tremendous role in the process of adjustment, in the preservation of group identity, and in bringing an avenue where people can gather to discuss social, economic, and familial issues. This last point is very important since all first generation interviewees lamented that many problems faced by Ethiopian refugees are due to, and are exacerbated by, the lack of familial support; a support that they enjoyed back home. The lack of support from family members is a consequence of the sharp discontinuities brought by exile that disrupted innumerable families, splitting them during flight and resettlement. Among several issues, the one that surfaced time and

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violated one of the cardinal tenets of the Ethiopian Orthodox faith. In their view, installment of a new Patriarch while the incumbent is still alive contravenes the dogma and practices of Orthodox Christianity. Needless to say, the action of the regime led to the unsavory split of the Patriarchate between two Holy Synods—The Holy Synod of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in Ethiopia, and the Holy Synod of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church-in-Exile (HSEOTCE) in Engedayehu.

times again, and is a real chagrin for so many study participants, is the lacks of guidance-married people receive.

In Ethiopia, marital conflicts are a public affair, insofar as when couples experience problems, they seek guidance from elderly members of the two families, as well as from elders of the community, who are highly respected and considered wise. The latter take charge of the couple's problems and help them find solutions. Here, marital conflicts are a private affair between the two parties involved. Conversely, there is no one giving advice, and the consequences, as many have observed, can be grave. However, since the establishment of the churches, there are better opportunities for younger couples to present issues of marital problems to community members and receive help.

## 1.13 Factors Affecting Refugees/Migrants Success

During many hours of interviews and conversations, emerging links appeared between Ethiopian women's integration processes and family disruptions, such as separations, divorces, and a reduction of contracted marriages among 1.5 and second generation Ethiopians/Americans. My hypotheses about the decline of marriages affecting 1.5 generation Ethiopians/Americans is that marriage decline results from the increased number of Ethiopian women refugees/migrants pursuing higher education, and reaching soaring achievements, while their male counterparts seemingly experience higher rates of downward mobility. This state of affairs creates imbalance between women and men, tension within the community, and the diminished number of marriages.

Second generation Ethiopians/Americans apparently follow the same trend of 1.5 generation. Inasmuch as the majority of girls pursue higher education and postpone

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matrimony. Here, it is enough to say that Ethiopian refugees/migrants, for the most part, prefer to marry within their own ethnic group. However, the downward mobility experienced by males in both careers and education is causing a decrease in marriages, and is a source of consternation in the Ethiopian community.

Indeed, many informants lamented the fate of several adolescent boys who increasingly drop out of school and engage in criminal activities. This situation, as many participants bemoaned, brings an imbalance between educated successful young Ethiopian women, and less educated, less successful young Ethiopian men. There appears to be congruity with my findings and scholarly articles that have identified "[a] gendered pattern that is consistent with the national trend: Immigrant girls tend to outperform boys in educational settings" (Brandon 1991; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Rong and Brown 2001; García-Coll, Szalacha and Palacios 2005; Qin-Hilliard, 2003; Suárez-Orozco and Qin- Hilliard 2004).

Many factors are contributing to this phenomenon. Principally, refugees/migrants having, in many cases, weak family economic resources are predominantly enrolled in inner-city public schools, where evidence points to boys suffering greater violence and racism than girls. As a consequence of violence and racism, the former disengage from their academic achievements in greater numbers than female students (DeVos 1980; Ogbu 1998; Crul & Vermeulen 2003; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2009). The phenomenon of singling out boys and young men for bigotry, rather than girls and young women, is due in part to the different expectations demanded from the two sexes. Girls, for the most part, are required to conform to family expectations demanding their presence closer to home; and further, girls, having many more responsibilities and chores in the house, feel

a stronger sense of family obligations (Fuligini and Pederson 2002; Abdi 2008). As a

consequence to these gendered roles, immigrant male youths, unlike their female

counterparts, have more opportunity to interact with the dominant society. If on the one

hand, interaction with the dominant society is viewed as having more opportunity to

integrate into the host society; on the other hand, integration in inner-cities environment

can lead to the adoption of problematic practices of inner-city youth. Integration into the

cultural inner-city environment can thus lead to a path of downward socioeconomic

mobility (Suárez-Orozco and Qin- Hilliard 2004; Abdi 2008; Suárez-Orozco et al. 2009).

These scholarly writings corroborate my observations. Here I reproduce excerpts from

first, and 1.5-generation participants, who emphasize the prevalence of these phenomena

in the Ethiopian community:

> I don't understand they [boys] are just lost, lost. Their parents sacrifice everything
> for them and they [boys] just throw everything away. They drop out of school,
> they do drug, they engage in violent behavior. The problem is they don't know
> who they are anymore. Back home it was different ... Back home, boys
> became men, here they don't, here they are lost (Interview 2012).

> Well my brother is a different story. He is ... He is a criminal ... [really long
> pause] I don't know why, he's ... Just ... He's just... you see I wasn't free to go
> out as he was, I had chores, I had responsibilities, I was close to my parents,
> particularly my mom, she told me stories of Ethiopia. She told me stories of when
> we were kids in Ethiopia. I remember, I remember who we are, my brother
> doesn't. He never listened to the stories, he was gone he was always out
> (Interview 2012)!

> I tried, but I work so many hours, my wife too she is gone from the house. I kept
> him until he was 18. He called the police on me saying I abused him. I punished
> him yes, I did, but it was my responsibility to keep him safe. I told him I did no
> like the boys he was going out with, not Ethiopians, no they were not Ethiopians
> they were African Americans. When he turned 18 he left, I don't know where he
> is, he went with them to do drugs and steal cars. (...) My daughters, they are all
> successful (Interview 2013).

In the last excerpt the gentleman elaborated on his daughters' career paths, but here I refrain from disclosing it to maintain the assurance of confidentiality. I believe that these issues, pertaining to boys dropping out of school, translating into downward mobility, are in part due to the changes taking place within the Ethiopian family structure. The changes in the homes de-stabilizes normative Ethiopian social dynamics causing males to experience a reduction in their status. The reduction of male status fractures the normative understanding of males' role in society. In other words, boys and young males do not have any longer a male role model. Thus, they experience confusion about the normative of gender roles and behavior, because the family unit is unable to reproduce a microcosm of culture.

Appadurai's "reproduction of culture" as being problematic is meaningful for this case study. When Ethiopians refugees/migrants resettle in a host society, they do not experience a total rupture with their country of origin, and they build social fields that link the two through the social networks of scapes: "ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes" (Appdurai 1990: 296). However, the "scapes" built a "social imaginaire" that is no longer the normative Ethiopian social and cultural way of being. The social imaginaire refers originally to Lacan's concept of how children understand and imagine themselves through what they see unravelling around them; that is, the stories they hear and the pictures they see (Lacan 1949). Henceforth, if the stories they hear do no reflect the realities they see, then, they no longer have a normative Ethiopian social and cultural way to built their self-image.

If, in Ethiopia, men were the patriarchs, and, as such, they dominated power beyond the household level, once they relocated to the U.S., such power and the

privileges accorded to men, were altered, if not, all together lost. The diminished status

men experience provokes a sense of decreased control over their lives and families,

which in turn alters their attitudes; i.e., a decreasing sense of self-confidence, and self-

worth that cause problems to develop. These transformations do not reflect the 'social

imaginaire,' which remains that of bestowing high praise to men's societal status, causing

boys and young men to experience dissonance between what they hear and what they see,

which causes them to experience a sense of loss similar to the loss felt by their fathers

and older siblings. This position, in turn, can induce their downward mobility. This

situation is not exclusive of Ethiopian refugee/migrant youths, but reflects other

refugees/migrants' experiences. John Holtzman (2000, 2008) illustrates this among the

Nuer[7] youths, "Nuer youth have become involved in negative aspects of American youth

culture, such as drugs, gangs, and teen pregnancy, at the expenses . . . of educational

success" (Holtzman 2008: 100).

However, I will argue that issues causing social unravelling, particularly the ones

impacting generational and gender relationships are created and indubitably exacerbated

by economic factors, but also by current policy making. Even policies created to benefit

refugees often fail to address refugee needs because of deep-seated misunderstandings of

policy-makers about refugees' cultures. One such policy, perhaps well intended, but

nevertheless detrimental, as I mention above, is the labeling process that systematically

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[7] Nuer youth are the Sudanese "lost boys." Lost boys was the name given to over 20,000
children, mostly boys, between 7 and 17 years of age who were separated from their
families during the second Sudanese Civil War. Displaced from their lands, and separated
from their families, the lost boys sought refuge from the fighting in neighboring
countries. In their search for safety, they endured unforgiving hardships while crossing
enormous distances (UNICEF sowc96).

categorizes displaced people as refugees (Zetter 1991). People are no longer individuals with particular histories and cultures, but become homogenous groups, who "[l] ike the places described in Waugh's (1930) first travel book, are "fully labeled" in people's minds" (Zetter 1991:40). The issue is relevant and important because:

> Despite a widely recognised universal condition it remains the case that there is great difficulty in agreeing an acceptable definition of the label refugee. This is more than a taxonomic problem because, far from clarifying an identity, the label conveys, instead, an extremely complex set of values, and judgements, which are more than just definitional (Zetter 1991: 40).

The labeling process fragments identities and lives it modifies a person's self-Identity from who s/he is and was to that of a refugee/migrant identity; forcing individuals to see themselves, and their place in the world, through the lens of this new identity. This represents what Bauman (2001) calls individualization or the transformation of human identity. An identity transformation from individual to refugee, as we saw in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) statement, "[a] person does not become a refugee by virtue of recognition ... but is recognized because he or she is a refugee" (UNHCR 2005:4).

The stance taken to label and categorize refugees seeks to give a common denominator, the term refugees, to displaced individuals in an effort to neutralize differences and to ensure protection of their rights, by providing a fresh and equal start to all, where ethnic identities do not count (UNHCR Refugee Status Determination 2005). However, anthropologists working with refugees have found that an important component of refugees' recovery is based on their freedom to construct a "[n] ormative picture of one's past within which 'who one was' can be securely established to the satisfaction of the refugee" (Daniel and Knudsen 1995:5).

Furthermore, these authors emphasize that a "[r] efugee's self-identity is anchored more to who she or he was than what she or he has become" (Daniel and Knudsen 1995: 5). As a case in point, Fetien, a first generation participant, told me that in 1981, when she landed in Washington D.C., with her husband and young children, she was awestruck by the scenery, and so were her children. More importantly, her account reveals that even after several decades living in the U.S., her self-identity is anchored to her Ethiopian life. This, I think, is evident in her wish to one day return to Ethiopia, and in her statement that the aroma of spices reminds her of 'home,' which denotes that even after three decades of living in the US, home is still Ethiopia: Everything looked different, everything was new. Language, culture, dresses, even the smells, the weather, the buildings ... Still today when I smell the spices I'm reminded of home ... Life was easier then ... One day maybe I go back to stay (Interview: 2012).

**1.14 The Collectivism of Women**

Tigist, who came to the U.S. in the early 1970s, while describing her life prior to resettlement, makes comments about women's strength, using words such as 'strong women,' 'determined,' 'enduring,' 'strong-willed,' who cared for and helped one another. The appellatives Tigist used to describe the women of her community reflect the identity of Ethiopian women; an identity that was part of her persona, since she was an integral component of the group. Her self-identity was drawn from the collectiveness of women. This is particularly true for the African philosophical concept of being, since one is with others, I am us. Goduka writes that the Bantu of Southern Africa have a philosophy of ubuntu in which the self cannot be without the collectivism of others, "I am we; I am because we are; we are because I am" (Goduka 2000: 71), because a person is

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through others. The collective self is not singular to the Bantu people, but is found in many African societies (Chilisa and Ntscane 2010). Moreover, Knudsen writes that self-identity is drawn from one's past within which one was. It is anchored to one's past, thus, inclusive of all memories. Here is a small sample of Tigist's memories:

> Ethiopian couples are at a disadvantage in the U.S. because there is a general lack of family support. There is no marital guidance like it was provided at home. Before Mengistu, life was good. The women in my family were strong they helped each other. I remember my grandmother, my aunts, and the women in the village everyone contributed and gave advice. No one felt alone. Now we help as we can, but it is not the same (Interview: 2013)!

Hence, this study seeks to examine the challenges faced by Ethiopian women in the Denver community to reach harmony and find fulfillment within their new social and cultural space, and to examine what they feel they have lost and gained as a result of their immigration. Most women I interviewed feel that they have lost their 'home.' However, not the concrete sense of the home, but the togetherness that home was for, and felt like. The majority of study participants commented that home is a social space to be with others. In their homes, there are always family members, guests, and friends. Most often, several generations live together. One of the most upsetting aspects of living in the United States is 'closed doors.' Metaphorically, Ethiopians see doors as barriers; having closed doors is to be severed from other people.

The majority lamented that when they arrived in the United States, they were placed in these small cubicles. Tigist, told me about the housing situation, and she was shocked at the rules and regulations present in the U.S., and at what the property owners enforced. She listed, in horror, the number of people allowed in an apartment depending on the number of rooms, Two rooms: four people, three rooms: five people. She

enunciated each number, imitating the managers of the apartment complexes. The number of bedrooms dictate the number of people allowed to live in the apartment; and in dismay, she asked: But what about families?" What do they have to do? They cannot afford a home! It is a difficult, difficult way (Interview 2013)! Tigist is not alone feeling this way. The vast majority of first generation study participants expressed nostalgic feelings about their lives in Ethiopia before the 1974 revolution. Informants talked about homes where everyone lived together and where life was easy. Back home, as they always refer to Ethiopia, social visits were part of quotidian. All women remember fondly being with other women, never alone, never, as they emphasize.

Ethiopian women refugees try to keep this tradition alive. However, as they observed, life in the USA is not conducive for daily visiting, as every one works too much, residences are too far apart, and not every one has a car. Nevertheless, they all try to maintain the social gathering part of their lives. Indeed, whenever I was in one of their homes, particularly during the weekends, meals were prepared, coffee was brewed, and a stream of friends and family members would be in and out throughout the day.

Another interesting comment women and men made was with regard to change. They commented that in Ethiopia, particularly in urban areas, life is changing as well. However the difference is that changes are developing organically among all people. In the host society, change is expected to come only from refugees/migrants, and not from the dominant society. In other words, study participants feel upon them a constant gaze that observes them, waiting, and expecting them, 'the others,' to change, and conform to the ways of the host society. Finally, they observed that, although they have documents stating they are refugees, they are not just refugees. They are people, like any other

people, with a past, a present, and plans for their future. A future that most of my first

generation informants hope will bring them back to Ethiopia.Nevertheless, they also

commented that their children and grandchildren will influence their final decision. As

informants continued sharing their plans for the future they explained that they resent

being labeled only as refugees, because the static, fixed label denies them their true

identity, an identity of women and men with a shared history and culture. Women and

men, who before experiencing refugeness had a past and plans for their future. Women

and men, who today hope to rebuild continuities and a thriving life for themselves and

their loved ones. However, the label denies them the possibility to be who they were, are

and who they can become.

## 1.15 Identity Dilemma - Identity as a Construct

Current and past researches corroborate my findings. Up to date, there have been

numerous studies exploring the consequences of identity construction. Empirical

evidence illustrates that refugees/migrants "[c] onceive their identity in very different

terms from those bestowing the label" (Zetter 1991:40). Resettlement brings compulsory

changes, problematized by identity construction and acculturation. I, thus, explore the

dynamics underlying the reframing and reshaping of their sense of who they are post-

migratory with their sense of selves prior to resettlement. I argue that the self-identity

during the process of integration undergoes a metamorphosis, which is mistakenly

associated with the loss of traditional values. The so-called Americanization or

westernization of Ethiopian women refugees/migrants is merely the mimicry of the

Western way of life and not an internalization of the culture or acculturation. The cultural

mimicry blends with the internal self-sense of identity to create a hybrid culture and a hybrid identity.

This happens because of convenience. When women, for example, diminish visits to one another they mimic an American way. However, their value system remains the same. The diminished daily gatherings are replaced by church gathering. The churches provide a space for women to express their religious identity, and they also provide a space for women to rebuild and reenforce a sense of community. The churches are avenues where women get together to worship, and give support to one another. During the research process, I spent an extensive amount of time at their Orthodox Church on Pennsylvania Avenue.  After some time, I was invited to the church basement where women and men gather during and after the ceremonies; a space dedicated for socialization. Here I noticed, as during the sermon, the separation of women and men. When I inquired about this division, Abebech, a 1.5-generation participant, and composite informant, reiterated that church gatherings were times for sisterhood.

More importantly, church gatherings are times when women, as they did in Ethiopia, share joys and consternations. During those gatherings, women plan for festivities, get togethers, and family celebrations. In this Ethiopian space, women can discuss family issues, such as conflicts between parents and offsprings generated by the divergent values they encounter in the host society. They discuss turbulences arising in their homes, which are provoked by their spouses' downward mobility and diminished sense of self-worth. In other words, the church has replaced the homes as a space for social gatherings, and as a space for women to exercise their power in the community and homes. As those gatherings take place, there is a blending of the two cultures. Women

decide which aspect of the American ways are acceptable to integrate into their lives and belief system, and which are not acceptable. These negotiations are representations of a hybrid culture in the making.

Moreover, and more significantly, I will illustrate that among Ethiopian women refugees/migrants this identity metamorphosis is partly a response to globalization and, as such, is a metamorphosis occurring among all Ethiopian women,[8] no matter where they are situated in the world, including those in Ethiopia. Surprisingly, however, Ethiopian women living in their home country tend to have more fluidity when experiencing changes that bring identity changes, than the Ethiopian women who have migrated to the US. This dichotomy that is, Ethiopian women refugees/migrants and Ethiopian women non-refugee/migrants, is understood when we analyze the former's identity formation in the host country as refugees and others, which is an identity constructed by policy makers, and by host communities othering outsiders.

The refugee identity is first constructed within institutionalized regulatory practices, which for bureaucratic purposes of managing and processing humanitarian assistance divide, organize, and label displaced individuals as refugees, immigrants, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons. To borrow Roger Brubacker and Frederick Cooper's literary expression, displaced individuals are organized and labeled to neatly fit a western conceptual box (Brubaker and Cooper 2000: 32). Consequently, Ethiopian women refugees/migrants suffer from the coercive influence of external identifications from the host country's federal organizations. These labels identify them

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[8] Here I refer to Ethiopian women residing in Ethiopia, who have not experienced migration.

as outsiders, undesired others, non-modern, vulnerable, and weak. The identity of Ethiopian women refugees/migrants, therefore, is no longer their own, but is constructed and politicized in order to conform to an external image. For women in Ethiopia, the issue of their identity is not problematic, because the formation and re-formation of their identity depends on their subjective experiences. Hence, it is fluid and multiple, following a natural and organic process void of labels enforced upon them by others.

Because the labeling process exacerbates a migrant woman's already difficult situation, I attempt to understand their past realities of Ethiopian women living in Ethiopia, their present situation of Ethiopian women living in the Denver metropolis, and their perceived need for reaching what they feel is a holistic and fluid self-identity in a new social and cultural space. Furthermore, I seek to understand how Ethiopian women deal with what they feel they have lost and gained through immigration/migration.

## 1.16 Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 introduced the study, illustrating the questions guiding the research project, and outlined several working hypotheses. In addition, I examined obstacles and factors restricting refugees/migrants, while outlining the concept of identity as a construct, and presented issues pertaining to the labeling processes. I illustrated the reasons I distanced my framework from western centric theories and, instead, chose to align my study with nonwestern feminist theories, particularly coming from Africa. I highlighted the purpose of the study, and its organization.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the theoretical development of my thesis. By outlining the thesis theoretical development, I explain, and discuss the reasons for choosing the different anthropological theories I used to frame my analysis. I develop further my

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decision to use African feminist theories, illustrating how the thesis benefits from their contextualized knowledge that respects communal forms of living that are not Western. The importance Ethiopians bestow upon connectedness and relationships clarify the concept I use of identity; an identity based on collectiveness, rather than individualism. Finally, African writings offer insights on value systems that again are not Western.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the methodology. I introduce the research participants, and the procedures used for gathering data. Additionally, I consider the limitations of the study, present ethical considerations, and possible solutions

In Chapter 4, I outline a brief history of Ethiopia, its migration patterns, backgrounds, and the lay of the land. This is important because the worldview of one's people is connected to their history, and historical events. In turn, migration patterns and lay of the land offer a nuanced picture of the heterogeneity of my study participants. Chapter 4 serves to illustrate, from a historical perspective, the identity formation of the Ethiopian people. Hence, in addition to offering a chronological order of events illustrating patterns of migration, I present key historical figures and events. Key historical figures and events have served to underline an Ethiopian identity that clashes with the identity construct of refugees/migrants imposed upon them.

In Chapter 5, I contextualize the Ethiopian migration into the modern discussion of the unequivocal dilemmas of globalization and forced migration. This chapter allows me to compare my Ethiopian case study with an already existing theoretical body of work, African narratives, and scholarly works.

Chapter 6 delves into the final analysis of my Denver case study, presenting data collected. I illustrate the concept of motherhood, sisterhood, and womanhood in relation

to my interviewees past and present experiences. I unravel the successes and struggles of first generation Ethiopian women refugees/migrants, contrasting them with successes and struggles of second generation Ethiopian women to assess what women feel they have gained and lost in their experience of resettlement.

Chapter 7 offers a summary of the study and its conclusion. I offer suggestions for future studies and how anthropology can help policy makers achieve better and more sensitive decisio

# Chapter 2 Theoretical Development

## 2.1 Explanation of Terms Used

Certain terms used in this study need to be clarified for full understanding of the specialized meaning that I intend. Ergo, terminology such as acculturation and mimicry are presented and further developed to ensure that the right meaning is attributed and achieved throughout the argument of my thesis. To reach this goal, first I present (a) the definition of acculturation found in anthropological and social studies theories; (b) I explain why acculturation is inaccurate to the analytical standpoint of my thesis, particularly when examining first generation Ethiopian women refugees/migrants, (c) I then juxtapose it to the anthropological and sociological concepts of mimicry and hybridization; and finally (d) I illustrate how and why the terms mimicry and hybridization are preferred points of analysis, since both terms assert agency to the individual. However, while illustrating how mimicry and hybridity bestow agency to the individual, I have to emphasize, and insist on illustrating the failures of acculturation theories, because people in the public domain, including policy makers, still use acculturation concepts to measure refugees/migrants' level of integration into the host society as successful or unsuccessful.

Acculturation is the predominant concept to illustrate how, through interaction; refugee/migrant populations integrate aspects of the host society, and thus acculturation

However, acculturation theories fail to illustrate what aspects of the received populations the host society integrates. This shortcoming is illustrated by explaining that host societies, perceiving their cultures to be superior, disdain and reject acculturation forms of the received population, and thus, the concept retains the dichotomy of superior/inferior, modern/non-modern etc, rather than retaining neutrality.

Thus, the discussion of acculturation, contrary to mimicry and hybridity, as it is currently conducted, is the same as assimilation insofar as acculturation does not allow choices, expecting refugees and migrants to adhere to the dominant society's ways. This demand is not overtly expressed, but is camouflaged through discourses arguing that acculturation does not prescribe the direction of change, nor does it place a value on the types of changes, but only refers to the process by which refugees/migrants 'adapt' to a new culture (Yu 1984). However, if refugees/migrants do not acculturate, they are considered by the dominant/host society as problematic, incapable of integration, and more importantly, as ungrateful. These types of discourses are found both in institutions, and mainstream society. The latter frowns upon refugees/migrants if, and when; they express too overtly their cultural values. In other words, it is always preferable when everyone fits nicely into an American mold. Furthermore, acculturation for the most part treats refugees/migrants as homogenous groups, and thus, it does not take into consideration, the local values and cultures of the displaced populations, nor does it take in consideration, the gender of the individuals, or their socioeconomic situations and expects a homogenous acculturation.

On the other hand, mimicry reflects the conscious choice that comes within the person doing the mimicking. It is a choice exercised by the individual void of outside

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pressures, and void of expectations from the host society. Hybridity is the result of mimicking. Mimicry as postulated by Bhabha (1984) in his, Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse, becomes an opportunistic pattern of behavior to access the power of the colonizers. Under colonialism, and in the context of immigration, mimicry becomes a pattern of behavior that is, – the colonized copies the colonizer in power, because by copying the latter, one gains access to the same opportunities the dominant group possesses. Mimicry is a conscious and intentional behavior. Minority groups, while engaging with the dominant group, intentionally copy the latter. Mimicry and hybridity allow agency and decision making to be a process controlled by refugees/migrants; and thus, are better suited to my case study. Also, I prefer these concepts because they disengage the dichotomy: dominant/dominated, superior/inferior.

Both concepts, mimicry and hybridity, are particularly pertinent to my case study, because, as I argue throughout, Ethiopian women refugees/migrants rather than acculturate to the local culture, mimic the aspects that suit their needs. For example, the relationships they develop with American women reflect a form of mimicry. The majority of first generation participants, but I have to indicate not all, commented that they have very few American friends, and that they rarely socialize with them. Because of the infrequency of their get togethers, Ethiopian women question if those friends are really friends, or if, in truth, they are merely acquaintances. Friends, according to the Ethiopian worldview, are as close and intimate as family members; thus, a friend is like a sister or a brother, nothing less. However, as many observed, for most Americans, such a relationship is too intense; consequently, Ethiopian women refugees/migrants socialize

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with American women, but they do not become as intimate, by sharing their feelings, hopes, and expectations, as they do with their Ethiopian friends.

Moreover, informants observed that American women have more freedom than Ethiopian women. Americans go out more often, and they socialize in places, such as bars and dance clubs, where, as many informants noted, Ethiopian women do not socialize. Informants also noted that Americans spend money freely, go out frequently, and engage in activities, which some Ethiopians find unacceptable. Conversely, Ethiopian women go out less frequently because of their responsibilities in the home. In addition, second generation informants commented that their parents do not allow them to have as many friends as American youths can have. Notwithstanding these differences, Ethiopian women refugees/migrants have American friends with whom they go out, but when they socialize with these friends, rather than treat them as family members, they maintain a certain distance by mimicking the American's socialization style.

Ethiopians, generally 1.5 and second-generation women, who are employed in sectors where Americans are present, may choose to join their American friends for coffee or a drink. However, first generation participants employed in similar sectors commented that they might join American colleagues for coffee, but never for drinks, and never in a bar. Second generation informants confided that they engage in American's behaviors, such as socializing in bars, dating American boys, and having many American friends when they are away in college, but not when at home among people of their community. These behaviors, relating to Ethiopian/American friendships are more aptly associated with mimicry and hybridity, since Ethiopian women refugee/migrants identify with the Ethiopian traditional value of friendship, rather than identify with the notion of

American friendship. Nevertheless, by engaging and negotiating aspects of the two cultures, Ethiopian women refugees/migrants begin to form a hybrid culture.

This new hybrid culture, and the new hybrid conception of culture, as Bhabha (1988) argues, is necessary in order to develop a real international culture and dismantle systems of cultural dominance. Moore Gilbert (2000) explaining Bhabha's concepts of hybrid cultures tells us that Bhabha emphasizes cultural difference because cultural difference does not require,

> 'Equalizing' refugees/migrants with 'host' culture by conceiving of their specific social practices (such as parenting) or institutions (like religion) as interchangeably equivalent, but with instead respects the heterogenous - even 'incommensurable' - histories, identities, and customs of" [refugees/ migrants] (Moore-Gilbert 2000: 461).

Bhabha (1984) also observes the inability of language to accurately represent the world, and therefore claims that, "[a] ll cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of the split-space of enunciation" (Bhabha 1988: 209). For Bhabha, this space is a Third Space in between cultures that are often thought of as diametrically opposed. This space is a site where cultural differences can be articulated, and where oppressed people have the possibility to renegotiate, outside of externally imposed binaries, their own identities. Bhabha cogently writes, "[r] ecognition of the split-space of enunciation will open the way to 'conceptualizing' an international culture, based not on the exoticism or multiculturalism of the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity (Bhabha 1988: 209). Therefore, because the concept of hybridity is free of cultural hegemony and hierarchy, it is better suited for the analysis of my case study. Nevertheless, I must develop further

acculturation theories so I can illustrate their different nuances, and the problems associated to the different thoughts when applied to my case study.

## 2.2 Acculturation Theories

Acculturation theories have lost favor among anthropologists because of the many problems and critique the concept and theories have incurred. However, if there is paucity in anthropological discourses about acculturation, it is still widely used in sociology and social psychology. The three predominant formulations of the concepts of acculturation - the Unidirectional model, the Bidimensional model, and the Interactive acculturation model - had their beginning in 1920, when sociologists Robert Park and Ernest Burgess began to discuss the concept of the 'melting pot' (Padilla and Perez 2003).

The three models were further expanded by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits from the Anthropology Department at the University of Chicago when, in 1936, they published for the American Anthropologist, "Memorandum for the study of Acculturation." Along with Park and Burgess, the three anthropologists were interested in the adjustment processes that individuals incorporate when exposed to a different culture than their own (Padilla and Perez 2003). Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936) expanded on the concept, but distanced their theoretical framework from their sociology colleagues, because according to the three anthropologists, acculturation did not imply assimilation, as Park and Burgess proposed, but "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous firsthand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (Redrfield, Linton and Herskovits 1936: 149).

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The Social Science Research Council (SSRC Seminar, 1954), in 1954, expanded further the definition and appointed a Committee to analyze problematic implications concerning the term. After several meetings, the committee termed acculturation as, "[t]he merger of two or more independent cultural systems, leading to dynamic processes that include the adaptation of value systems and transformation within relationships and personality traits" (Chun, Balls Organista, & Marin, 2003, p. xxiii). This shift in definition was implemented to further counteract the portrayal of acculturation as a process of moving from one's own culture to the host society's, a process characterized as assimilation (Romero 1981). Indeed, the general perception of refugees/migrants, as my case study illustrates, is that, though they intimately share in the cultural life and traditions of their host society, they do not forget or negate their past values and traditions.

Although acculturation concepts have evolved and expanded to date, the three models are criticized because they omit to critically examine the dominant-subordinate relations of the cultures in contact (Ngo 2008). More significantly, acculturation theories ascribe to acculturation a universal reality (Williams and Arrigo 2006). In other words, regardless of cultural diversity and situations, acculturation theories ascribe integration under a linear model, instead of approaching the discourse of acculturation through a relativist frame. Hence, the process of acculturation, as it is currently discussed, fails to take into consideration the heterogeneity within cultural groups in terms of age, sex, socioeconomic status etc. This monolithic view tends to consider individuals within cultural groups as one and the same, with similar experiences, backgrounds, and expectations. Furthermore, acculturation theories base their models on the concept that

cultures are bounded, static, and homogenous, changing only due to external influences and contacts. Thus, they fail to recognize the accelerated and relative ease of people's movements across national borders as an indication of the interconnectedness of cultures. Acculturation theories, as presently discussed, provide an incomplete even misleading picture of acculturation (Ryder et al. 2000). As a case in point, my case study is highly heterogenous, and representative of a transcultural, unbounded culture that interacts across multiple borders.

## 2.3 Acculturation Theory Brief histories and Definitions of Past Theories

Acculturation theories can be viewed as a later stage of diffusionism, which played a decisive role in the formation of North America Anthropology from the 1890s (Leal 2011: 315). In the 1930s and 40s, aspects of diffusionism were challenged and revised in order to meet its problematic stance and to address new challenges. "Acculturation theory was the major outcome of these critical revisions" (Leal 2011: 315). One of the many differences between diffusionism and acculturation theory was that the former were more interested in contact between different Native-American cultures, whereby, acculturation theorists privileged the cultural consequences of Westernization among Native-American cultures and later among African cultures in the New World (Leal 2011: 316). These contacts could be observed "on the spot" (Herskovits 1948: 525). Thus, they were visible and real, and not conjectured as the interaction between nonwestern encounters discussed by diffusionism (Leal 2011). For this reason, Herskovits was a major proponent of acculturation theory. As above mentioned, along with his colleagues Redfield and Linton, Herskovits wrote the 1936 "Memorandum on Acculturation" (Redfield, Herskovits and Linton 1936). Between

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1940s and 50s the latter wrote numerous articles on the topic of acculturation, observing

that the process of acculturation include, but are not unique to, 'diffusion on the spot'"

(Herskovits 1948: 525) or 'cultural transmission in process' (Herskovits 1948: 523). Leal

writes that, "Herskovits viewed acculturation as a comprehensive theoretical tool for the

interpretation of processes of cultural contacts whose diverse outcomes – retention,

syncretism, reinterpretation, counter-acculturation – were extensively argued" (Leal

2011: 317).

Following Herskovits' footsteps, Roger Bastide (1960), interested in Afro-

Brazilian religions, developed further on the concept, and introduced an idea of cultural

blending influenced by French sociology. Notwithstanding the sociological aspects

introduced by Bastide, his works are considered as a late "off-spring of the Herskovitsian

engagement with acculturation theory" (Leal 2011: 317). Although those later

acculturation theories touched upon the blending of cultures, they were still criticized

because, in reality, they did not pay attention to the creative transformation of cultures, or

to the bricolage already existing within one culture, but emphasized origins and purism

(Hannerz 1997; Schneider 2003; Evans 2006). As a consequence, more recent

acculturation theories have evolved, taking on a more dynamic view of acculturation, and

criticizing earlier theorists such as Herskovits and Bastide of practicing "passive notions

of acculturation" (Apter 2004: 160). If later acculturation theories stressed a more

interactive and more active form of acculturation, they are still criticized, because they

tend to forgo the notion of agency that comes from the group or individual acculturating.

Because of these critiques, acculturation theories evolved further, from the idea of

unidirectional acculturation model (UDM) into a more inclusive model with

bidimensional acculturation (BDM). Others yet prefer the Interactive Acculturation

Model (IAM). Unidirectional models were based on the implicit assumption that changes

in cultural identity takes place along a single continuum over the course of time. More

importantly, unidirectional models saw acculturation as the process of relinquishing one's

own culture and values to adopting the culture and values of the dominant society (Ryder

et al. 2000; Padilla and Perez 2003). However, theorists who adopted a bidimensional

perspective describe acculturation in terms of two cultural orientations: one's relation to a

home culture (a culture of origin) and one's relation to a host culture (a new or second

culture), which remain separate from one another. In other words, proponents of this

model explain that while refugees/migrants may adopt values and behaviors of the host

culture, they do not give up facets of self-identity developed in their culture of origin

(Ryder et al. 2000: 50-51).

Finally, the Interactive Acculturation Mode (IAM), which has gained the most

preference; rather then analyzing how immigrants acculturate into the dominant culture, it

attempts to illustrate the interactive nature of two, or more, cultures coming together.

When exploring immigrants' acculturation into the dominant culture, Bourish et al.,

(1997) introduced the following three points: (1) acculturation orientation adopted by

immigrant groups (2) acculturation orientations adopted by the dominant culture toward

specific groups of immigrants; and (3) interpersonal and intergroup relational outcomes

that represent combinations of immigrants' and the dominant culture's acculturation

orientation (Bourish et al. 1997: 379).

Although IAM proposes a more nuanced model of acculturation, the paper

presented by Bourish, et al., failed to explore how the dominant culture, while

maintaining its own cultural identity, adopts traits of the immigrants' cultural identity.

Because of this lack of analysis, the Interactive Acculturation Model is left incomplete.

Despite the fact that past and newer definitions of acculturation, most notably - BDM,

IAM - strive to illustrate the process of acculturation as a two-way process in practice, it

remains a one-way process. This occurs because theories and research posit their focus of

research on the changes refugees, migrants, and sojourners (i.e., the received group),

undergo in response to their contact with a dominant majority. This negates a real

freedom of choice, insofar as it underlines that the received populations are compelled to

comply with the host societies' cultural norms, rather than to provide them with freedom

of negotiation. Consequently as critiqued by Padilla and Perez (2003) and Ngo (2008) the

interactive acculturation model fails to take into account a real and concrete two-

dimensional model of acculturation; whereas, the concepts of hybridity and mimicry,

postulated by Bhabha (1984), cannot be monolithic, insofar as both mimicry and

hybridity can develop only as a two-dimensional model.

## 2.4 Acculturation as a Two - Way Process

Although more recent definitions (Lum 1996) ascribe acculturation as a reciprocal

process between two or more cultures, and as a complex long-term process involving

learning, reevaluating, and coping with both the original and the host culture, the model

differs little from Redfield's et al. (1936) original definition. As a case in point, Berry et

al. (1997) and John W. Berry (2005) while attempting to clarify the term, defined it as

being reflective to the changes the group and individuals undergo when coming in

contact with another culture. This new definition reflects almost literally the original one.

Nevertheless, while discussing the differences between assimilation and acculturation,

Berry et al. (1997) pointed out that the process of acculturation is reciprocal. Notwithstanding, they continued, acculturation induces more changes on the received group than the group receiving. Unfortunately, the authors failed to illustrate why the process is asymmetrical (Padilla and Perez 2003; Ngo 2008).

The process is asymmetrical, and acculturation theories fail to illustrate this point, because receiving cultures use allocative and authoritative resources to exercise power over the received group. The receiving culture systematically devalues the attributes and contributions of received cultures by deeming the latter inferior. In addition, host cultures exclude received populations from opportunities for material and social resources, such as gaining professional employment commensurate to the skills they had attained in their original societies (Dominelli 2002; Tew 2006). Furthermore, the dominant culture creates myths of their superiority vis a vis the inferiority of the received culture, thus, 'otherizing' and alienating refugees/immigrants. In this context of dominant-subordinate power relation, acculturation cannot be reciprocal, but results in the alienation or absorption of the subordinate group into the dominant one.

## 2.5 Acculturation as an Implication of Equal Opportunities

Finally, present theories of acculturation perpetuate the pervasive myth of equal opportunities. In other words, acculturation theories assume that when refugees/migrants become acculturated, they automatically have a chance to reach a good life. This assumption is problematic on two fronts: (a) it blames the refugee/migrant population when it fails to achieve upward mobility; in other words, if the refugee/immigrant fails to reach a good life, the issue rests on his or her attitude, not on barriers the individual may have encountered; (b) achievements gained by refugees/migrants are deemed successful

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or otherwise unsuccessful by an Eurocentric or western-centric ideology that does not allow nonwestern ideas of what achievement could entail. Thereby, acculturation could be seen as advocating causation, and thus, to establish linear probable causes; that is, when refugees/migrants adopt, by acculturating, values and behavior of the receiving society they will necessarily gain opportunities to reach upward mobility, financial stability, and thus success. Acculturation theories privilege cultural consequences of westernization upon nonwestern population (Leal 2011).

Because of the critiques I presented above, the term acculturation is inadequate for the purposes of this thesis. I decided, therefore, to distance myself from acculturation models and analyze instead first and 1.5 generation Ethiopian refugees/migrants women's behavioral changes through the concepts of mimicry and hybridity, which allow for agency. More importantly, the two concepts are better suited as a way to combat the domination of one voice, one canon, one mode of thought, as well as singular identities, linear history, and so forth (Easthope 1998). Cultural hybridity "[e] ntertains difference without the assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Bhabha 1984: 4).

## 2.6 Theoretical Aspects of Mimicry and Hybridity

Unlike acculturation theories, both mimicry and hybridity theories allow fluidity, and accord praxis, agency, and negotiations to refugee/migrant populations. Mimicry refers to the attitudes colonized people assumed toward colonizers, "[mimicry] emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (Bhabha 1984:126). Mimicry, as I already illustrated, is, thus, a conscious and intentional behavior in which minority

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groups engage with the dominant group, and intentionally copy them, while intentionally hiding their own cultural identity. When, and, if, the minority group decides to adopt certain characteristics of the host society's cultural identity, the behavior adopted is adjusted to their own culture, forming a hybrid culture. Ethiopian women refugees/migrants, as I will demonstrate, during the integration process into the host society, do not disavow their cultural identity, but form a hybrid identity. Bhabha (1994) cogently writes, "[w] hat is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different – a mutation, a hybrid" (Bhabha 1994: 111).

Acculturation, as discussed, cannot represent refugees/migrants' sense of self-identity. Acculturation is merely how the Ethiopian refugee/migrant women present themselves to their host community in order to facilitate interaction. In contrast, mimicry is more aptly associated with the process of integration, which in psychological terms implies a conscious and chosen decision. In anthropological terms, it implies agency, that is, whether or not to change the reactions and responses suggested by the values of their home country when confronted with the unfamiliar practices and values of the host country. The behavior changes created by mimicry are more nuanced than those behavioral changes attributed to acculturation, because those changes are temporal, rather than permanent, and as such the alterations are decided, and occur without the internalization of the value associated with such behavior.

Acculturation is also problematic because it is usually applied to the behavioral processes arising from long-term encounters between a displaced population and the receiving one, but more rarely applied to encounters between individuals and groups in different social circumstances. In other words, acculturation processes are attributed only

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to certain immigrants, those of lower social statuses or lower working skills, but are not attributed to highly skilled workers. According to Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) there is a class distinction between 'migrants' and 'cosmopolitan transnationals.' The latter, because of their education and skills are not considered immigrants, but cosmopolitan and privileged. As cosmopolitans, their cultural identity is praised as worldly, rather than criticized as unappealing; hence, without the need to undergo acculturation.

Because of this disparity in the use of acculturation between different social interactions, I find the term acculturation to have a bi-polarized view of the relationship between the host population with immigrants as the others, or immigrants as transnational cosmopolitans. Furthermore, acculturation assumes that the Ethiopian women refugees/migrants social collective is homogenous, and, as such, all women will have the same behavioral reactions when facing their new lives in the host society, but the reality is quite different and more nuanced. The Ethiopian refugee/migrant women social collective is heterogeneous and consist of a series of individuals and groups (e.g. Tigrigna, Amhara, and Oromo), who have different means of agency, interactive processes, and power (Andreeff 2007). As a case in point, the Amhara have had a long history of interactions with the American culture. Starting in the early 1900s, Empress Zawditu (1916-1930), following her father's vision, sent students and emissaries to study and live in the United States (Getahun 2007). Before the latter became forcibly displaced, the discourse of acculturation did not arise, and yet some students, most notably Melaku Bayan, the first student to arrive from Ethiopia to the United States, settled in America permanently. Melaku Bayan's decision to resettle indefinitely in the United States evokes a discourse of personal agency, rather than a discourse of acculturation. That is because

Melaku represents the prestigious cosmopolitan, who chooses where to live, and subverts the need to acculturate, while at the same time, the host society does not require his acculturation. Mimicry, as Bhabha postulates, recognizes the agency power of all individuals, and not just of transnational cosmopolitans. Therefore, the concept of mimicry allows the subordinate culture to create its own version of the dominant culture.

Mimicry repeats a behavior, or a cultural norm, but it does not represent a behavioral modification. The behavioral modification represents what Bhabha (1998) calls hybridity, where, as he claims, there is a space in between identity and the designation of identity. The in between space is an interstitial passage; "[t] his interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity" (Bhabha 1998: 147).

Furthermore, to mimic and form a hybrid culture requires action, the action of imitation, which suggests a conscious decision on the part of the mimicking subject to take part of the society at large. Mimicry requires praxis. Ethiopian refugee/migrant women decide when, where, and to which degree to imitate behavioral norms of the host society. Hence, while women refugees/migrants seem to adjust and internalize the host society's cultural norms, they are merely mimicking the behaviors of women of their host country while keeping their Ethiopian values, and cultural norms vibrant. That is done through rituals, traditions, and norms regularly performed at church and social gatherings. As I analyze Ethiopian women refugees/migrants through the concepts of mimicry and hybridity, I am careful not to universalize, nor essentialize their life experiences, because"[we] cannot appreciate the specific nature of diverse hybridities if we do not attend to the nuances of each of the cultures that come together" (Loomba 2005: 151).

**2.7 Migration, Refugees Studies Theoretical Development**

The framework for exploring and advancing my line of inquiries is based on Migration and Refugees studies. I use Transnational, Global, and Postcolonial Theories to contextualize my work. I begin analyzing the transnational lives of Ethiopian women refugees/migrants with Nina Glick Schiller's pioneer article, Transnationalism A: new analytic framework for understanding migration, which gave rise to the conceptualization of transnationalism, followed by more recent scholarly articles. I examine globalization by considering the theory of globalization and political economy developed by Eric Wolf, without however negating space to authors such as Philip Marfleet (2006), whose extensive research is based on globalization and migration patterns. Within the context of Refugee Studies, I consider an array of authors, including those addressing anthropological refugee studies, as well as, authors of social studies, psychological studies of traumatic events, and others. Both Migration and Refugee studies inform my research project in view of their analysis of migratory experiences and the complex relationships between migrant and the non-migrant populations. Both analyze social and economic aspects of migration, as well as the creation of ideologies. By ideologies, I mean that, by virtue of becoming a refugee, the individual, whether a man, woman, or child, is re-constituted as a new kind of person, because of the labeling ideology of the receiving societies (Malkki 1991; Zetter 1991; Moussa 1993; Zetter 2007; Marfleet 2006). In other words, as I argue throughout, the ideology of labeling refugees transforms their identity. Hence, refugees, instead of being perceived as individuals with self-identities, become conceptual frameworks, namely refugees. Moreover, I intend to analyze critically how the ideology of labeling can lead to inaccurate representations: e.i.,

refugees as helpless, and as a burden rather than an economic opportunity, as Harrel-Bond (2002) suggests.

Finally, migrant and refugee studies frame the status and living conditions of immigrant populations in contemporary societies. They seek to understand aspects of immigration and integration in today's immigrant and emigrant societies. Furthermore, such studies seek to understand current paradigms and terms, which are shaped by diverse naturalization policies and public debates on immigration policies. In particular, I focus on theories regarding changes in gender relations that are often compelled by the differences in social structures between migrant populations' homelands and their countries of relocation. Although, the majority of Migration, Refugees, and Transnational studies I consulted are written by Western scholars, I use African Feminist Theories to analyze my case study, as the worldview of my sample group is more reflective of the African cultures than the western ones. Thus, I cannot base my research on the culture, history, and philosophies of Euro-Western thoughts, but I have to consult and use knowledge based on Africa and African theorists. Most importantly, as Guba (2005) observes, I have to take into account, communal forms of living that are not Western and allow space for inquiries based on relational realities and forms of knowledge that are nonwestern (Guba and Lincoln 2005; Chilisa and Ntseane 2010).

## 2.8 African Feminist Theory

My research is developed as an ethnography framed and interpreted using non - Western Feminist Theories, and applying African Feminist Theories. The decision to distance my analysis from a sole western theoretical approach stems from my belief that western theories, and in particular western feminist theories, tend to impose hegemonic

ideas upon non-western women's experiences. Western feminist theories tend to universalize the discourse of womanhood under a myopic lens that does not take into consideration differences of non-western women's values and traditions. Thus, as Fennel and Arnot observe western feminist theory recreates "[i] ts own knowledge in distant geographies in its own image" (Fennel and Arnot 2009:3).

As critiques of western theories postulate, these hegemonic forms of imposed knowledge deny localized knowledge by imposing "Western female-based structures of language, concepts, theories and models of reality and world views as a criteria against which experiences of all non-Western women . . . can be known and written about" (Chilisa and Ntseane 2010: 618). As a consequence, Western feminist theories cannot identify how nonwestern women express agency and resistance against oppressive practices. By preferring postcolonial indigenous and African feminist approaches, my study is better informed by a philosophical worldview that reflects the worldview of my case study. The perception of reality of Ethiopian women reflects values based on communality, rather than the western worldview of individuality, and individualism. Hence by using African feminist theories the voices of Ethiopian women refugees/migrants are able to come out, and can be heard in their veracity. More importantly, their voices are void of a cultural disconnect because they are not subjected to the imposition of Euro-Western ideas.

Furthermore, I use postcolonial feminism theories, because they do not universalize the condition of women, but carefully examine the variability and distinctions among women, such as age, education, marital status and socioeconomic realities. Gender, therefore, is not treated as the sole variable, but intersects with age,

sexuality, ethnicity, class, nationality, etc. Authors such as Chandra Mohanty (1988),

Aihwa Ong (1988), Anne McClintock (1995), and Gayatri Spivak (1992), help to inform

my analysis by addressing gender from a nonwestern perspective. These authors analyze

the condition of women questioning, for example, the universalization of patriarchy.

Patriarchy, the authors suggest, can be used as conveying the idea of unequal

relationships. However postcolonial feminists warn that patriarchy is highly variable,

since it works in tandem with other social structures. Therefore, women cannot be

characterized as a singular group based on the inaccurate idea of a singular oppression,

because it is a false concept. Mohanty for example writes that,

> The discursively consensual homogeneity of "women" as a group is mistaken for
> the historically specific material reality of groups of women. This results in an
> assumption of women as an always-already constituted group, one which has
> been labelled "powerless," "exploited," "sexually harrassed," etc., by feminist
> scientific, economic, legal and sociological discourses. (Notice that this is quite
> similar to sexist discourse labeling women weak, emotional, having math anxiety,
> etc.) (Mohanty 1988: 65-66).

Similarly, Spivak (1992) insists on the importance of looking at the particularities of

women, and challenges the conventional pre-postcolonial and westerncentric points of

analysis. Spivak's studies focus on subalterns or people who are often marginalized by a

dominant group: immigrants, refugees, women, and the postcolonial subjects. Aihwa Ong

(1988) laments that feminist perspectives of emancipation are based on western

standards, goals, and rationalities, which are, in turn, used to evaluate the cultures and

histories of non-western societies (Ong 1988: 80). For example, the category of

emancipation postulated by western feminism assigns nonwestern women social

benchmarks that, "[w] estern feminists consider critical in achieving a power balance

between men and women" (Ong 1988: 82). However, the categories of emancipation

emphasized by western feminism do not comply with the worldview maintained by Ethiopian women refugees/migrants, and as Ong observes, many non-western women live in a situation where there is "deeply felt tension between tradition and modernity" (Ong 1988: 86).

As my analysis develops, I illustrate how Ethiopian women refugees/migrants use traditional gender roles structured by patriarchy, but nevertheless hybridized, to assert their autonomy and agency based on their own performance of gender roles. I examine how the value placed on children by both African women and men is crucial to women's agency, and of outmost importance in neutralizing the oppression of patriarchy. The centrality of motherhood continues to be in the United States, as it was in Ethiopia, highly valuable. However, motherhood is but one condition that neutralizes patriarchy.

I present several cases reflective of the Ethiopian population in Denver in which Ethiopian women refugees/migrants gain authority, though not overtly, while their spouses' authority seems to diminish. It is noteworthy to point out that the process of gaining-loosing authority is not a linear process. That is because it is not dictated by the host society's social environment promoting gender equality, and thus, ascribing equal power. Women's gain in authority is related to a variety of reasons, such as changes in the family's economy, changes in their male counterparts' career paths, and from the alteration such changes bring to men's social status. The changes in career path can either represent upward mobility, as well as, downward mobility. Paradoxically, both situations resulted in women's accretion of authority.

When males attain upward mobility, the accrual of authority experienced by women results from the development of new household patterns and forms of

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cooperation. This situation, however, is not unique of their experience in the United States. Several informants commented that similar situations were present in Ethiopia. Numerous participants, particularly among 1.5 generations, recalled their mothers as being head of the households while their fathers were absent for business. Their fathers, as traditional roles demands, performed functions that brought them into the "public sphere." For example two of my informants' fathers worked as scientists, and traveled quite a lot. Another one was in academia. The mothers of the informants, as their occupational roles demanded, performed their tasks within the "domestic sphere." The role of the two scientists' wives was the raising of children, and household helpers performed all other housework. The raising of children was done in cooperation with women of older generations. The wife of the gentleman in academia raised the children and was involved in craft trade. The roles within the household were equally important for the well being of the family, and demanded cooperation between the two genders. Other study participants, who came from different socioeconomic statuses contributed to activities such as farming, food processing, weaving, and pottery making in addition to taking care of children and attending to the household chores (Steady 1981, 1985; Pankhurst 1992; Weedman 2008).

When Ethiopian refugees resettle in the U.S., they experience economic barriers created by difficulties in gaining employment, and the diminished social capital they experience in the dominant society. Men more keenly feel this situation, because in Ethiopia, they were the bearer of such powers, whereby women were more often dependents of men. Resettlement can result in women gaining power while men experience the decline of it. To this point, several women informants reported that it had

been easier for them to find work than for their husbands to find work; and, women

gaining employment resulted in heightened financial independence and decision-making

power. Hence, Ethiopian refugee/migrant women not only have power and autonomy in

the performance of traditional roles, but also gain autonomy outside of traditional gender

roles in areas deemed by Western feminist discourse as most important indicators of

power (Steady 1981-1985; Al-Ali 2002; Holtzman 2008; Karraker 2008). Henceforth, I

present cases that, when analyzed within a local and historical context, illustrate how

women within 'traditional' gender roles reveal their strength in patriarchal societies.

At this time I would like to point out that patriarchy is highly variable because, as

noted above, it works alongside other social structures (Loomba 2005: 183-85). However,

what is less variable are the ways by which it is neutralized. As we know patriarchy is

widely practiced outside of Africa. Nevertheless, regardless of where we find it

patriarchy is balanced by local normative derived from standard or norms of behavior.

Before I illustrate how it is balanced, I would like to point out how western feminist

theories universalize it,

> [Patriarchy] refers to the ways in which societies are structured through male
> domination over, and oppression of, women. Patriarchy therefore refers to the
> ways in which material and symbolic resources (including income, wealth and
> power) are unequally distributed between men and women, through such social
> institutions as the family, sexuality, the state, the economy, culture and language
> (Sedgwick and Sedgwick 1999: 181).

This quote captures what patriarchy is and how it operates. More importantly, it

illustrates how those forms of patriarchal oppression, when analyzed within local and

historical contexts can be neutralized by women, not only in Africa, but also in other

parts of the world. For example, Southern Spain, nestled in the Mediterranean basin,

practices the same patriarchal ways as Africa, insofar as "[t] here is a strong agnatic emphasis and an ideology of male dominance" (Gilmore 1982: 180), which translates into socioeconomic differentiation, favoring males over females. However, in Southern Spain, as in Africa, women express their autonomy and agency within patriarchal ways. As Gilmore stresses, there is a strong agnatic emphasis and an ideology of male dominance, but these male-centric ideologies are neutralized by way of coexisting with matrifocality, or a family structure where mothers are heads of the family.

Furthermore, domestically, the finances are, for the most part, and particularly among peasants, women's domains. Women are economically responsible for the well being of the family, thus, they control and allocate spending (Gilmore 1990). The ability to control resources was corroborated by a considerable number of my informants, who pointed out that their mothers and grandmothers were the 'managers' of their house. It is important to point out that Gilmore (1990), Chioma Steady (1981-85), Sudarkasa (1981-85), and Oyěwùmi (1997, 2003) note that there are different types of powers and authority, such as the ability to control one's actions and or the actions of others, make decisions, control resources etc. Power can be seen in informal relationships, between friends, siblings, and in marriage. Nevertheless, western feminist theories deem formal political power, which for the most part is a domain controlled by men, as the only real power.

Lastly, as an example, it is important to point out that in Southern Spain, as in Ethiopia, and in numerous other regions, there is a dichotomy between 'public sphere' and 'domestic sphere.' The latter is predominantly female. Nevertheless, here again, as in Ethiopia, women play essential roles in the economic realm of the family. Gilmore

writes, "[t] here is constant evidence of the importance of female contributions to the domestic economy" (Gilmore 1990). Such contribution, as my participants commented, varies reflecting women's roles as child-bearers, food-producers and distributers. Finally, an additional factor playing an important factor abating patriarchy refers to the family unity and solidarity that permeates both African and Mediterranean families. This solidarity results in cooperation between husband and wife. A cooperation that as Chioma (1981-85) postulates, "[p] rovide a more appropriate framework in which to examine the question of sex roles in Africa than a framework of competition and opposition which Western feminism fosters" (Chioma 1981-85: 28). I raise these points, because I think it is important to illustrate that the neutralization of patriarchy is not a singular phenomenon, but is widely practiced. In Ethiopia, as many of my participants confirmed, there is a constant paradox and duality in the relationships between men and women. Gilmore to this point writes, "[t] his dynamic dualism occurs in all aspects of culture and ideology, in both conscious and unconscious processes. There is nothing unique about an element of ambivalence in belief systems and norms; and of course binary oppositions are universal" (Gilmore 1982: 180).

The belief system in Ethiopia demands women to be subaltern to men; however, once they resettle in the U.S., their ability to rebuild lasting relationships among themselves destabilizes Ethiopian hierarchical patterns. The collectivities women build helps them repossess their identity, rebuild continuities, and imbues them with strength; a strength men are not able to reach because Ethiopian men's identity and strength come from and is built from social status, not collectiveness. The drop in men's social status strips them from their patriarchal male's identity, and of the powers associated to

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patriarchy. However, women and women's identity were connected to their subordinate

position, and on the collectivity they had with other women. The networks Ethiopian

women built in the past were not only social gatherings, but were a way for their voices

to come out into the community.

Today in their resettlement, they continue to perpetuate a tradition of collectivism

that although, modified and hybridized, enables them as it did in the past, to neutralize

patriarchal oppression. It is critical, therefore, to see and to understand the importance

they bestow on relationships and connectedness to others for a correct examination of

their experiences in the United States. Connectedness, and collectivity are integral parts

of Ethiopian women's identity, and represent a form of belonging. In their resettlement,

gender differences, particularly women subordination, enable women to attain a sense of

community that men do not reach; thus, we have the paradox of women being in a

subaltern position, which nevertheless, enables them to reach a sense of belonging and

helps them to rebuild continuities in the discontinuities they suffered.

## 2.9 Concepts
### 2.9.1 Womanhood - Motherhood – Sisterhood

The concepts I bring forward framing the discussion of womanhood, motherhood,

and sisterhood draw directly from African Feminist Theories. The African feminist

philosophical view differs from western feminism, and reflects more appropriately the

findings of my research study. The philosophical worldview of Ethiopians promotes and

emphasizes collectivity rather than individuality. For the most part, the group has priority

over the individual, and the individual is bound with others. We clearly see this

togetherness starting in the family structure, which views the extended family in terms of

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obligations and rights. As the majority of my interviewees commented, children in

Ethiopia are raised communally, particularly in rural areas. Therefore, children have

strong ties to the nuclear family, and to the extended family as well. Medhanit, a 1.5-

generation participant, recollects:

> The family is . . . I guess important, but important is a word that does not, is not
> enough to describe how much the family means, how close we are. We are very
> close, and not just the nucleus family, [with nucleus she means, mother, fathers,
> and the offsprings of the two] but the extended family as well [By the extended
> family she means aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, and children born outside of the
> marriage[9]]. Growing up in America you'd say, 'oh I have distant relatives', but
> there is not such thing as distant relatives, in our culture a relative is a relative.
> We make the same amount of time that we would make for my aunt, who is my
> mom sister, as we would for someone that my mom grew up with and there is no
> relationship with us, but we call them aunts you know; haha so there is no (...) I
> guess that's a good way to put it, we do not have distant relatives, there are no
> distant relationships we are just tight as a people (Interview 2012).

Goduka (2000) to this point writes,

> [A] 'being' is essentially bound with others: 'I am we; I am because we are; we
> are because I am.' A person 'is' through others. This principle is in direct contrast
> to the Eurocentric view of humanity; 'I think, therefore, I am' (Descartes). The
> former expresses a concept of self that is individually defined and 'is in tune with
> a monolithic and one-dimensional construction of humanity' (Goduka 2000: 29).

Furthermore, to analyze African women through a Western feminism's lens is

problematic, because the latter has the tendency to interpret women's position in Africa

derived from "Western middle-class experiences" (Chioma Steady 1994), which cannot

properly describe the black woman experience. Therefore, I use African feminist authors

to inform my analytical framework on gender issues and inequalities among Ethiopians

refugees. Although the majority of African authors I used are not Ethiopians, I believe as

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[9] Almost all of my participants commented of children born from extramarital
relationships, who are accepted as an integral part of either family. I will elaborate further
on this phenomenon.

Goduka, that while Africa is immense, and thus, very diverse, there is also a unity grounded on an African world-view, which is missing in a western ideology (Goduka 2000: 65). Cheikh Anta Diop (1962) to this point wrote that there is a profound cultural unity still alive beneath an appearance of cultural diversity present on the continent of Africa. My use of African feminist theories does not exclude female oppression. Patriarchy, many religions, and diverse cultural ideologies all privilege males' voices and assert males' authority. However, oppression needs to be understood in loci and addressed within the context of particular cultures. If one does not take into consideration the cultural context of our researched population, one cannot make informed assertions, and risks falling prey to becoming an oppressive voice as well.

### 2.9.2 Mimicry - Agency – Hybridity

The study is informed by key concepts that underline my premises regarding Ethiopian women refugees/migrants capacity to negotiate between the two cultures, and assume behavioral norms that benefit their lives, while discarding aspects of their own traditional values that no longer benefit them, while, nevertheless, conserving their Ethiopian identity. To stress this particular point, I emphasize the concept of mimicry (Bhabha 1984), since when mimicry develops, the dominated group using agency power, or praxis, mimics behavioral patterns without internalizing ideologies. In other words, the dominated take advantage of the dominant groups.

Through praxis, refugees, migrants, sojourners, and minority groups, mediate their subaltern position (Bhabha 1984). Thus, I hypothesize that when Ethiopian women refugees/migrants assume Western women's habits and styles, they are mimicking the latter style, rather than embracing it. Mimicry is the refugee/immigrant women's agency

and praxis. Through praxis, Ethiopian women gain autonomy from their position of subalterns in relation to the dominant group. Their traditional culture and social structure are transformed through their negotiations of freedom. However, not only do they negotiate their traditional culture, but they negotiate western cultural practices as well, often resulting in the adoption of the latter, however, transformed. Hence, though not completely, aspects of their traditional culture may be discarded while western practices might be adopted. As a case in point, during a conversation with Medhanit, while talking about women's position in Ethiopia, she burst out that every culture has its little ugly moments, even the greatest one. The particular ugly moment she was referring to is the diminished status Ethiopian women have within their traditional culture when they do not have children. A woman's worth is dependent on her ability to procreate, and further, a woman is not considered a true woman until she has had a child. This belief posits Ethiopian women, who had their first period, but had not yet given birth to a child in a liminal space of being almost a woman, but not quite. Medhanit, lamented,

> A woman becomes a real woman only after she had a child . . . that is a huge part of our culture, because there are people who think less of you if you haven't had a child . . . it takes away the womanhood of a young lady. A woman has not reached her full potential until she has had a child (Medhanit 2012 emphasis in original).

Ethiopian women refugees/migrants, particularly among 1.5 generation, when they resettle in the US, reject the notion of worthiness based on the number of children women have. Therefore, quantifying a woman's worth based on the number of children she has is negotiated and discarded. It is important to notice that women discard the notion of unworthiness associated with not having children, but they never discard the worth of children. Ethiopian refugee/migrant women's negotiation of the two cultures

enables them to attain merits located outside their traditional beliefs, by repossessing and claiming honor through education and upward mobility. The conceptualization of worthiness, however, does not assume the western standard of career and individualism, but is negotiated and transformed from values emerging from the interaction of the two cultures, which overlap and creates a transformed culture. This transformation constitutes hybridity; it is what Bhabha (1994) calls a conscious act of disavowal. Traditional Ethiopian cultural aspects that are no longer beneficial are transformed and replaced. However, the replacement of beliefs does not bestow a greater legitimacy onto western's values and beliefs, but reveals a 'third space' where new forms of cultural identity are created that combine the western's value to gain upper mobility with the Ethiopian value placed upon children. After all, culture is constantly negotiated and is never what one observes on the surface (Bhabha 1984).

This is because neither culture nor social structures are ever completely static, but both are constantly modified by agency power (Weber 1922: 90). Agency transforms Ethiopian women's subaltern status, insofar as women build social networks, which allows their voices to come out in the community, which in turn slips out into the host society's structures. This is visible, for example, in the establishment of organizations such as the Ethiopian Community Center, or the Ethiopian Community Development Council. Both centers provide social services, engage in public education, provide citizenship classes, language classes, and classes about the cultures of Ethiopia, including cooking classes, traditional clothing, and styles of hair. Finally, the centers advocate for their community' needs. Hence, through their collective agency, or what Weber (1922:105, 114) called social action, Ethiopian women bring about cultural changes.

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These cultural changes are seen in my discussion of Ethiopian women refugees/migrants identity negotiation and transformation. In my analysis, I argue that part of the problems ensuing in the family unity are due to the heightened social position in which Ethiopian women find their selves once resettled in the United States, while their husbands experience the lowering of their social position. When Ethiopian women refugees/migrants enter the American economy as salaried employees, according to the western's worldview, they gain status. Their position is, however, ambiguous, since if in one hand they are considered active agents of the host society, because they have entered the American economy, and at other times, they have secured more income than their husbands (Pedraza 1991; Al-Ali 2002; Getahun 2006; Pessar and Mahler 2006). On the other hand, they are considered subordinates of patriarchy. Because of this ambiguous position, Ethiopian refugee/migrant women 's experience, in my opinion, reflects the position European white women held during colonial times:

> European women in these colonies experienced the cleavage of racial dominance and internal social distinctions very differently than men precisely because of their ambiguous position, as both subordinates in colonial hierarchies and as active agents of imperial culture in their own right (Stoler 1989:634).

The ambiguity to belong in more than one place figuratively, and as a matter of fact, is better understood through the concept of liminality. Before I explain this concept I would like to illustrate a second point, because it is relevant to my project; that is, the relationship of power European women had over colonized African women. European white women in the colonies, though subordinate in colonial hierarchies, were superior *vis-a-vis* African people, and as noted by Stoler (1989) racist toward native populations, and particularly toward native women.

Allegedly insecure and jealous of the sexual liaisons of European men with native women . . . [they] were uniformly charged with constructing the major cleavages on which colonial stratification rested . . . [and further] imposing their racial will on African and Asian colonies (Stoler 1989: 640).

Thus, there is a paradox of Western feminism claiming a universal sisterhood while conveniently forgetting how European women in the colonial era were symbols of oppression (Mohanty 1988).

I now return to the concept of liminality, since it is also a peculiarity of Ethiopian refugee/migrant women's experience, particularly among 1.5 Ethiopian women generation.

### 2.9.3 Liminality

Liminality, according to Victor Turner (1969), refers to those who are in a transition between symbolically-and ritually delimited stages and, therefore, without categorization. Liminal beings are outside the laws that govern any particular stage or category (Turner 1964: 95). Turner's conceptualization of liminality refers to that temporary state existing outside, or in between identifiable stages, which takes place during a rite of passage, for example, the biological process of menstruation, which marks the transition from being a girl into becoming a woman. Thus liminality refers to a transitional or liminal stage. This concept becomes important, since informants during interviews and conversations with regards to marriage and coming of age, told me that an Ethiopian girl becomes a woman when she can conceive, thus, after her first menstrual cycle. A girl's first menstrual cycle, particularly in rural areas, gives permission to husbands and wives to be sexually active so that the girl/woman may begin the bearing of children, and only after conceiving a child, the girl/woman becomes a woman.

This period in between, before conceiving children, but after her first menstrual cycle, which gives permission to be sexually active and so to bear a child, is what Turner (1964) calls Betwixt and Between, or the liminal period where one is literally between stages, and as Turner postulates, neither here nor there, but in a structural invisibility. Among Ethiopian women refugees/migrants this liminal stage becomes problematic because as Medhanit related above, a woman is not a woman until she bears a child. Because Ethiopian refugee/migrant women, for a number of different reasons that I will discuss later, do not begin having children until a much later age than at their first menstrual period, the liminal stage can last for decades. The problem rests on the notion that the individual in this liminal stage is socially and structurally ambiguous, because in the liminal period one is structurally, if not physically invisible (Turner 1964: 47). As my analysis unfolds, it illustrates how Ethiopian refugee/migrant women are compelled to negotiate their womanhood in terms that are outside both western and traditional terms, which once again constitutes a third or hybrid culture.

Many first and 1.5 generation informants came from the Amhara and Tigray regions, which have the highest prevalence of rural married women before the age of 15. A substantial number of first generation Ethiopian women refugees/migrants I interviewed are the mothers of the 1.5 interviewees resettled in the Denver Metro Area, which most notably find themselves in Turner's Betwixt and Between space. 1.5-generation women find the category of emancipation assigned by western feminists unacceptable and unrealistic. Insofar as the terms used by western feminism universalize their situation of Third World Women as a monolithic categorization, that assumes a

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homogenous oppression of all nonwestern women, who are characterized as being

traditional, backwards, primitive, uneducated, victimized, and poor (Mohanty 1988).

This deeply-felt tension between tradition and modernity is the most accurate

feeling Ethiopian women refugees/migrants expressed. Furthermore, this feeling of in-

betweenness, of liminality is aggravated by western standardized ideas of what is modern

versus what is traditional imposed upon nonwestern cultures and nonwestern women.

Ethiopian women refugees/migrants' reject both the imposition from western feminists

that dictate what is modern, and what is not, while rejecting as well the Ethiopian idea

that a woman's worth is tied to her ability to procreate. During those negotiations, a

hybrid culture unfolds one that is altered, transformed, and on the making. However, the

transformation is not always fluid and creates tension on what Bourdieu (1980) calls and

deems one's Habitus.

This concept is important, because during many hours of conversations with my

sample group, particularly first generation participants, they talked about Ethiopia, as a

land and a place where they belong, and that they feel nostalgic about. Furthermore, the

majority of first generation informants observed that Ethiopia is a place where life was

easier. When I inquired what they meant by easier, they all emphatically elucidated that

Ethiopia is where they feel comfortable, and the Ethiopian ways, as they responded, are

our ways. They elaborated by telling me that their customs, the way they eat, drink,

speak, the way they help each other, their daily gatherings, all of those customs are

natural and organic to whom they are. As Kidist simply said, "Life is easy, because you

don't have to think before you do, you just do!" What my participants referred to was

Habitus, which is derived from our social background and upbringing, our social world

inhabited by the body. Habitus shapes who we are in a given society. In turn, capital or our resources accord us social power, when one is in a social field in which her/his capital and habitus are not recognized her/his social power is lost; and thus, life becomes a struggle.

**2.9.4 Habitus**

Bourdieu (1980) describes habitus as a system of durable, embodied dispositions acquired through one's social environment, and expressed through ways of speaking, thinking, dressing, gesturing, feelings. These behaviors are derived from our social background, and our upbringing of the particular place we were born. Habitus defines a person's sense of place in the world; a space that influences a person's sense of values, because it is strongly shaped by one's inhabited space. Hence, habitus is an important concept to understand the relationship between the social world and the individual. The lives and experiences of refugees cannot be understood without reference to their habitus, their wider social conditions, and how their resettlement into a different habitus creates discontinuity in their lives. In turn, the refugees/migrants experience into a new habitus causes the alteration of their selves to rebuild continuities from the discontinuities a new habitus necessarily creates.

> Bourdieu (1980) writes,
>
> The conditioning associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transportable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations  necessary in order to attain them (Bourdieu 1980: 88-89).

Or as explained by his student Loic Wacquant (2005),

> [Habitus is] the internalisation of externality and the externalisation of internality, that is, the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel, and act in determinate ways, which then guide them in their creative responses to the constraints and solicitations of their extant milieu (Wacquant 2005: 316).

In other words habitus corresponds to the socialized norms and tendencies that guide one's behavior and thinking. Habitus is created through the social rather than the individual. It is the process of the collective that informs the way one is. It is not the result of free will, nor is it dictated by society's structures, but is created by the interplay of the two. Thus, it is created freely by the individual's agency, which, however, has been conditioned by the structures of society. Furthermore, habitus is where power is culturally and symbolically created and legitimized through the interplay of agency and structure. Habitus is the interplay, the duality between the individual and his/her society; in other words, it is how individuals perceive their world, and act in their world. Within their habitus, individuals act naturally without thinking. They belong like other individuals of their society belong. Simply put, peoples' habitus allows them to be whom they are without having to think how to be.

When we live in a society of which we are a product, rules and behaviors are tacit; we experience them and act on them without the need for thinking because we belong. Habitus is a place of being in the world, in which one belongs without any questions or any doubts; thus, the concept of Habitus provided my research with insight about what it means to lose one's place in the world and what it means to lose the sense of belonging. The ease and certitude being in one's own habitus comes from the Cultural Capital of such habitus, Bourdieu's second concept.

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**2.9.5 Capital(s)**

According to Bourdieu's analytical work-frame, there are diverse forms of Capital(s): cultural, social, symbolic, and economic, all playing determinant roles in people's lives. Cultural Capital, as described by Bourdieu, is the durable embodiment of disposition one learns and expresses through ways of speaking, gesturing, standing, thinking, and feeling (Bourdieu 1980). In other words, cultural capital is who we are, how we speak, our accent, our slang, the way we maneuver in our daily life. Cultural capital is what influences the way people feel, act, and interact. More importantly, cultural capital informs people of a given culture what they value and what they do not value (Moussa 1993), permitting people to behave naturally, because they know the rules, of that certain environment.

Social capital consists of our networks, our relationships, people, organizations, and structures we know. Those are the ties we use as resources. Social capital is formed by our family, close friends, and neighbors, as well as, by our acquaintances that form our farther or broader social circles to which we tap into occasionally for information and ideas. Social capital can be acquired in the schools we attend, or any networks that link us to society at large (Navarro 2006). Therefore social capital links relationships and institutional structures. 1.5 study participants form the group who has the most capital, more than first generation, because 1.5 participants are the ones who are building, for example, institutions such as the Ethiopian Community Center (ECC). For the first generation, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the main institution linking them. The main difference between the two institutions is that the ECC connects Ethiopians to non-Ethiopians through referral and information about social services, education, health care,

and immigration. The Church is a more intimate institution that builds a strong Ethiopian community without, however, linking Ethiopians to non-Ethiopians. Second generation organically acquire social capital in the schools they attend, and because education is perceived as an assurance of social mobility the schooling second generation attend are for the most part excellent.

Capital(s) are formed by all fields of valued resources none of them are dominant and all are exchangeable. The forms of capital[s] and the means by which they are created are equally important, and can be accumulated and transferred from one area to another, thus both create social power relations. That is because individuals possess certain capital(s). Through capital(s), one belongs to a certain social class, develops alliances, and further, one accumulates different forms of capital. Therefore Bourdieu explains, different people or groups rule different forms of capital; hence, capital is where societal power relations lay. In order for capital(s) to be useful, those who are imbued with power and those whom posses capital(s), have to belong in a social world that recognizes such capital(s) as legitimate (Morrice 2011).

When the group recognizes the capital[s] as legitimate, they become symbolic capital and, in turn, are converted into power and symbolic power. For Bourdieu, the conversion of capital into symbolic capital is a collective undertaking and "[c] annot succeed without the complicity of the whole group: the work of denial which is the source of social alchemy is, like magic, a collective undertaking" (Bourdieu 1977: 195). When one does not have the 'complicity of the whole group,' because one has fled his/her social world to become a refugee, or a migrant in a society that is framed by a different habitus, one does not have either cultural, or social capital. Without capital[s]

one does not possess resources; "when people become refugees they are stripped of all of the structures which maintain [people's] relationships" (Moussa 1993: 27).

The sense of a lost habitus is more prevalent among first generation Ethiopian women refugees/migrants. Likewise, the loss of capital, linguistic, cultural, ethnic and other forms of symbolic dominance are felt more keenly among first generation Ethiopian refugees/migrants. This is because, not only have they lost their resources and social relations of power, but they lack the American capital(s) as well. Therefore, they are in a state of disadvantage, finding themselves at the bottom of social hierarchies, and without social networks in which to rely. Insofar as capital(s) provide(s) the means for a non-economic form of domination and hierarchy, the lack thus strips people of resources, placing them in a subaltern position vis a vis people holding those forms of capital(s).

While, for 1.5 generation, and particularly for second-generation refugees/migrants, the loss of capital(s) is less traumatic and can be more easily acquired simply by attending American schools. Indeed, as mentioned above, the value placed on education is such that both parents work two or three jobs to be able to endow their children with the best education, as they recognize the implicit importance and value of new social and cultural capital(s). Awate, a first generation male participant, commented that he and his wife worked all the time, as much as they could, in order to offer their children the best education in the best establishments. As he commented not only is it important where you go to school, but who you meet; when you are the wrong color, you need connections. This is an important point, which I will elaborate on further, since several participants raised the topic of racial discrimination, and racism, in particular, when talking about job opportunities. They commented that they felt they were offered

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jobs below their experience, not only because they were refugees, but because of their color.

First generation refugees/migrants possess a habitus and have capital[s] that were recognized and legitimate in Ethiopia. However, by moving into a new social world, their capital is not recognized and, in most cases, does not have exchange value. This is the case with their profession, education, languages, networks, etc. Since they do not possess American capital(s), whether cultural or social, they have to learn everything anew, including how to build relationships, and use the American institutional structures. For example, many of my study participants shared that learning to use American social networks was indispensable for their success in the Denver Metro Area. Many refugee/migrant first generation women, as they newly resettle into the host country, have no access to the cultural and social capital of the given society. Such lack proved to be a challenge to their coping and integrative capacities, since making informed decisions became crucially difficult. In other words, they were deprived of what Ball et al. (2000) term inherited knowledge, a knowledge learned through the mundane of daily activities, which is tacit and natural. Several interviewees lamented, for example, their ignorance about the American health care system, and recalled the difficulties they encountered to understand its rules and regulations. Asrat, who was an elementary school teacher in Ethiopia, resettled in Aurora about a decade ago. While recalling her earlier experiences, she commented that even opening a bank account was a source of frustration. She remembers how her daily life has been overly complicated. Hence, she strongly felt that her success was dependent upon learning the "American ways," and upon re-building a

habitus and capital(s) that would conform to her values; while at the same times learning

to fit into the American social make-up.

### 2.9.6 Scapes

Finally Arjun Appadurai's concept of scapes is interpreted along theories of

transnationalism, because both theories take distance from the center-periphery frame

arguing that it no longer suffices nor reflects today's reality. I will start with the

introduction of scapes developed by Appadurai, since it provides immigrants and

refugees the conceptualization of transnationalism. In other words, immigrants and

refugees, once resettled in their host country, do not experience a total rupture with their

country of origin, but build social fields that link the two through the social networks of

Appadurai's scapes: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and

ideoscapes (1990).

Appadurai proposes to replace the center-periphery model with overlapping and

separated global cultural flows that contribute to the interchanging of ideas and

information. He terms those cultural flows scapes, and as cultures are, those scapes are

fluid, interactive, and in constant shift. Through the scapes, people have immediate

contacts with the population of the globe. For example, ethnoscapes refers to the

interaction of multiple people from multiple cultures coming together. The coming

together of multiple cultures forge broad cultural interaction in which individuals will

have different experiences, depending on the personality, gender, and age of the person.

Following ethnoscapes, Appadurai introduces technoscape, mediascape, and

financescape, which are closely connected. Technoscape refers to the

Global configuration, also ever fluid, of technology, and of the fact that technology, both high and low, both mechanical and informational, now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries. (...) The odd distribution of technologies, and thus the peculiarities of these technoscapes are increasingly driven by (...) complex relationships between money flows, political possibilities, and the availability of both unskilled and highly skilled labor (Appadurai 1996: 34).

Those technologies permit the dissemination of images and the interaction of people at an unprecedented speed. The images are from mediascapes, which bring the colors, sounds, and flair of different cultures alive for anyone to see and experience. Mediascapes, although "[t] end to be image-centered" (Appadurai 1996: 35) it refers to the dissemination of all information with the use of magazines, newspapers, and the production of films and television programs. More importantly, both mediascapes and technoscapes connect immigrants and refugees to their country of origin, and to the people they left behind in ways that were not possible just a few decades ago.

Financescapes, thanks to the technologies of technoscapes, tie the economies of different countries in multiple ways. Financescapes are the flow of capital, from the remittances sent by immigrants, refugees, sojourner workers to their country of origin, to the financial exchanges made among multinational corporations, international stock exchanges, and the distribution and exchange of commodities. Although the world has been connected throughout history, what differs and is most remarkable today is "[t] he sheer speed, scale, and volume of each of these flows are now so great that the disjunctures have become central to the politics of global culture" (Appadurai 1996: 37). The last of the scapes, ideoscape, refers to the ideologies forged by governments and the political parties, both at variance and in alliance to the governments.

Ideologies are shaped by shared and contrasting ideas coming together, as well as by the images disseminated by mediascapes, and oftentimes such images are the only things by which one forms ideas of places and people. The ideas are formed by people's interaction with the scapes, which are the building blocks of the "imagined worlds" "[t]hat is, the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe" (Appadurai 1996: 33). In other words, each person, while exchanging ideas, will form new ideas that will be unique to that person, and, consequently, differing from the ideas formed by others. Hence, the scapes processes transform migrants and refugees into transnational individuals. Transnationalism, therefore, refers to the social fields created by the movement of people and the fluidity of today's movement of ideas and interactions. The intertwining and fluidity of landscapes transform immigrants into transnational individuals no longer uprooted and disconnected, but linked in multiple ways.

Appadurai's scapes are important because, while my informants feel nostalgic about Ethiopia; they, nevertheless, feel that nowadays, they can be connected to Ethiopia in ways that they could not be in the past. This ability lessens their craving to return to Ethiopia because they no longer feel completely separated from their roots and loved ones. Homesickness, as many commented, is no longer as painful as it was when communications with their loved ones were difficult, and far apart. Furthermore, if for many years, first generation study participants were certain about one day returning permanently to Ethiopia, now, they are more ambivalent about such a decision. Many women commented that though when they travel to Ethiopia, they feel elated to be home, they also realize that, at times, while in Ethiopia, they miss Denver. Often, they

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commented, their children are multicultural; they are a hybridization of the two cultures.

These realizations illustrate that Ethiopian women refugees/migrants have formed a

hybrid transcultural identity, becoming part of two cultures. The experience of

refugees/migrants is no longer, as it was in the past, to confront a total rupture with one's

own country, but is to experience transnationalism.

**2.9.7 Transnationalism**

Transnationalism, or transnational migration, refers to the processes by which

migrants "[f] orge and sustain simultaneous multi-stranded social relations that link

together their society of origin and settlement" (Glick Schiller et al. 1995: 48). The two

groups engage in social process, which establish "[s] ocial fields that cross geographic,

cultural and political borders" (Riccio 2008: 217), by doing so, immigrants are no longer

considered immigrants per se, but transmigrants. In other words, if immigrants in the past

were viewed as individuals detached from their home countries, families and friends;

today, for the most part, they maintain close contacts. "Transmigrants are immigrants

whose daily lives are dependent on multiple and constant interconnections across

international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship of more

than one nation-state" (Glick Schiller et al. 1992: 48).

As a case in point, the majority of my study participants not only have family

members still residing in Ethiopia, but they have close family members, such as sisters,

brothers, aunts, and uncles in other cities of the United States and in Europe. Many

engage in daily activities that link them to their relatives living across national borders.

Similarly, to the immigrant groups discussed by Glick Shiller (1995), and the Filipino

migrants discussed by Fresnoza -Flot (2009), the majority of Ethiopian families are

transnational. Ethiopian family members, goods, capitals, resources, and services move

back and forth between Ethiopia, the United States, and several other countries. Many of

my interviewees travel between three continents once or more per calendar year. Most

members of the three churches where I conducted my interviews commonly send their

children overseas to spend time with family members and relatives. During a

conversation with Andinet, a 1.5 generation mother of two, while inquiring about her

young son, who I had not seen for a couple of weeks, she replied that he was visiting her

brother in Germany. She continued by telling me that since her family was spread

between Africa, Europe, and the United States, it was common for her children to travel

alone for extended periods of time to visit relatives living outside the United States.

As many of my informants observed, notwithstanding they still feel strongly

attached to Ethiopia, and they still call Ethiopia home; nevertheless, they consider Denver

as their second home, particularly women with school age children. The latter recognize

that their children's socialization in American schools imbues them with American

values, which can be both positive and negative. Positive values are related to education,

better opportunities, and upward mobility. Negative values are related to individualism

and materialism, hence, there is a constant negotiation between values of the two

cultures. Moreover, most of the women acknowledge being a part of two countries and

two cultures; and, thus, having transmigrant and transcultural identities.

The women expressed that their country was Ethiopia, because they were born

there, they had a past, and a collective history; however, they also observed that their

present lives were intertwined with the history and values of the U.S., if only through and

for their children. Thus, what do they feel they have gained in their transcultural lives; and, what are their concerns about their transcultural lives?

## 2.10 Hypothesis

As previously stated, the purpose of this study is to examine the challenges faced by Ethiopian women in the Denver community to reach harmony within their new social and cultural space and to examine what they feel they have lost and gained in their self-identity as a result of their immigration. To accomplish my purpose, I examined their lives prior and post resettlement. I considered Ethiopian women's past and present lives to gain a better understanding, and deepen my knowledge of their experiences. The literature review provided an examination of the socioeconomic and political situation of Ethiopian terrain, as well as, an overview of the people's position within the political and socioeconomic contest of their past and present conditions. As the study unravelled, I formulated a number of hypotheses that emerged from the life experiences of my sample group.

### 2.10.1 First Hypothesis

As documented in scholarly and economic studies of migration, a substantial number of refugees and immigrants entering the United States as skilled labors tend to have high rates of unemployment and or under employment. Very few refugees/immigrants can obtain a job at the same level as they had in their own country or that is commensurate with their qualifications, as formal qualifications acquired outside the U.S. are not officially recognized (Gomberg-Muñoz 2010; Vertovec 2011). Underemployment, economic constrains, and a diminished sense of worthiness felt by men causes family unrest, clashes between husbands and wives, and strifes in the family

unit. In turn, this situation causes men to feel a diminished sense of authority, which leads

them to denigrate the role of women to compensate for their felt loss of status. Because of

these unsettled feelings, the unity of the family is under strain; unions are jeopardized;

and men begin to have the tendency to denigrate women. Thus, my first hypothesis is that

as a consequence of this family conflict, Ethiopians feel a profound loss in term of

accomplishments and human relations.

**2.10.2 Second Hypothesis**

Contrary to many of the discussions in literature, I found that Ethiopian women

refugees/migrants still assert their authority through traditional gender roles rather than

through western-centric worldview of success, such as career achievements and

individualism. I do not mean to imply that Ethiopian women refugees/migrants do not

achieve success within a worldview centered on career achievements. However, I suggest

that many of my study participants consider the role of motherhood as central not only

for family unity, but as a fundamental point of Ethiopian society as a whole. For the

majority of Ethiopian women, the role of mother is a salient component of their lives and

has intrinsic values. The centrality of motherhood is common in Africa as it is in many

non-western societies (Chioma Steady 1981, 1985; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997;

Fresnoza Flot 2009; Mazuru 2012). Steady makes the very important point that; "[t] he

importance of motherhood and the valuation of the childbearing capacity by African

women is probably the most fundamental difference between the African woman and her

Western counterpart (Chioma Steady 1981, 1985: 29). I believe, that Ethiopian women

refugees/migrants assert their authority in the family and in society incorporating their

traditional values.

**2.10.3 Third Hypothesis**

Ethiopian women refugees/migrants' agency permits them to negotiate between the two cultures, enabling them to choose features from both cultures that bestow upon them power, and actively engage them in decision making in the household and in the community. Women's fluid negotiations of values of both cultures enables them to reach upward mobility within a western concept of upward mobility as in obtaining career paths; while, nevertheless, maintaining a sense of community and traditional values of helping one another, which was central in Ethiopia. Ethiopian women's recreation of social networks is a reproduction of traditional values; however changed, that gives them strength. Thus, the social collectivity reproduced by Ethiopian women in Denver, is a source of power that destabilizes patriarchal subordination, - a subordination that was already challenged in Ethiopia.

All three groups of my sample population observed that, despite the fact that women in Ethiopia are considered subordinate to men, they, nevertheless, have the primary influence on family matters, and this helps them to assert their authority. Conversely, the majority of western literature and scholarly work tend to deny authority to African women. For the most part, Western scholars and their theories have difficulty accepting other points of view as valid. For example, western feminist theories do not consider motherhood as a signifier central to identity. Patriarchy and male domination exist and are features in most societies, but Western-oriented emancipatory ideas are not the only ideas that bring power to women. Power, to borrow from Quisumbing (2003), "[is] a multidimensional concept, one needs to look at various dimensions of power and

choose those that are relevant in the cultural context" (Quisumbing 2003: 22). Women in

patriarchal societies negotiate their roles in different ways, and use motherhood as

anchoring women in the community, the family, and in personhood. Medhanit explained

this way:

> Being a mother is not just giving birth to a child; it is being able to provide love
> and care; it is the building of a family, and the building block of society. Being a
> mother is not a duty, it is an expression of love and caring for one another . . . to
> have a child is a priority in my life, it is the most important factor for an
> Ethiopian woman (Interview 2012 emphasis in original).

The sense of family is not complete until you have kids (2012); this is what Enku,

a second-generation study participant succinctly attests.

The family is considered as the cornerstone of society, and as the most basic unit

of social organization carrying out vital tasks, such as the socialization of children;

which, though it is a task of both parents, it is mostly done by women until children reach

puberty (Molvaer 1995; Getahun 2006). The socialization of girls is a task reserved to

women and is carried out by female family members. The gendered responsibility of

taking care of children is highly valued, since it is based on the Ethiopian cultural and

religious value of helping each other. The Ethiopian refugees/migrants I interviewed,

from each generation, cherished the love and support they received from their family

members, and particularly from their mothers. It is, however, important to note that all

women participants of my study group, though cherished and valued the responsibilities

of motherhood and the caring of children whether their own or younger siblings, also

commented about their ambivalent ideas concerning the different expectations Ethiopian

society has for women and men; thus, opening discussions for societal changes. The

impact of a different worldview was most prevalent among 1.5 and second generation

participants, who placed education as their most important goal, and thus, postponing marriage and having children at a later age. Furthermore, 1.5 and second generation informants are ambivalent about the idea of womanhood being synonymous with and correlated to having children, arguing that a woman is a woman regardless of her bearing of children.

Keeping in mind women's awareness of change, and by analyzing my findings along Quisumbing's lines, one hypothesis I develop throughout is that, though Ethiopian men hold power and they assert having control over their female counterparts, the structural significance of women as mothers enables them to gain independence and autonomy. This is particularly true today as African feminists are reclaiming the voices of African women by vocalizing the intrinsic power of motherhood. In addition, Ethiopian women's power, both in Ethiopia, and in the United States, as demonstrated by my case study, rests in their role as educators. Indeed, in the case of elderly women, we need to take into consideration the salience they have in seniority, which demands filial obligation.

These types of powers are, for the most part, unrecognized by western lenses. Particularly, the role of mothers and motherhood is not considered empowering. Simone de Beauvoir, in 1984, during an interview with Alice Schwarzer, pointed out that she equated motherhood with slavery.[10] Four decades before, in Le Deuxième Sexe, Beauvoir wrote that, "[m] aternal sadomasochism creates guilt feelings for the daughter that will express themselves in sadomasochistic behavior toward her own children, without end"

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[10] "Meme si une femme a envie d'avoir des enfants, elle doit bien réfléchir aux conditions dans lesquelle elle devra les élever, parce que la maternité, actuellement, est un véritable esclavage" in Alice Schwarzer 1984: 77

(de Beauvoir 1949: 567). Hence, from a western point of view, motherhood can be viewed as an oppression, which rather than empowering women, could almost dehumanize them. Nevertheless, I argue that what is deemed oppressive in Western Feminist theory, and Western worldview can be regarded as a source of power and pride in other cultures.

For example, the use of the veil, as an example to my argument, for the most part, is a practice that in western literature and works is purported as oppressive. Nevertheless, copious research on the situation of Muslim women illustrate how the veil, rather than oppressive, can be used and manipulated by Muslim women as a subversive tool. Frantz Fanon (1967) in his The Wretched of the Earth commented on how Algerian women, during the 1954-1962 struggle for independence, used the veil as a form of resistance against French domination. Furthermore, veiling, or the use of the veil, is a live experience with multiple meanings (Hoodfar 2003). Some women wear the veil because it is simply part of their social culture's values, being so ingrained in their way of being that not wearing it makes them feel naked. Others wear it to fight oppressive colonial influences, and yet others wear it as a symbol of feminine empowerment. Nevertheless, veiling in the West is criticized, and Muslim veiled women are presented as victims of oppression. "The static colonial image of the oppressed veiled Muslim woman ... deny Muslim women their agency" (Hoodfar 2003: 5).

The misconception attributed to many non-western practices, I believe, continues to be a way by which western dominant cultures reify and perpetuate hegemony. Hence, for the analytical frame of my thesis, I decided to disengage from those hegemonic viewpoints and instead draw heavily on what Steady (1981, 1985) calls 'an African

Brand of Feminism' that comes from both African scholarly theoretical propositions and African literature, which do not deny women their agency, nor deny the barriers women face, because of patriarchy (Hoodfar 2003; Oyěwùmi 2003; Zakaria 2001; Buchi Emecheta 1980).

# Chapter 3 Methodology

## 3.1 The Research Design

The study was designed to explore integrative strategies Ethiopian women

refugees/migrants adopt in a new social space. It explored issues arising in women's

lives, since as Moussa writes, to become a refugee,

> Is a search of continuity despite sharp, if not violent, discontinuities. The
> discontinuities are geographic, material, cultural and relational. These
> discontinuities impinge on the identities of refugees in the context of their gender,
> nationality, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, culture and political ideology (Moussa
> 1993: 15).

Hence, this study examined how Ethiopian women refugees/migrants negotiate

the challenges their Ethiopian identity had to undergo because of the new identity of

refugee. It explored how these women created new identities, which were crafted in

response to the experiences they confronted in their new live's journeys. The study

explored the struggles and the opportunities they encountered and continue to encounter

in their daily lives. Special consideration was directed toward the examination of the

power struggles ensuing between husband and wife provoked by gender role changes that

occurred after relocation. Thus, the research explored how women negotiate increasingly

added responsibilities when they are compelled to join the non-domestic workplace to

contribute to the household income, while exploring their experiences, and worldview

prior to resettlement. I explored which elements Ethiopian women refugees deem

necessary to rebuild continuities and belonging in their new social and cultural space.

Finally, I examined the different phases of their identity transformation, from an

Ethiopian identity to a constructed identity, to a repossessed transnational/Habasha

identity. To accomplish the study, I engaged in ethnographic fieldwork using the following four methods: Participant Observation, that is, hanging out in the Ethiopian Community; focus group interviews consisting of dynamic interactions that helped me fine tune my findings by bringing women's individual knowledge together. Surveys, to systematically garner information about key topics from my n population; and, finally, in-depth interviews that focused on key elements. Additionally, because the quality of relationships formed is an essential aspect to reaching harmonious integration, I provided a sociometric map, which was drawn by research participants. Here it is important to note that, in order to maintain confidentiality, all names have been changed into pseudonyms and the locations of provenience are omitted, or modified.

## 3.2 Methodology – Sociometric

To obtain the sociometric map, I asked each participant to draw a network map consisting of the individuals' circle of friends within and outside the community. Further, I inquired about the different networks and organizations they contact for help. I asked each participant to mark the intensity of the relationship from dotted lines to continuous lines with different thicknesses, depending on the gradient of the relationship. A distinction was made between external and internal networks. External networks comprised the church they attend and the organizations utilized by the respondents. Internal networks comprised family ties and friends with whom the women assemble integrative strategies to reach self-sufficiency. The networks, therefore, are a complex set of social, cultural, and economic relationships that can enhance or constrain women's opportunities.

Sociometric allowed me to better identify the relationships women formed, and also, to identify the strength of their different relationships. Through socio- metric I was able to individuate the gradient of relationship within the community, as well as, if and what types of relationships were formed outside the community. The key indicators for this phase included how many contacts each respondent has, and how many of those contacts are close friends versus acquaintances, and further, whether the respondent has contacts and friends outside the community. By completing a sociometric analysis, I was able to infer who provides emotional support, how strong each of those relationships are, which relationships bear importance, and is more meaningful according to the participants. The relationship formed provide women with the social capital they need to reestablish a sense of belonging, thus, to rebuild continuities in their resettlement.

The approach of sociometric analysis complemented both participant observation and key informant interviews. In-depth interviews focused on sociometric analysis and questions were open ended. The interview process was structured as a dialogue; however, the conversation was a one-way conversation, where the informant carried the majority of the conversation. This approach provided ample opportunity for the respondents to share their ideas and opinions, and allowed me to gain a deeper knowledge of their network relationship. The indicators were then coded as ratio variables for the first three, and were used in quantitative analysis. Those first variables comprise: contacts as close friends; contacts as acquaintances; and strength of relationship measured from 0% through 100%. The last two indicators, friends, inside/ outside community, and persons providing emotional support, were coded as nominal variables (Russell 2011).

### 3.3 Intent of the Study

The broad intent of my study was to collect testimonies of displaced Ethiopian women refugees/migrants resettled in the Denver Metro Area. Therefore, the focus of the research is primarily about Ethiopian women refugees/migrants past and present experiences to discern their adjusting and coping strategies once they resettled in the United States. To understand how they cope with the grief of losing their homes, what they deem necessary to keep of their cultures, what they feel they can let go, and what meaning they associate with what they value and do not value as necessary to integrate in a new social space. I analyzed the agency, resilience, and creativity they bring about to rebuild their lives and the lives of their loved ones. I listened to their stories about the past, and to the problems and opportunities they encountered during their resettlement journeys in the United States. I probed into their lives wanting to know their hopes and expectations for the future. I analyzed how they reframe who they are, and how they negotiate belonging while experiencing the identity construct of refugees. Finally, the study examines the transnational relationships they form, and also, the socialization processes with individuals, groups, and institutions they actively seek to re-form different forms of capital needed to integrate in Denver, Colorado. Different capital[s], as Bourdieu (1986) remind us, convey social energy and consist of resources based on connections and group membership (Bourdieu 1986: 241, 248), which allows Ethiopian women refugees/migrants to rebuild continuity despite the severe discontinuities they suffered.

Ethiopian women refugee/migrant constitute the core of this study[11]. However, soon after I started the interviewing process, I realized that women never spoke only of themselves, even when the questions were strictly related to their particular experience. Women, while recounting their stories, always integrated their family members, talking about husbands, children, siblings, and parents as if they were a part of their selves. The majority of my study participants, particularly first generation women, explained that their experience could only be explained in relation, or in common, with the experience of their spouses, children and families. This I came to realize is because they do not think in terms of 'I,' but they comprehend the "I" as "we." In other words, Ethiopian women conceptually think of the "I" as "us," because they do not have the more individualistic frame of mind westerners have. Rather, they strive for collectivity, since Ethiopian people are in tune with a multidimensional construction of humanity. In other words, Ethiopian women value a relational existence rather than the western monolithic one-dimensional individualistic existence. Indeed, as I further inquired about this particularity, they explained that their system of values does not comprehend the individualistic "I," I am, or me. It is contrary to their cultural values, and to the commitments they have to their families. Those values are common among women and men alike. Men, like women, cannot think, just in terms of "I," as they also seek collectivism and companionship with others.

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[11] Although more studies are now devoted to women, they are still not commensurate to the number of women refugees. Wendy A. Young, director of Government Relations and U.S. Programs, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (Young 2002), writes that women and children constitute approximately 8o percent of the world refugee population. Since the needs and situations of women differ from men, there is the need to have studies specifically dedicated to analyzing women's needs and experiences.

Consequently, my key informants suggested that my study could not be completed without the integration of both genders. Furthermore, the majority of study participants suggested that their experience was such, because of the shared experience they had with their spouses, whether they were together, separated, or divorced. The women could not understand how I could illustrate their true experiences without integrating their spouses' experiences and feelings. Therefore, though not in equal numbers, I decided to interview Ethiopian men refugees/migrants as well.

As I noted before, the view of communality versus individualism is common among African cultures, and corroborates African writings. Ivy Goduka (2000) elaborating on the philosophical worldview of the Bantu of Southern Africa explains the "I" as: "I am we"; I am because we are; we are because I am [to the extend that] all human beings are connected not only by ties of kinship but also by the bond of reciprocity rooted in the interweaving and interdependence of all humanity" (Goduka, 2000: 70). Therefore, the western-centric ideology of humanity that is expressed by Rene Descartes' aphorism: "I think, therefore I am," illustrating the concept of self that is individually defined as being in "[t] une with a monolithic and one-dimensional construction of humanity' (Goduka 2000, 29) does not apply to the African's philosophical worldview. Oyěwùmi Oyěrónké (1998) also postulates that, "Existence-in-relation and being-for-self-and-others sum up the African conception of life and reality" (Oyewumi 1998: 398).

Ergo, since the general consensus expresses that the individual in African societies is naturally connected to others rather than separated, I proceeded in my study by looking at the connectivity points of individual stories with the stories they offered of

their families and friends. Furthermore, rather than analyzing singular aspects of my

informants' lives, I choose to look at their life experiences holistically, thus, adapting a

life-history approach. That was because, when I made specific inquires, my informants,

rather than responding directly to the question posed, would elaborate with abundant

particularities that offered rich narratives of their lives. For instance, when I inquired

about the date or time period they left Ethiopia, the majority of participants rather than

responding with a specific date, would elaborate on factors they perceived as culminating

events that triggered their final decision to flee Ethiopia.

As the narrative proceeded, most of my informants talked about events they had

felt as having a relevant impact to their integration in the U.S., a land that for the vast

majority was unknown until their resettlement. Those events varied, but, for the most

part, were related to educational achievements and employment attainment. My case

study observed that gaining employment was of outmost importance because being

employed relieved them from a pervasive feeling of being idle, and of being in a state of

dependency. The feeling of dependency was for many deeply bothersome, and, as many

related, once they, or their spouses, gained employment, they felt a sense of

accomplishment. Employment made them feel once again in charge of their lives. It is

noteworthy that many informants, particularly women, observed that by gaining

employment, they were able to tap into the value system of the dominant society. The

American value system deems careers and financial independence highly valuable, and

key factors for empowerment. Moreover, contracting additional education in the United

States facilitated informants the entrance into the American value system by providing

additional opportunities to gain employment, financial independence, and upward

mobility. Hence, education provided the opportunity to rebuild and achieve cultural and social capital.

In Ethiopia, on the other hand, children and harmony among all family members are more valuable than careers. All participants emphasized the importance of being together as a family, and all expressed nostalgia for the loving and closeness of family relationships. All informants lamented the isolation they experience due to the American way of life, which emphasizes individuality, work, careers, and wealth. In Ethiopia, as Medhanit noted, and many others corroborated, children, and not money, are the wealth of families[12]. When Ethiopians embrace westerner's values, it represents their relationship and agency toward different social circumstances, without however, diminishing the Ethiopians' core value. This state of affairs is better understood when examined within the totality of refugees/migrants' life stories.

Armstrong (1987), like Bertaux and Kohli (1984), comments that life stories implicitly refer to the totality of people's experience and their relationships to different social circumstances. The life story approach does not fragment and compartmentalize the different aspects of one's life, but enables the researcher to focus on the totality of individuals' lives (Armstrong 1987; Bertaux and Kohli 1984; Dyson et al. 2008). Therefore, as the authors suggest, I was able to pair social events to social factors and analyze individuals through social and cultural factors, such as education, socio-economic status, place of provenience etc.

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[12] During my analysis I will illustrate how the value placed on children can put a strain on 1.5 and second generation women, who delay marriage and having children.

## 3.4 Qualitative versus Quantitative

The research was conducted using mostly qualitative data with the addition to quantitative data, while performing content analysis. The decision to take a qualitative methodology approach was based on the belief that life experiences are best described and are better captured through qualitative methodology than quantitative. As Alexander Ervin (2005) postulates,

> Emphases on quantitative measurement ... in the end does not work because of the complex and organic nature of any human activity. (...) Moreover, the exclusive use of quantitative measure, which appears more 'scientific', may actually distort underlying realities (Ervin 2005: 96).

Nevertheless, some quantitative data are included, as the two combined methodologies bear robust results.

## 3.5 Methods

Because the project was designed to explore integrative strategies, a careful analysis of domain variables, such as age, marital status, and length of time in Denver, were contrasted with ordinal values, such as employment, socioeconomic position, and immigrant status. Further, it explored exogenous variables, since the latter can impinge on present day experiences. The research was carried out in four phases, with each phase constituting a source of verification, and each phase corresponding to the following methods, which I will elaborate on the following pages:

(1) Participant Observation/Selection of key Informants and Interviews

(2) Focus Group Interviews

(3) Survey

(4) In-Depth Interviews/ Focus groups interviews

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I began my study with secondary data collection, and continued with the collection of primary data. To this end, the field methods used were selected and triangulated to provide the necessary information, and appropriately target issues. Although secondary data collection opened my research project, it is not included in the four phases, since it was always combined and was an integral part of the research. Initial observations, contacts, and key informants interviews constituted the first phase. The second phase consisted of focus group interviews. The third one encompassed the assembling and distribution of a survey questionnaire. Finally, the fourth and last phase involved more in-depth interviews with a sample of respondents to the survey. I conducted both semi-structured and structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews pertained to key informants interviews, whereas survey interviews maintained a structured form. To this end, I prepared and administered a number of interview questions that allowed my key informants to tell me stories, rather than give me fixed and direct answers. Once I analyzed the answers of those interviews, I designed fully structured questions that allowed answers to targeted information needed. I did this to reduce unneeded variabilities. Focus groups and in-depth interviews were also semi-structured. Sociometric analysis was conducted to measure the different networks and social relationships formed by my study group. With sociometric analysis, I gained quantitative data, and I was able to examine the preferred relationships women sought. Additionally, through sociometric analysis I was able to determine women's relatively stable patterns of interaction that they formed over time.

It was interesting to observe the development of focus group interviews. Those interviews, rather than being a complete separate phase, were organically intertwined

with key informants interviews. That was because, oftentimes, while I was conducting key informants interviews, friends or relatives would drop by the homes to visit. The ensuing interview, if not interrupted, would transform into a focus group interview. The latter provided vivid discussions imbued with rich insights. That was because the synergy of several people would spark animated conversations. It was engaging to experience and observe how different personalities harmonized the conversation. In several occasions, the same group came together, and, as I was listening, I realized how, for example, more gregarious women would bring out the voices of the more reserved ones. It is important to say that this was done organically, the more convivial women would gently coaxing the more introverted ones to share their stories, but they never inserted their opinions, or voiced their ideas, as opinions and ideas of the less talkative ones.

As I mention above, the project's four phases correspond to the four methods I used to gain information. Once I finished the garnering of data, I triangulated and tested all information collected. Through triangulation of the four methods, I was able to verify that the different approaches pointed to the same conclusion. Thus, I used triangulation as a process of verification. First, I implemented methodological triangulation, thereby comparing results that I obtained with the survey questionnaire to interviews and focus groups gatherings to see if similar results were found. I then combined the findings of all the methods with results obtained through statistical analysis to verify that observations were indeed accurate.

While carrying out triangulation of methods, I also triangulated my data by continuously comparing my findings with findings of previous research and ethnographic works. Likewise, the answers to interview questions are cross checked with observations

collected while conducting participant observation, and while partaking of festivities, gatherings, and during general conversations. The principles I used for triangulation included, "[t] he use of data from different sources, the use of multiple perspectives to interpret a single set of data, and the use of multiple methods to study a single problem" (Beebe 2001:19). Thus, by applying those principles from the outset and throughout my research, I obtained essential features for a robust interpretative research process.

Triangulation helped my study throughout its developing stages. First, by analyzing my data from several approaches and garnering the same conclusion, I increased the validity of my conclusions. Second, its iterative process served to reduce my bias as a researcher. Although I tried to be aware of preconceptions, they were inevitably present since they are firmly situated in the set of values and beliefs system I inhabit, and have inhabited all of my life. By triangulating and cross checking my findings, hypotheses I generated from one data collection strategy were always investigated using a different field method so as to attain validity, reach accuracy, and finally increase the robustness of my conclusions.

## 3.6 Quantitative Analysis

To interpret gender and power relations quantitatively, first, I classified answers from each generational groups, first, 1.5, and second generation. Second, I compared answers, analyzed patterns, and looked for emergent themes. Third, I went back and forth comparing my emerging models with evidences found during data gathering and writing. Finally, I was able to ground evidences of some of my findings in already found literatures, while at other times, I could not. I then started to make classifications on the answers I received during fieldwork, and as patterns and links emerged, I added new

classifications. Furthermore, I began to examine results and began to make descriptions and interpretations of my collected data. One of my questions was, "What Ethiopian women refugees/migrants feel they have gained and lost through migration," and since one of the primary changes among first generation women was entering the work force, I decided to analyze what this change has brought into their lives, particularly in view of (a) by entering the workforce, they gain independence; but (b) family conflict arise; and (c) child rearing habits and values have to change. Thus, I made the following classifications to guide my analysis:

(a) Women's relationship with male

(b) Women's relationship with children

(c) Male's relationship with children

(d) Women entering the workforce

(e) Changes observed in relationships after entering the workforce

(f) Implications on the family structure when both parents have jobs

(g) Implications when both parents are responsible for households chores

(h) Male's diminished sense of self

(i) Questions about race and ethnicity in relation to relationships and job opportunities

Classifications on changes of traditional values and lifestyle

(1) Inability to rely on family and kinship structures

(2) More demands placed on day-to-day lives

(3) Conflicts with childcare

(4) Behavioral differences between boys and girls

(5) Education

Furthermore, I examined patterns and links in relationship formation. To do so, once again, I used sociometric analysis. Sociometric allowed me to better identify the relationship formed among women and the strength of the relationships, since with sociometric I can analyze the structures that give a group its form. Hence, I was able to individuate the gradient of relationships within the community, as well as, if, and, what types of relationships are formed outside of the community. During this phase, I asked the respondents to draw a map of their network and circle of friends, making sure that the relationship intensity was well marked.

Participant Observation opened my research. After participant observation was well established and I became familiar with church parishioners, and, they with me, I began the first stage of interview survey. Through random snowballing, I started to administer a survey questionnaire. The survey respondents were asked questions about the importance of education, motherhood, their participation in activities outside the community, their comfort level and their feelings of inclusion when dealing with people outside of their community. I administered the same interview survey at different locations and gatherings. In this manner, I was able to obtain a statistically representative sample of the population of Ethiopian women. Here is an example of the survey questions; the entire interview survey can be found in Appendix D. Example of survey questions:

Figure: 7

(a)     Is education equally important for boys and girls?

(b)     Do you participate in activities outside the community?

(c)     If you do, do you feel that you are being included fully?

(d)     Is or was motherhood a priority in your life?

The survey questions were spurred by a discrepancy between what I observed and what people told me. The aim of my research, as I stated throughout, is to understand how Ethiopian women deal with what they feel they have lost and gained through immigrating; and to understand the challenges and successes they face to reach harmony within their new social and cultural space; to correctly answer these questions, I had to conduct a culture bound analysis where themes of womanhood, motherhood, and sisterhood had to be explored in relationship to their African perspective, only then, could I hope to obtain a robust interpretation of Ethiopian women's true sense of the self.

The discrepancies I observed surfaced during many hours of conversations in which women talked about the importance of the family unit and the emphasis women ascribed to children and childbearing. However, a substantial number of participants, when asked about their children, denied having any.

As I will present, there are two main causes that lead to the demographic shifts in family characteristics, (a) socioeconomic constraints, thus, lack of economic capital, and (b) the formation of a hybrid culture that incorporates, rejects, and alters cultural forms of the two cultures.

**3.7 Paradigm**

The paradigm I formulated to framework my study was based on post-positivism, as I believe it values and encourages different approaches, and allows for insights that extend beyond the realm of measurable, discoverable facts, post-positivism focuses toward a more hermeneutic research. It favors qualitative research methods and more importantly is conducive for a collaborative and interactive relationship between researcher and participants.  The collaborative work I attained through post positivism allowed for multivocality rather than the emergence of my singular voice as the researcher. Additionally, the hierarchy that so often develops between researcher, key informants, and participants was minimized, if not all together eliminated.

Furthermore, it fostered an atmosphere of reflexivity that stimulated my awareness of biased judgments. Researchers' biases are inevitably present, because they are historically, economically, and religiously situated in a set of values and beliefs. Therefore, throughout the research phases I consciously sought to refrain from bringing my own values and beliefs by maintaining a nonjudgmental stance and a constant mutuality with my informants. It is also important to realize that the researcher cannot always be entirely objective and hence, subjectivity will influence the data acquired. Thus, I attempted to minimize subjectivism by tape-recording conversations and, as best as I could, I recorded all observations immediately. Furthermore, as patterns started to surface, I discussed their meaning with several of my informants to discern the validity of my observations (Bebe 2001, Ervin, 2005, Van Arsdale 2005).

Finally, post positivist paradigm facilitated an inductive approach, or a bottom-up approach. Pattern of knowledge were, thus, garnered from field observation and informants, who undoubtedly have the better knowledge of their culture.

**3.8 Data Gathering. First Phase - Participant Observation**

Participant observation (PO) launched my primary data collection. The majority of my fieldwork took place in Denver proper and Aurora. Primary data gathering began in early spring when I started to hang out at the Ethiopian Orthodox Churches to conduct participant observation (PO). Participant observation helped me to gain a better understanding of the Ethiopian community since I was able to examine their geographical and cultural terrain. While conducting participant observation, I was able to interact with numerous members of the community and gain invaluable insights by observing interactions among people, discerning the hierarchy of the community, and gaining knowledge of their daily activities. However, I knew that my presence inevitably altered, to some degree, the environment I was observing. Nevertheless, during informal gatherings people forgot about my presence, thus, allowing me to see them more as their natural selves, without their feelings of being observed. The events I was fortunate to attend varied from intimate events, such as wine tasting, art exhibitions, and coffee ceremonies, to much larger gatherings, like the Axum Festival that took place the second week in June at Axum Park in Aurora. Some festivities were small, and took place in the intimacy of informants' homes. Others were much larger events with hundreds of people participating, such as the Tigrigna Festival that took place last August.

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Furthermore, the Ethiopian Community Center organizes weekly cultural classes, such as cooking classes, history classes, clothing styles, and hair braiding.[13] On September 27, I was able to participate in the Meskel celebration and bonfire, a very old Christian holiday, celebrated at St. Mary the Gishen-Mariam Orthodox Church in Aurora. Participating in those very diverse festivals and celebrations allowed me to present a more emic perspective. Moreover, I was able to experience events similar to the way Ethiopians experienced them. Participant observation was combined with semistructured interviews. The goal for the semistructured interviews was to gather vital information from different voices.

Participant Observation was done in stages since, first, I had to gain permission to be among the women. To this end, after introducing myself, I shared with the community members my intentions for being there, and discussed the possibility of garnering information through unstructured or semistructured interviews. Women, as well as men, maintained their autonomy in the decision to participate, or not participate in the research study. The need to pay particular attention to confidentiality was highly respected. Indeed, confidentiality was of outmost importance to the people I met during the research process, and, as I will elaborate a bit further, made the recruiting process challenging. Additionally, I sought to avoid any bias I could have had, first as a researcher, next, as an Italian with a particular worldview, and third, as a mother. In other words, I sought to prevent bias or expectations that are intrinsically mine, and which are dictated by my upbringing. I took special attention in crafting the types of questions asked to allow

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[13] Different regions have different braiding styles, and, interestingly, Ethiopians can tell from which region a woman comes from just by her braiding style.

participants the opportunity to answer my inquiries comfortably without the feeling of embarrassment or discomfort. To make sure that my questions were as ethical and least intrusive as possible, I paid particular attention to nonverbal clues. During the preparation of interviews care was dedicated to formulating questions as to avoid an answer with yes and no monosyllable. Likewise, I refrained formulating leading questions that would have led to expected responses.

Finally, I provided variables that are crucial for correct data analysis. Hence, independent variables such as demographic and socioeconomic factors are included. Demographic variables included age, marital status, age at marriage, location of marriage, and number and sex composition of children. Socioeconomic variables that I include are settlement patterns, including place and type of residence; (apartment complex or single family home); area of resettlement and location; education; and wealth index. As a variable, I also examined exposure to media; thus, I sought to count how many Ethiopian programs they watch versus American programs. If American programs were favored, I sought to find out which programs, and how much time was devoted to TV programming. These activities were done because I believe exposure to media is an important factor to include since much of the American culture is learned through the media. Indeed, many parents I interviewed commented about their children spending too much time in front of the TV and learning 'bad' habits from American programs.

## 3.9 Key Informants Interviews

As participant observation was underway, and I had established and determined key locations to 'hang out,' I was introduced to my first two key informants. At this point I will not use their names or their pseudonyms, since, during first contact, all participants

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were particularly worried to be recognized, and told me that at this point of my research, the use of pseudonyms could not assure anonymity. Thus, in this starting phase, I will not offer aliases to accommodate their wishes. As I began my narrative, key informants blended in more easily into my study sample and allowed anonymity to be maintained. My first contact was an established 1.5 Ethiopian woman refugee/migrant, who is an instrumental figure in Denver's Ethiopian community. She is a key leader and promoter of educational and community development projects here in Denver. Her cohorts include successful women and men who relocated, as she did, with their family during the Red Terror, or who have migrated to Denver after the Ethiopian famine in 2002.

My second 'key informant' belongs to the first generation of Ethiopian women refugees/migrants, and resettled in the United States as an adult via Addis Ababa. Both informants are knowledgeable and are 'enculturated' into the area of activity, or knowledge being studied" (Ervin 2005: 168). Additionally, both participants are highly involved in the Ethiopian community. While the first is involved in the promotion of Ethiopian cultural events, my second informant offers assistance to newly arrived Ethiopian refugees/migrants. Those two initial contacts were instrumental in helping me find additional women to interview. More importantly, both informants provided astute analytical insights. My gatekeeper, from the 1.5 generational group, was also instrumental in teaching me the proper etiquette to maintain when I was among her community members. For example, she taught me the proper way to greet them, who to kiss, how many kisses to give, and otherwise who not to kiss. Furthermore, she explained the proper way to eat, so as not to offend Ethiopian customs. Key informants interviews, as well as all other interviews, were tape-recorded.

Before commencing the interview process, I provided a voluntary informed consent form. Therefore, all participants were informed and aware that, at any time if, she, or he, wished to terminate the involvement in the study, s/he was free to do so, without incurring any sort of consequence, and without being penalized, or judged. The research maintained at all times openness, promoting cooperation between myself, study participants, and community members at large. Because of the diversity of my key informants, I was able to gain insight about the integrative strategies women embrace from different prospectives, from different generations, and from different life experiences. I feel, therefore, confident that my key informants were representative of the Ethiopian 'universe,'or the N population, and thus, my subset, or n population represented the population at large.

For the recruitment of informants, I used a snowballing sampling, that is, key individuals suggested further candidates, thus creating a snowball effect. Furthermore, as I commented above, I attended festivals and activities promoted by the Ethiopian Community Center where I was able to meet individuals who graciously agreed to be part of my study. Thus, as I stated, I was able to include sampling from first, 1.5, and second-generation women participants. This sampling allowed me to contrast different paths of integration and offered me the opportunity to identify different paths of resistance to patriarchal subordination.

Finally, before the interview process began, I administered a pilot questionnaire to six people to verify the validity of my interview questions. Likewise, I prepared a pilot testing for the survey questionnaire, so that I reached a distinct improvement to the questions I originally asked. Thus, from the beginning, I was able to avoid confusion,

leading questions, and questions unnecessary to my research topic. The types of questions I administered avoided hierarchical and embedded-power conversation. The questions represented three types of qualitative knowledge: representational, reflective, and relational. Demographic questions such as age, education, residence, and other pertinent characteristics of the people participating in the study, opened the interview. They were followed by what James Spradley (1979) calls 'grand tour' questions, those, as he writes, "[t] hat cover the scope of the domain in question" (Spradley 1979: 87-88). A third set of questions was Likert- scaled questions with five choices. The first set was to establish fluency of the English language; whereby, the second set was to establish integration patterns. The questions were both open-ended and close-ended.

## 3.10 Second Phase - Focus Groups

As I mentioned above, Focus Groups Interviews were a natural aspect of my interview process. Most of my interviews took place at the homes of the participants, and often times during the weekend. Because informal visits among Ethiopians are still very popular, as I was conducting key informants interviews, a stream of friends and relatives would drop by to pay visits. If the informant, usually a woman, was being interviewed and had previously told her friends about my presence, and if she had shared with friends and relatives my research intentions, the interview would transform itself into a focus group interview. The number of women, therefore, varied between a minimum of three to a maximum of six. The interview was unstructured, tape-recorded, and lasted about one hour. However, the gatherings lasted much longer, and, through amicable conversations, I gathered further data. It is important to note that I always had a journal where I kept field

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notes. Those were invaluable once I began the process of transcribing tape-recorded interviews.

In addition to my field notes, I noted personal reflections. I made a summary of all women present, what they wore, and how they seemed: happy, talkative, introvert, extrovert, or sad. Once, for example, during one such focus group interview, a participant shared her grief for the loss of the church patriarch, Abune Paulos, who had just died the previous day of an undisclosed illness.[14] In addition, I jotted down noises, colors, smells, and a brief picture of the room. If the interview was taking place in the intimacy of participants' homes, the aromas of spices and coffee lingered with me afterwords. As I read my logs, during content analysis, the smell of coffee brewed with cardamon and the ever present burning of incense used at coffee ceremonies, which I described in my notes, transported me back to those rooms. The aroma of spices, the feelings expressed during interviews, and my own impressions and feelings were all jotted down, giving me the opportunity to once again immerse myself in the moment. As my data analysis progressed with the unravelling of my logs, the women would be right there with me.

**3.11 Third Phase – Survey**

The third phase unfolded with the distribution of a survey, which was administered after the initial pilot-testing questionnaire. Nevertheless, I commenced to distribute surveys at the outset of the research, and, as a consequence, after the initial pilot testing, I changed some questions and deleted others. I deleted questions to which people were not very responsive or seemed ambivalent. However, I realized that

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[14] Abune Paulos Yohnannes Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church died on August 16, 2012. Abune means 'Our Father' in Ge'ez.

ambivalence, the lack of responsiveness, or the inability to access data, were all sources

of data. Nevertheless, after the initial pilot testing, I designed more targeted questions.

The survey systematically gathered information from my 'n' sample, which was

representative of the 'N' population.  An important aspect for conducting a survey was

that information was derived directly from the population. Using the survey, I was able to

assess various aspects of the integration processes and to gain a sense of women's general

satisfaction.

The survey contained three types of questions, close ended; open ended, and

filtered[15] questions, which were posed to all participants sequentially. Additionally, in

accordance to anthropological standards the survey was brief, sequenced from present

day issues to future expectations and plans. More importantly, questions were sequenced

from demographic data to more sensitive topics. The survey questions came from the

pilot questionnaire and contained additional subtopics that were connected to the primary

goals of my research project. As the survey was finalized, I distributed it in person.

Although respondents had the opportunity to send the survey at their leisure, and I made

sure to provide a pre-addressed and stamped envelope, almost all of the survey

questionnaires were completed while I was present. In this manner, I had the opportunity

to clarify participants' inquiries regarding the survey questions. On occasions,

particularly when I distributed the survey at the church, a key informant helped me with

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[15] The filter questions were sorted out to know which respondent did not need more
detailed follow-up questions for a particular event. Insofar as the respondent did not
experience the particular event in question (Knäuper 1998). For example 1.5 generation
participants experienced the Red Terror in ways that dramatically differed from first
generation. Whereby, second generation participants did not experience it at all.

women who had some difficulty understanding the questions because of language

barriers. Through the survey, key indicator variables were obtained, coded, and classified.

## 3.12 Fourth Phase - In Depth Interviews

After I collected all survey questionnaires the fourth phase began. To this end, I

chose, at random, eight women to administer an in-depth interview. Only women who

chose willfully to participate in this additional phase were interviewed, and, as in phase

one of the study, informed consents were distributed. The interviews were unstructured

and tape-recorded with the permission of each respondent. The length of time for these

interviews varied between one to one- and one half hours. They never exceed ninety

minutes, because, after ninety minutes, it was difficult to maintain the focus on the

subject matter. It was during this phase, that I asked women to draw the map for my

sociometric analysis.

## 3.13 The Selection Process

The most difficult aspect proved to be the recruitment of women. Most of them

relocated in the mid to late 80's, with the exception of a few who arrived at later dates.

Those who migrated at a later date arrived via Sudan and Kenya, two from European

countries, and one from Israel. Initially, women did not trust the motivations of my

research study, mainly because of their experiences as women refugees. Although, the

majority of my first generation study participants have relocated in this country decades

ago, their dealing with immigration and law officers is still fresh in their minds because

for the most part the experience was unpleasant, and was punctuated by mistrust. Mistrust

came from several sources and from the beginning of their flight. Here, I submit one

example to explain why mistrust becomes almost a way of life. The Geneva Convention of 1951 affirms a refugee as:

> A person owing well-founded fear of being persecuted for reason of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside of the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (UNHCR 1951:152).

Hence, a person to be eligible for protection has to prove persecution. However, though rape of women and girls is being used as a weapon of war, sexual violence and rape are not recognized as a form of persecution (Freedman 2008).

A number of study participants suffered those brutal experiences. The inquiries they were subjected to at port of entries were torturous, and, in several cases, ineffective for their admittance. Hence, as I was conducting Participant Observation, and I was inquiring about their willingness to participate, women were, not only, reluctant because of time commitment and confidentiality based on their comfort level to talk about such difficult issues, but they were highly suspicious of my questioning as well. Indeed, literature writing on refugees's issues report that the particularities of a refugee's experience make refugees intensely suspicious of institutions, people representing such institutions, government bodies, and immigration offices. One has to gain their trust before being able to do research among them (Daniel and Knudsen 1995; Zetter 1991, 2007; Prendergast 1996; Malkki 1986; Marfleet 2006; Moussa 1993).

Jane Freedman (2008) observes that sexual violence and rape may not be considered on the same level as other types of violence because such violence is deemed personal, and/or private. Many courts of law, she reports, consider rape as a result of

private feelings of lust, and or desire, and not a form of persecution or torture (Freedman 2008: 418). Rape and sexual violence are often effectively normalized and considered as part of the universal relations between men and women (Marfleet 2006; Young 2002; Prendergast 1996; Freedman 2008). This state of affairs is dramatic on several fronts. First, host societies deny women entry, and classify them as illegal aliens based on their inability to prove persecution. Second, rape is used as a weapon of war, as a disruption to societies, and as a weapon for ethnic cleansing. That is, if women are sexually active outside the marriage, even if by sexual abuse, they can be banned from their community, or if not banned, they become a pariah (Krug et al. 2002; Freedman 2008; Young 2002; Women Health Council 2007). On a 2004 report the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) commented:

> Sexual violation of women erodes the fabric of a community in a way that few weapons can. Rape's damage can be devastating because of the strong communal reaction to the violation and pain stamped on entire families. The harm inflicted in such cases on a woman by a rapist is an attack on her family and culture, as in many societies women are viewed as repositories of a community's cultural and spiritual values (IRIN 2004: 5).

Consequently many women suffer sexual abuse and do not report it in order to maintain membership in their family and community (Marfleet 2006; Daniel and Knudsen 1995).

**3.14 Gaining women's trust**

Ethiopians, as I soon learned, are very welcoming, warm, gregarious, and sociable; however, they are also very reserved; and, in general, they do not like talking with strangers, particularly about their private affairs. When I approached Ethiopian women refugees/migrants, they often directed me to talk to a male community member[16].

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[16] I elaborate on this matter on chapter 6 when providing data analysis.

It was only after several months that women began to freely talk to me, or to address me before I addressed them. That was particularly true at the Church where I regularly conducted participant observation. A couple of women, who eventually became part of my research study, after we became acquainted, teased me mercilessly about my attending their Church. Hence, after a while, women welcomed me, and amicable exchanges were common. Nevertheless, it was still difficult to begin the interview process.

My research was greatly facilitated when two American friends introduced me to two of their Ethiopian friends, who became my first two informants. As I mentioned before my first informant belong to the 1.5-generation group and my second one to the first-generation group. Both informants became tremendously valuable for the success of my thesis. As I began the interviewing process with these two women, and our relationship progressed, I had hoped with their help, to meet other women, but this proved to be difficult. Both informants, but particularly the one from the first generation group, were reluctant to introduce me to friends, fearing that the community would criticize and oppose their involvement in my study. Nevertheless, as they began introducing me as their friend, rather than as a researcher, I made inquiries with other women about their willingness to participate in the study, but my request was met with resistance. The issue was almost always about the assurance of confidentiality, and the limits of anonymity. The Ethiopian community is a tight community, and the majority of people knows each other, and knows the particularities of people's resettlement. Hence, the use of a pseudonym did not guarantee anonymity. Furthermore, empirical evidence

indicates that refugees prefer avoiding participation in this kind of study to avoid painful memories (Marfleet 2006; Daniel and Knudsen 1995).

However, as time passed, I was able to establish rapport, gain trust, and more women decided to willingly participate. Because of the age difference between my first two key informants, I was able to establish rapport with women from first and 1.5 generation group. With my initial contacts we were able to create a 'snowball' effect, which established my sample group of first and 1.5 generation participants. When I was invited to the Axum festival, I had the opportunity to meet a considerable number of second generation Ethiopian/Americans. By having found individuals willing to participate in my study from the three generational groups, my sample became representative of the population. Noteworthy was the positive disposition second generation Ethiopian/Americans had about participating in the research study.

### 3.15 Structuring the Interview Process

Once the interview process was on its way, I strived to find a convenient time, and provide a place where women felt safe. Time and place were always negotiated and became of outmost importance. I would always encourage the women to find a time that was convenient to them, and a place where they felt the most comfortable. Soon I noticed a pattern, first generation participants invited me to their homes during the weekend. The time varied between eleven and three o'clock. During morning interviews, traditional food was served and was followed by coffee. Afternoon interviews were always occasions for a coffee ceremony. 1.5, and second-generation participants preferred to meet in bookstores or coffee shops, and a few chose to meet at a library. The time of interview that the 1.5 and second-generation informants selected varied. First generation

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men almost always chose Ethiopian coffee shops, or Ethiopian restaurants, but 1.5 and second generation men followed the same trend as their female counterparts.

The different places selected to conduct the interviews seems to reflect generational differences, as well as the level of integration into the host society. First generation participants tended to feel more comfortable in a cultural space embedded with their Ethiopian heritage. Whereas, 1.5 and second generation navigated between the two cultures easily.

It is noteworthy to mention that during interviews, second generation informants commented that their homes are different from the homes of their American friends[17]. When I inquired about what they meant, some replied that their homes smell like Ethiopia, and others explained that their homes smell of the spices their moms use for cooking. Two of the respondents noted that their homes are more crowded than American homes. However, they would not elaborate on what they meant by more crowded, unless I asked. They elaborated by telling me that more people live in Ethiopians' homes than American ones. In Ethiopian homes, it is normal to find several generations living together, as well as children contracted outside of marriage, and also relatives, and close friends. Moreover, some families welcome newly arrived Ethiopian refugees/migrants. In turn, the latter stay with those families until they find a place of their own. This trend reflects Ethiopian refugees/migrants integrative patterns, which I will describe in my analysis. A final comment important to rise is, whenever I inquired of second-generation informants if I could interview their parents, the majority replied negatively, and explained that their parents would not understand the scope of my research and would be

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[17] See chapter 6 and 7 for further analysis

suspicious. Only a minority agreed to ask their parents about their willingness to participate, and almost all suggested their father.

The interview process began always as a two-way conversation. First my participants wanted to know about my research study, why I was doing it, what I wished to achieve, and particularly why I had decided to undertake a study about Ethiopians. First generation women, in particular, were curious about my experience as an Italian relocated in the United States, as well as, how I felt being a mother without a close family network. Moreover, topics of conversation varied from food, family, health, and politics; and children were always an important topic. The conversation about children ranged from their education, socialization, and behavior, to parents' involvement in their children's schools and education, to the concern parents expressed about their children growing up in the U.S. and learning values of individualism and materialism. The majority of informants expressed their desire to keep sending their children back to Ethiopia to learn the value of collectivism. Those conversations were an essential part of the interviewing process.

Starting the interview with unstructured and amicable conversations allowed participants to gain knowledge about me as a person, rather than just as a researcher, which enhanced their comfort level, as well as it built trust. Also from this prelude, before starting the questions, which followed a chronological sequence from the past to the present, I was able to infer which topics were of more urgency to my informants. Those exchanges allowed me to obtain invaluable data. Indeed, conversations regarding children's education gave me a better insight about women's hopes and concerns. First generation women often shared the difficulties they face understanding the American

school system. Often teacher-parent conferences were for parents a source of worries, mostly because of language barriers, which they lamented, prevented them from grasping the nuances of English. Consequently, they observed that language barriers disallow them to be fully participants of their children's academic development. First generation informants lamented their inability to be as involved in their offsprings' education as they wish they could be. This situation is a cause of chagrin for both parents and children. Indeed, several second-generation participants, like their parents, regretted their parents' limited involvement in their education. The value placed on education was, indeed, of utmost importance to all participants. Education[18] not only is seen as a way to achieve upward mobility, but also becomes, for women, a way to negotiate and further neutralize patriarchal subordination.

**3.16 Field notes**

I kept a journal to jot down my field notes; the journal consists of actual observations and personal reflections. For every interview, I recorded the place, the time, and a brief description of the interviewee, as well as, how the interview proceeded, the overall mood, feelings, smells, colors etc. Key words relevant to the study were noted in the margins along with my feelings and impressions. Then, they were used as I was doing data analysis. Key words were coded and used as quantitative data. Field notes were a crucial component during data analysis. They brought back the interview moment in ways that verbalizations alone were not able to do. Thus, I read and reread my logs repeatedly. James Beebe (2001) suggests that, "[logs] are the source of the data for making sense out of a situation" (Beebe 2001: 66). Indeed, by reading, rereading, and

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[18] See chapter 6 for further analysis

checking back with my informants, as I was analyzing data, patterns formed and trends emerged.

## 3.17 Data Analysis

To analyze my data, I took the Interactive Model emphasized by Beebe (2001). With this method, as I suggested above, I first coded data and made marginal remarks; secondly, I displayed the data while continuing to have conversation with study participants in order to seek their advice in data interpretation, and to clarify any confusing expressions. Finally, I drew conclusions. During the process of data analysis, I carefully read my field notes, and logs, and then divided them into thought units to which codes were applied. To apply codes, I used a different method of analysis. Namely, I performed content analysis to the responses I had received. In other words, I grouped key words and phrases that represented the team of interest.

For example, I grouped phrases and words relating to education, career paths, and individuals' level of satisfaction. I paid special attention to coding terms regarding children, and the values women, as well as men, pose on them. I then grouped, coded, measured, and performed quantitative, or statistical analysis, to confront quantitative analysis with qualitative analysis and ascertain the validity of my findings. The coding was an on-going process and occurred continuously throughout the research. As suggested by senior anthropologists, the time used to code logs helped me to avoid the risk of jumping to premature conclusions. Furthermore, as likewise suggested, the coding took only the form of numbers, as they are easier to manipulate. I provided appendixes for my coding system, and for the quantitative analysis I performed. Nevertheless, here, I

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offer an example to illustrate; for instance, how I applied nominal codes for the marital status' variable.

Figure: 8

| Marital Status | | Participants | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Married | 1 | First Generation | 1 |
| Separated | 2 | 1.5 Generation | 1.5 |
| Divorced | 3 | Second Generation | 2 |
| Single | 4 | | |

Marginal remarks helped me to sort out the coding process. Furthermore, the application of different numerical codes facilitated the ability for me to see patterns.

Once the coding was completed, and all responses cataloged, the data was ready to be displayed for analysis. The domains of information were then compared to reach a deeper understanding of my informants' integrative strategies. I made comparisons of the attitudes toward pursuing education with the degree of life changes, and a perceived satisfaction, or dissatisfaction. Furthermore, I compared to which degree-obtaining employment, particularly among women, is viewed as a positive accomplishment compared to the value they posit onto the rearing of children, and women's domestic roles. I sought to illustrate how women's domestic roles have been affected by their involvement in economic activities outside the home. Marital status was coded and compared to emotional states (that was done by comparing my discrete[19] data with

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[19] Discrete data refers to data which values/observations are distinct and separate, i.e., they can be counted.

categorical[20] data, to which I assigned a numerical value using a likert scale). The comparisons and data display sought to identify patterns of themes and plausibility. Furthermore, seeking confirmation from informants was of critical importance for a correct interpretation and, also, for avoiding wrong conclusions.

## 3.18 Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Integration such as economic stability or instability varies among individuals and situations. Marital status, number and residence of children, and social ties are other factors that change at different stages of one's life, and will affect the complex process of integration. Hence, the interplay of those variables needs to be addressed and quantified to reach reliability and validity, and to enhance the robustness of the data analysis. Because the language at time posed barriers, my 1.5-generation key informant helped with the administration of the survey questionnaire. During the focus group interviews, as well, women with language proficiency helped those who had more difficulty expressing their feelings in English. Although they always assured me of the accuracy of the translation, the translation itself can pose linguistic interference, as in translation; true feelings can be involuntarily altered. Languages have particular ways to express sentiments which, when translated, often fail to capture their nuances.

In an effort to present a holistic rendering to what it means to integrate into a new social space, I adopted a longitudinal approach asking questions about life prior to resettlement, and post resettlement. I inquired about the experiences they had before, during, and post flight. This approach serves to capture refugees/migrants lives more

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[20] Categorical data is data that can be sorted according to category. For example participants were assigned with categories female, male.

fully than just focusing on their present situation, but it can also trigger what Hammerton and Thomson (2005: 15-16, 359) name "memory stories." The two authors emphasize that personal life stories are, for the most part, a selective rendering of the narrator's experience. That is, memory stories are recollections that the individual chooses to recall. The memories recollected represent a negotiation between the past and the present. Consequently, the recollection does not reflect entirely the past experience as it unfolded.

Furthermore, my own experiences and presence did affect the rendering of the people I researched. Hence, as LeCompte and Schensul (2010) suggest, I strived to remain as reflexive as possible. That is, to use Bourdieu's term, I sought to avoid the possibility or likelihood that my own cultural capital, or habitus, would interfere with my exposition and renderings of those narratives. For clarity sake, I bring forth an example. For instance, both women's and men's memories were often infused by a sense of nostalgia and longing for their past lives in Ethiopia. They felt particularly nostalgic for the close relationship they had in Ethiopia with extended families, friends, and communities. Those feelings reflected the Ethiopian value of being bound with others, rather than reflecting the individualism emphasized in the host society. In turn, in the context of my analysis, I had to keep in mind my own longing for "Italian" past relationships, so as not to let my own nostalgia interfere and seep through, resulting in an analysis exalting memories of idillic places or past.

Lastly, informants' availability and willingness to participate was at times problematic. The difficulties for women's participation varied from finding time to the finding of equitable locations; but more importantly, to the women's freedom of participating in the study. After all, in keeping with the strong values of togetherness and

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collectivity informants, before agreeing to participate in the research, would always discuss their possible involvement with their spouses, particularly if the participants were women. This was not an act of subordination, but of respect. As I mentioned before, Ethiopians are reserved and prefer to keep personal matters private, as a result, before accepting to participate in the study, informants preferred to receive the blessings of their spouses and family members. For the assurance of confidentiality, and before my relationship deepened with members of the Ethiopian community, the first few interviews took place in safe and neutral settings, such as the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, and or at the Ethiopian Cultural Center. It was only after the participants developed trust and rapport with me that they invited me into their homes, and the interview took place within the intimacy of their domains

## 3.19 Conclusion

Zygmunt Bauman (2004) argues that refugees are Wasted Lives stripped of everything, even their identity replaced by an identity of statelessness and status lessens because to experience becoming a refugee is to be uprooted from one's land, history, culture, and social collectivity to experience disruption and fractured lives. It is to experience exclusion and the loss of oneself. It is to search for belonging and continuities despite sharp discontinuities. In order to capture these dramatic issues, and to understand how refugees cope being in this unsettling transitory period, and to garner what strategies they adopt to rebuild their lives, I used a longitudinal approach, interviewing a group of fifteen Ethiopian refugees/migrants: nine women and six men. I balanced their past life narratives, prior to resettlement, with their present life narratives, post resettlement. My sample group comprises first generation informants of whom I interviewed six; five 1.5

generation informants, and four, second-generation informants. These fifteen individuals made up my core group; however, I had the good fortune and opportunity to meet many more Ethiopian women and men, who for different reasons, were compelled to resettle in the Denver Metro Area.

The many conversations I had corroborated, enhanced, and helped me to redefine the answers of my sample group. At the end of the interview period, I further conducted a sequence of focus group interviews to further verify my findings. The stories of informants and individuals I met illustrated the negotiations they underwent in the choices and pathways they take to rebuild their lives in the Denver Metro area. Their stories helped my research to see how their identities were altered at multiple levels: gender and gender roles, race, ethnicity, and class. Furthermore, they faced an imposed racial identity of being black; and, further, their education, skills, cultures, and values were questioned. They were stripped of their rooted identity to be re-identified with a label of refugees. A label, which conjures up ideas of loss, sufferance, and of being passive victims, rather than being victimized. However, the stories I collected tell a very different reality; the stories collected narrate the determination of individuals victimized, but never victims, determined to rebuild a meaningful life for themselves and their loved ones in a new and often strange environment.

A Poem by Lena Bezawork Grönlund

**Belaynesh**

A man who worked in the same household as Belaynesh drives the car.
He wears a dark cotton shirt and a jacket.
It is midday. We are the twins
on our way to the hospital
where we were born.
It is the same Volkswagen
she traveled in to give us birth.
Twenty eight years earlier.
He says it's the same route. It is also
the same month as we first left. May. 1976. In the middle of the revolution. In between
Selassie and Mengistu.
We hold on to each other's hands so hard. Water gushes up through the throat
from the stomach
out into the car
over the seats
and onto the floor.
We swallow and swallow. There is something about the air, something about the car,
something about how you sat here with us that is making me drown.

Lena Bezawork Grönlund

# Chapter 4 The Lay of the Land

The Soil is the great connector of our lives, the source and destination of all

Wendell Berry (1977)

## 4.1 Introduction

If one wishes to understand the Ethiopian diaspora and how the Ethiopian people experienced and still experience the exile from their nation, then one has to be familiar with Ethiopia's history and lay of the land. To grasp the Ethiopian's diasporic experience, one has to know who Ethiopians were, and are, where they come from, and Ethiopia's past and present history. Ethiopians claim to have the most ancient history, and its people tell that their land was the first dwelling of mankind. They date the lineage of 225 generations of Ethiopian Kings and Emperors back to Menelik I, son of King Solomon and Queen Sheba. They proudly remind their listeners that their country was never conquered by a colonial power. Adults, and children alike, recall how the ill-equipped Ethiopian army forced the retreat of heavily armed Italian soldiers, using astute and bellicose mavericks. Indeed, the battle of Adwa fought in 1896 under the leadership of Emperor Menelik II has gained legendary status.

Moreover, according to Ethiopians, the lost Ark of the Covenant, which had contained the original tablets of Moses, resides in the northern region of Tigray in the city

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of Aksum. Ethiopia's history is rich and vibrant and so are the Ethiopian people who are proud of being Ethiopians. Thus, Ethiopians refugees/migrants sense of displacement and their longing for what they still call home can only be understood when their lives are situated in a historical context and analyzed longitudinally. This chapter, therefore, is devoted to Ethiopians' past and introduces how their traditional values are in dissonance with the values Ethiopian refugees/migrants, who are living in the United States, encounter in their present situation.

**4.2 Chronology of Key Events - Past Events**

As stated in the introductory section, to understand the significance of the Ethiopian diaspora, it is necessary to look at the social, political, and historical circumstances that led to its development. Hence, I present the historical processes that contributed to the Ethiopians' journey to the United States. Second, I interpret how this process altered Ethiopians' lives, their realities, and worldviews. However, before delving into the analysis of change, it is important to understand the identity of people prior to their migratory experience. It is critical to know how such identity was formed to understand the negative effects that changes were brought on by forced resettlement, and what the labeling processes caused. Hence, I will delve into Ethiopia's antiquity and briefly illustrate the histories and narratives that shaped the country and the identity of its people. Lastly, I will attempt to illustrate how forced migration challenges such identity and how exterior forces, and internal uncertainties give rise to identity's crises and questionings.

Before probing into the subject of identity issue, Ethiopian women refugees/migrants experience, I must situate the Ethiopian refugee/migrant people geographically and historically within their country of origin, and then examine the complexities of their social structure. To do so, I present first the Ethiopian people and their ethnic diversity. This is important to note because interethnic diversity dictates present day ethnic groups relations and strains. Conflictual relationships among Ethiopians germinated as a consequence of King Menelik's (of Shoa province) expansion, and consequent annexation of territories to his kingdom. Before his expansion, Ethiopia, then known as Abyssinia, was a loose alliance of kingdoms. It was only in 1899 that King Menelik, after winning several battles fought in the eastern, western, and southern territories of Abyssinia, established the present-day Ethiopian's boundaries, and became Emperor Menelik II (Marcus 2002). Historians write that Menelik's reign coincided with Europe's "scramble for Africa" and they quote him as saying that, "[if] powers at a distance come forward to participate in the partition of Africa between them, I do not intend to be an indifferent spectator" (Greenfield 1965: 118). Menelik's scramble and colonization of Abyssinia resulted in the strained relationships that continue to persist in present day Ethiopia. More relevant, those struggles continue until today to dictate relationships among resettled Ethiopians, as well.

Second, I introduce the early relationship Ethiopia had with the United States, since those early Ethio-U.S. relations influenced Ethiopians resettlement location of choice. Following, I introduce migration patterns paralleling each pattern to the sociopolitical history of the country. Finally, within those historical forces, I attempt to

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paint a picture of an Ethiopian identity derived from specific historical landmarks and

legendary figures.

## 4.3 The Ethiopian People
### 4.3.1 Languages

The Ethiopian people can be segmented on the basis of their languages, and their

unity is largely defined by it (Marcus 2002). Ethiopia spans on a territory of 350,000

square miles, and is the home to three families of the Afroasiatic phylum that compose

the Semitic, Cushitic and Omotic languages. Nilo-Saharan languages of the Eastern

Sudanic and Koman branches are spoken on the Western border. In the Southwestern

corner of the country, Cushitic and Semitic languages alongside Omotic and Surmic (East

Sudanic) ones are spoken, (Crass 2006). Numerous tribes subdivide both Cushitic and

Semitic language families. Ethiopia recognizes nearly 100 ethnic groups (Powne 1969).

The four main groups are the Oromo, the Amhara, the Tigray, and the Somali. A few

other ethnic groups are the Afar, the Anuak, the Konso, the Sidamo, and the Sury. At

present, at least seventy languages and dialects are spoken in Ethiopia. The most

important Ethio-Semitic language is Amharic, as it is Ethiopia's Lingua Franca. Tigrigna

is the second most important language, and is spoken in the northern region of Tigray.

The most populous language is Oromo, which is spoken widely in all Ethiopian regions,

simply because Oromo people constitute Ethiopia's largest ethnic group. Tigrigna and

Amharic are the modern languages deriving from Ge'ez, Ethiopia's ancient language.

The Ethiopian Heritage Society of North America (EHSNA) reports Ethiopian

ethnicity rates as the following: Oromo 40%, Amhara and Tigrean 32%, Sidamo 9%,

Shankella 6%, Somali 6%, Afar 4%, Gurage 2%, and other 1%. However, there are

discrepancies on the number generated by other official sites such as the EGOV, which

puts the Amharas at 48.3%, Oromos 19.2%, Guragies 17.5%, Tigreans 7.6%, and others

at 7.4%. I believe the former is closer to being correct since the Oromo constitutes the

largest population group. The latter numbers, as Professor Feqadu Lamessa postulates on

Press TV, (King 2013) is reflective of inaccurate or biased information about the Oromo

people. Their biased information, as the professor laments, tends to diminish their

numbers, and uses ethnicity as a force to rule by division (Lamessa in Tim King 2013).

## 4.3.2 The Religions of Ethiopia

Historically, Ethiopia has tended to be culturally regarded as a Christian entity.

However, though there are more than 20 million people adhering to the Ethiopian

Orthodox Tewahedo Church[21] there are also as many Muslims (Finneran 2007).

Historical sources associate the emergence of Christianity with the Aksumite kingdom in

the fourth century; however, other sources claim that Christianity had been known in the

region in much earlier times.  The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and

Order, for example writes,

> In the Acts of the Apostles, VIII: 26-40, we are told of a certain Eunuch, the
> treasures of Queen Candace of Ethiopia, who went to Jerusalem to worship the
> God of Israel. There he met Philip the Deacon and was baptized by him.
> Ethiopian tradition asserts that he returned home and evangelized the people. In
> his Homily on Pentecost, St. John Chrysostom mentions that the Ethiopians were
> present in the Holy City on the day of Pentecost. Later, when the Apostles went
> out to preach the Gospel, Matthew was allotted the task of carrying the good news
> to Ethiopia, where he suffered martyrdom (Selassie and Tamerat EOTC 1970).

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[21] Tewahedo means professing the unification of nature in Christ by birth; it means being
made one or unified.

Ethiopia is also the home of Judaism. Information about the latter is found in the Kebre Negest, or the Glory of the Kings, where the story of the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon is recounted. Finneran (2007) writes that the Falasha of Northern Ethiopia, who practice a "[v] ery archaic form of Judaism" (Finneran 2007: 13) claim descendents from those Israelites. He continues by writing that, "Falasha would imply a derivation from the Ge'ez noun fellese meaning 'stranger' or wanderer'"(Finneran 2007:13) indicating a constructed identity of 'otherness', and thus, implicating that from antiquity Ethiopians sought to create differences among ethnic groups rather than sameness (Finneran 2007).

### 4.3.3 Multiethnic Identities

Harold Marcus (2002), like Van Arsdale (2006), postulates that within Ethiopia there are multiple identities, and to borrow from the latter an amalgam of cultures and ethnicities. Often times, the various ethnicities are in conflict with each other and strive to have the right of self-determination. Indeed, one of the students' ideologies from the 1970s was to overthrow the Amhara rulers in order to reach ethnic equality. Marcus writes that the "Tigrayan students in particular felt demeaned that their historic tongue was considered tribal, whereas Amharic enjoyed national status" (Marcus 2002: 221). Indeed, historically, Tigray was the land of Kings and Queens, the seat of the ancient kingdom of Aksumite, and of Adwa's battle, the site where the Italian army was defeated in 1896. Moreover, Tigray had always enjoyed privilege status, and was considered a region of great importance. By controlling the ports of Massawa and Asseb, nestled on the Red Sea, Tigray was the seat of trading caravans exporting African goods into the world; thus, the Amharization of Ethiopia was considered an insult to the Tigrayan

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people. Likewise, the Oromo people, who constitute nearly one-third of the population of Ethiopia, and are one of the two largest ethnolinguistic groups within the country, have struggled for decades to be recognized by the various Ethiopian governments. They claim, as other southern people do, that since 1889, when Menelik of Shoa incorporated their territory, they have been colonized and oppressed.

Dr. Trevor Trueman, Chair of the Oromia Support Group (OSG), observes that the Oromo people, alongside other Ethiopian ethnic groups, such as the Anuak, have been struggling for equal rights, democracy, and the right to self-determination for decades (The Journal of Oromo Studies 1999). However, they keep suffering persecution and forced conscription at the hands of the Ethiopian government (Cultural Survival Quarterly 1984). The Anuak and Oromo are but two examples, Van Arsdale (2006) writes that the people of the Somali region "[f] ell pressured by a centralized, distant, and ominous bureaucracy" (Van Arsdale 2006: 58). Undoubtedly, the relationships among ethnic groups are strained. Members of small populations struggle for independence demanding the right of self-determination, which is however, continually denied. Consequently, the multiple ethnicities struggle within the policies of the Ethiopian governments. The division and tense relationships found within Ethiopia correlates with the tensions that are still felt even when Ethiopians relocate to the United States.

The struggles of national liberation and territorial contestation, like the 1974 Ethiopian revolution, spurred an exodus from Ethiopia. Many, who departed, had hoped that the 1976 "Programme for the National Democratic Revolution" initiated by the Dergue would indeed accord them their rights for self-determination. However, this was

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not going to happen. Mengistu declared that national groups were oppressed along class lines, and since Haile Selassie's feudal regime had been overthrown, it was the duty of all groups to be united in the "formation of a socialist, culturally plural Ethiopia" (Markakis 1981; Moussa 1993: 74; Lefort 1981; Levine 1971). However, Mengistu's government (1974-1991), like the central government of his predecessors Menelik II (1889-1913) and Haile Selassie (1930-1974), was dominated "[by] Shoan Amharas, the Amharic speaking people of Shoa province" (Moussa 1993: 74).

This state of affairs, coupled with Mengistu's brutal repressive government, hastened massive diaspora from Ethiopia. Furthermore, the latter's ill-suited economic reforms worsened, and created famines that had devastating effects on the lives of all Ethiopian people, particularly among the peasantry, who, on the point of starvation, were compelled to flee their lands (Giorgis 1989). Therefore, the people of Ethiopia who sought refuge in the United States have highly different origins.

## 4.4 Ethiopians in the United States

### 4.41 Ethio-US Early Relationship

The United States is home to a significant number of Ethiopians, from different backgrounds, and ethnicities, who relocated to the U.S. to flee oppressive regimes, for economic reasons, or in search of better opportunities. Their presence can be attributed to three specific determinants, (a) the diplomatic ties developed in the early 1900s between the two nations; (b) fleeing the atrocities that came about after the 1974 revolution; and (c) leaving famine-ridden regions in search of better opportunities and economic stability.

In 1903 the United States, with its ambition to expand its international commerce and its desire to sever European supremacy over Africa, sent Robert P. Skinner to Ethiopia to establish diplomatic ties. To this end the Skinner Trade Mission was founded which benefitted both regions. The United States benefited economically, and Ethiopia benefited as well by having a strong ally to deter the colonization ambition of European powers. As a result of these diplomatic ties shortly after the foundation of the Mission, a steady number of Ethiopian young male,[22] members of the elite were sent to the United States as diplomatic emissaries to represent Emperor Haile Selassie's monarchy. However, many more began traveling to the United States to pursue higher education. Among the intellectuals, many sought to remain in the United States because they were dissatisfied with the lack of an Ethiopian democratic state. They protested economic disparities, and, particularly, the peasantry's abysmal conditions. It is important to note that, although, those individuals prolonged their stay to voice political dissatisfactions, their intentions was always to return. Permanent migration per se was not an option, and it was only after the 1974 revolution, that many Ethiopians were compelled to leave their land as a long-term endeavor. Nevertheless, despite the tragic situation unravelling in their homeland, they were still not willing to consider permanent exile as part of their future, because Ethiopians love their country and their culture, and they derive their identity from their cultural values.

**4.4.2 The Military Junta Regime (1974-1991)**

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[22] Although some females travelled abroad as well, they were still a minority.

The second cause of emigration was caused by the dictatorship of Haile Mariam

Mengistu, who in 1974, after ousting Emperor Haile Selassie, took power and began a

policy of brutal repression. Although Mengistu's policies terrorized the nation at large,

they were particularly targeted against members of the Ethiopian elite. Mengistu's

dictatorship was overthrown in 1991 by a coordinated armed struggle of rebel groups,

namely the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and the Tigray

People's Liberation Front (TPLF). From the latter, emerged Ethiopia's late Prime

Minister Meles Zenawy, who succeeded Mengistu's military regime and ruled Ethiopia

until his death in 2012 (Blunt 2012 BBC News Africa). Hailemariam Desalegn, a trusted

aide to Meles, is currently acting as Ethiopia's prime minister (George 2012 Times

World).

### 4.4.3 Famine (1983-1985)

Lastly, the third influx of Ethiopian refugees/migrants to the US was provoked by

the famine that ravaged the region between 1983 and 1985. Mainly rural people, who

after losing their livelihood, were forced by hunger and environmental degradation, to

seek refuge in neighboring countries, Europe, and the United States, formed this last

group. It is thus far possible to say that the Ethiopians of the diaspora comprised distinct

groups, who came from different ethnicities, backgrounds, localities and inhabited

distinct social and socioeconomic spheres. Therefore, as Getahum (2006) underlines, the

Ethiopians that sought refuge during the 1980s, were distinct from the pre-Revolutionary

Ethiopian elites. At present, there is a steady number of Ethiopians entering the United

States seeking employment and upward mobility who can be considered as a fourth

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group, and their migration can be viewed as an ongoing process (Gebre 2002, Getahum 2006, Weldeyesus 2009, BGV-FN: 2012).

## 4.5 Era of Emperor Haile Selassie 1930 - 1974

### 4.5.1 Forty years of Imperial Regime

Emperor Haile Selassie took power in 1930 and ruled the country as a monarchy until he was deposed in 1974. Although he had no interest in bringing democracy to Ethiopia, his Christian heritage and his anti - communist stance won him favors among Western political leaders (Haile 2008). At his coronation Haile Selassie, being a strong pro-American leader, followed Emperor Menelik II's policy of strengthening diplomatic relations and commerce with the United States. Because of his partiality, he sent numerous intellectuals to the U.S. as Ethiopian's emissaries, and invited dozens of African-American teachers to Ethiopia to become instructors and headmasters in the various schools of Addis Ababa and Harar (Getahum 2006). Ethiopia's pro-Americanism starting with the Menelik's dynasty, and continuing with Haile Selassie, was really a pro-Western attitude articulated by the elite as a way towards modernization. Modernization was reflected in the policies taken by the Abyssinian[23] expansion, which had started with the coronation of Menelik II in 1889. Menelik II, during his reign (1844-1913), had expanded the Abyssinian empire through conquest, annexation, and subjugation of independent territories and people. Menelik II converted what had been sovereign independent states "to the hegemony of one over the rest" (Trimingham 1976: 135). His expansion had started earlier then the European colonization of Africa (Bulcha 1988),

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[23] Present day Amhara

and won him the respect of European powers, who saw in Menelik II's ambitions the same ambitions and characteristics of European imperialism. Furthermore, as Europe began its colonization of Africa, the Abyssinian ruling class collaborated with the latter to divide the Horn (Trimingham 1976), thus solidifying Europe's favors and respect.

Haile Selassie (1930-1974) while inheriting a divided population, in terms of culture, language, ethnicity, and history, decided to consolidate the annexed provinces into a unitary empire (Bulcha 1988). Following Italy's attempt to colonize Ethiopia (1936), Selassie turned his alliance preference toward the United States to counter Europe's colonial ambitions over Africa (Getahun 2006: 15; Milkias 2006). Moreover, the Emperor aimed to copy the modernization strategies of the United States, while the US was willing to help since of their interest into the access to unhindered international commerce (Getahun 2006). Haile Selassie's *enamorement* with the United States was for self-*aggrandizement* (Milkia 2006), and the Emperor renewed the commercial agreement, or treaty of amity and economic relations, that had been established in 1903 with the Skinner Mission.

During this period, the United States Immigration Act of 1924 had allotted 100 green cards to Ethiopians to immigrate to the U.S. (Getahum 2006), and the Emperor ordered a series of reforms so that the Ethiopian educational system became to reflect the educational system of the United States. For example, English became the official medium of instruction in most secondary and higher education establishments (Getahum 2006, Haille 2008, Milkia 2006; BGV-FN: 2012), and by 1969, the majority of Ethiopian Colleges of higher education used an American curriculum; instructors were Americans,

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or were American-educated. Selassie also began the construction of several educational

establishments, which he named after himself. By 1969, he had established 452

Universities, which are named Haile Selassie I University (HSIU). So much was

America's interest and involvement in Ethiopia's higher education institutions that, as

Getahun writes,

> Vice President Nixon visited HSIU in 1957 while the then American Ambassador
> to Ethiopia, Edward Corry, met HSIU students in many occasion. [...] The
> administrative structure of Haile Selassie I University and its manner of
> enrollment and evaluation 'was indistinguishable' - and still is, for that matter -
> from that of a standard American college (Getahun 2006: 37).

Such a relationship between Ethiopia and the U.S. continued to facilitate a steady flow of

Ethiopian delegates to the U.S., and Selassie's fascination with the American education

system propelled him to send more and more students to study abroad in American

Universities. By the 1970s, Ethiopian presence in the US had grown into the thousands

(Marcus 2002).

**4.5.2 End of Emperor Haile Selassie - Issues of the Past**

During the time of Emperor Haile Selassie, issues of social and economic

disparities grew exponentially. In his last decade of reign, landlords and merchants

accumulated great wealth. Land was distributed among the few, who became ultra rich,

while, the majority suffered from poverty, lack of health care, and inadequate schooling

(Getahum 2006, Haile 2008, Hailegebriel 2012, Mussa 2005). This economic disparity

grew exponentially, caused the attempt of a coup d'etat in 1960, and was supported by

students living abroad. Although, the coup failed, it caused unrest all over the country

that resulted in political disorder, social chaos, and the ever worsening of an already

declining economy. The famine of 1973-1974 ravaged the Wallo province, killing an

estimated 200,000 people (BBC News Ethiopia Timeline; Jonathan Dimbleby 1973,

2008, Verghese 2010). If the monarchy attempted to curtail the tragic news of starvation,

students, teachers, and intellectuals made sure the world and the people of Ethiopia knew

about the devastation ravaging the highlands. However, starvation did not spare the rest

of Ethiopia. Because the majority of Ethiopia's agriculturally suitable land is

concentrated in the highlands soon the famine spread throughout the rest of the country

(Milkias 2006; SOS Sahel Ethiopia 1992-1993).

As Milkias (2006) writes, it was the intellectual and student body, many of whom

were studying abroad, that spread and created a new political consciousness among the

farmers, lower branches of military and paramilitary forces. This new awareness resulted

in the Ethiopian revolution of 1974, which caused the demise of Haile Selassie's reign

(Milkias 2006: 163, 243). Colin Legum of *The Observer* wrote about the Wollo's famine,

"[it] hung like a stinking albatross around the neck of the Emperor" (Colin 1974). The

revolution reflected a Gramscian idea of consensus, and not a revolutionary idea of

violence, as it transformed later. The consensus of society, as a whole, was to bring

justice to all Ethiopians. Intellectuals were instrumental in spreading the consensus by

giving the masses the theoretical awareness of their aspirations for justice, and by

demonstrating that Haile Selassie, although, in charge, had lost the ability, or the

willingness, to solve the economic problems of the country (Milkias 2006).

To this point, as early as 1965, the Ethiopian student movement was organized,

which had the aim to change Haile Selassie's feudal regime into a democratic Ethiopian

State. Their first demonstration, with the slogan "Land to the Tiller," demanded

economic justice, so to take peasantry out of serfdom (LeFort 1981; Milkia 2006). In

1972, student leaders and intellectuals formed the EPRP, Ethiopian People's

Revolutionary Party, with the intent to overthrow the monarchy, remove the feudal

system, and set up a popular democratic republic. However, when the revolution struck in

1974, the EPRP was yet to be organized enough to assume the leadership role.

Consequently, a Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), better known as

the Dergue, assumed power with the provision to end its authority as soon as a

democratic government was established. However, the Dergue did not hand over power

to a civilian government, rather it shifted its authority to a one-man rule, Mengistu Haile

Mariam.

Mengistu undertook the purge of those who were instrumental in the bloodless

coup and who had brought the monarchy to an end. By mid 1977, most of the EPRP

leaders and members were dead or had fled (Bulcha 1987), and daily executions and

disappearances of people prevented students and elite members living abroad from

returning. Many were compelled to seek political asylum (Getahun 2006: 49), and,

although they belonged to the very wealthy sphere of society, when they assumed the

label of refugees, their privileged socioeconomic status, although helpful in buying "[a]

better quality of asylum" (Van Hear 2004: 28), no longer mattered. They became

homogenized with the ensuing flow of later Ethiopian refugees/migrants, who, rather

than being a homogenous group, was highly heterogenous in their social, economical,

and educational backgrounds. The elimination of distinction among the different groups

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ensued what Zetter calls, "identity disaggregation," which, according to his observations, provokes and heightens an identity crisis (Zetter 1991, 2007).

## 4.6 The Ethiopian Revolution

### 4.6.1 The Dergue and the Mengistu Haile Mariam's Regime (1974 - 1991)

I did not want to leave, but what choice did I have?

(Interview 2013)

So, so horrible that's why Ethiopia people come to America

(Interview 2012)

Immediately after the dethroning of Emperor Haile Selassie, the military junta was led by General Aman Mikail Andom (1924-1974), who was actively involved in democratic reforms, and implemented socialistic style policies. The policies included land distribution, the nationalization of industries, and offered services under public ownership. After forty years of unjust power distribution the policies introduced by the *Dergue* gained great support among the population (Marcus 2002; Getahum 2006; Haile 2008). Many students, who had left Ethiopia discontent with Emperor Haile Selassie's policies, returned in support of the new regime. However, the popularity of the military junta quickly came to an end. Political issues and discordance within the regime soon surfaced. General Aman Andom, along with 60 officers, was assassinated, and Colonel Haile Mariam Mengistu was nominated head of the state (Marcus 2002; Getahum 2006; Haile 2008).

Thousands were killed including intellectuals, professionals, and other perceived opponents of socialism. Although anyone could have been a suspect, youngsters and the

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educated were systematically targeted. Ironically, many of the students, teachers, and intellectuals killed during those infamous years were Marxists, who had supported the *Dergue's* initial policy of agriculture collectivization. The first two years of Mengistu's regime came to be known as *The Red Terror*, a direct association to the socialist state Mengistu's attempted to create, modeling Soviet Union's land reform policies. To this point, he commenced a number of land and military reforms, which were intended to reestablish Ethiopia's failing economy. However, Mengistu's campaign was " [a] n expression of aggressive but covert Amhara nationalism. Covert, because it [was] expressed in the broader terms of *Ethiopian tikdem* (Ethiopia first) and *ennat ager weym mot (*Motherland or Death)" (Mekuria Bulcha 1988: 70). "The notion of 'Greater Ethiopia' was continuously played up, while in fact ethnic politics and marginalization of ethnic groups predominated" (Van Arsdale 2006: 46).

Moreover, as the administrative authority was centralized, conditions in the northern regions worsened, and Tigray was placed in a position of marginal importance (Van Arsdale 2006). Mengistu's policies placed northern and southern regions, in dire positions. His procedures were more than just politically unacceptable to the Tigrayan people, but they were culturally unacceptable as well. The policies implemented by the military junta were viewed by the people of Tigray as a great insult to the Aksumite civilization. But more importantly, the policies were viewed as an ethnic attack to its people (Van Arsdale 2006; BGV FN 2012). This is noteworthy since several first generation women study participants came from Axum, Tigray, and during our conversations, they shared with me that they experienced discrimination and cultural

imperialism. A first generation participant from Tigray told me that while living in Addis

Ababa, where she worked, she experienced marginalization and harassment because of

her ethnicity. However, harassment, after the 1974 revolution, turned into open

oppression and the Tigrayan language was banned. Kidist, another first generation

participant from Tigray, remembers vividly those terrible times:

> We didn't speak Tigrigna our language, just Amharic . . . I didn't see my family
> for many years, we don't go to Tigray because you don't go, you cannot go. You
> peak Tigrigna they kill you, if you have dancing music, a cassette they kill you.
> They kill you for your language; yes . . . Still now when they come from Tigray,
> from Axum we make a community. We speak one language, our language
> (Interview 2012).

The condition of marginalization created by Mengistu's regime exacerbated a

greater division among regions and ethnicities, a division which is still felt today among

Ethiopian refugees/migrants. A condition most notably visible is in the division of the

Ethiopian Orthodox Churches in the United States. As it is underlined by Getahum's

remark, "The Ethiopian immigrants were (and are) ethnically diverse and at times (still

today) acutely divided into Amhara, Oromo, Tigre, or in terms of regional origin such as

Gondare, Shawe, Walge" (Getahum 2007: 7).

Figure 9: Regions of Ethiopia

Figure: 10 Administrative Regions and Zones of Ethiopia www.idp-

uk.org/Resources/Maps/Maps.htm)

**4.6.2 The Red Terror and Its Ominous Policies**

As Mengistu's policies worsened the country's economy, and, as his dictatorship became increasingly murderous, the influx of refugees increased. If, prior to the 1974 revolution, the Ethiopians living in the United States consisted of highly educated and elite members of society, the new influx of Ethiopians fleeing belonged to the lower class and the peasant class. Thus, the new refugees arriving in the U.S. encompassed diverse social, economic, and educational backgrounds, and, rather than being city dwellers, they were from the countrysides.

The policies that were introduced increased the number of refugees in the following ways: in 1974, the Ethiopian government issued the Declaration of Socialism with the implementation of a one-party state public ownership, and collective agriculture (Marcus 2002). In 1975, industries and private companies were nationalized, and, in 1980 the policy of *villagization*, a key component of Mengistu's socialist agricultural collectivization policies, was implemented, increasing displacement and number of Ethiopian refugees in the United States.

Mengistu's resettling program greatly worsened the situation of the 1983-85 famine. Several sources, indeed, blame the government's military policies for the creation of famine. Alex de Wall (1991), associate Director of Africa Watch, with regard to Ethiopia's famine, observed that, though the great famine of 1983-85 was officially ascribed to drought and to climate adversity, in truth, it was provoked by Mengistu's villagization policies. De Wall continues by emphasizing that inclement climate alone was not the cause for such devastation. The war was to blame for worsening and willfully

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deteriorating an already difficult situation that reached catastrophic consequences. He

regrets that it was due to human rights abuses that the famine came earlier, struck harder,

and extended further (Alex de Wall 1991: 5).

The effects of the famine were further aggravated by forced conscription.

Thousands of men from Tigray, Wollo, and Gondar regions were removed from their

lands and forced into conscription. In May 1989, Jeune Afrique reported that the

Government of Mengistu ordered the forced conscription of all young people between the

ages of 18-30. However, youngsters below the age of 15 were also taken from their

parents' homes and forcibly conscripted. After 45 days of training, they were reportedly

deployed to fight in different parts of the country, and those who attempted escape were

killed. Many of the forced recruits were young undergraduates at the University of Addis

Ababa, and many others were high school students (LeFort 1981; Hamza Jeune Afrique

1989; De Wall 1991). The majority of young men and women conscripted had just

returned home from refugee camps in Djibouti, Kenya, Sudan, and other countries

outside Africa after being displaced by the 1973-74 famine. As they returned, and as they

began to rebuild their community, they were forcibly rounded by the Mengistu's

government to serve in its military (Ethiopia Country Reports 1991-1992: 123 IRB 1992;

Van Arsdale 2006).

The displacement of men from their territory and their plots caused the

prolongation of the drought's effect, worsening Ethiopia's already failing economy (De

Wall 1991; Hamza African Watch 1994; Marcus 2002; Van Arsdale 2006), since the

Dergue "[r] elied increasingly on forcible conscription and the brutalization of its own

troops" (Human Right Watch/Africa 1994). During villagization and forced conscription, more and more people died, and or were displaced. Meanwhile the Red Terror campaign continued, and tens of thousands were arrested, tortured, and summarily executed. De Wall writes that on the night between June 4th and 5th, about 400 students were killed, with a total of at least 2,500 being murdered in the first phase of terror (De Wall 1991: 103).

One of my study participants, a first generation female from the northern region, who gave me her age as being between 48 and 55,[24] was able to flee the Red Terror, only after experiencing its brutality for 10 to 12 years. The following account is part of her experience. I chose to reproduce a long account using her own words because it entwines the interrelationship of her vulnerability as a woman and as a northerner from Tigray, the deep fear that was gripping parents for their children, and the terror that was looming large, enmeshing everyone and every thing:

> Mengistu killed killed, people are dying all the time. At night time, they come they take you from your house, they kill you in front of your house. One guy three boys he killed and threw the body in front of the house door and the mother and father see and cry, cry, cry and then you pay money, the father pay money for the boys, for the dead boys, 50 bir no 150 bir to take the bodies, to bring to hospital, to take the body to burry them, you have to pay money. The father say eat them, cook them, I don't want it, I don't pay money again you kill my kids and then I pay you again? Yes we have a problem at that time that is why I'm coming, that is why people are coming. You know pregnant two weeks she died over there why? Why? For her mother horrible horrible horrible. This one dies, this one dies, and this one dies. You can't walk you now we... hmm we... the soldiers, the kebele, we don't go out, we don't go eat, we don't speak Tigrigna our language, no no we

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[24] The age uncertainty comes from (a) the difference between our calendar and the Ethiopian calendar. The Ethiopian calendar is based on the Coptic calendar with a a leap day every four years. Also the Ethiopian calendar has 12 months each of 30 days and a thirteenth month, named Pagume, of five or six days, depending on the year. Ethiopian Heritage Society in North America (EHSNA)

didn't speak our language no Tigrigna just Amharic, yea we don't haemm we don't go together to walk, they kill you, that's why I came here so I ask to come otherwise they kill you . . . In Addis10 years with Mengistu yea. If you can you hide, you don't care where. Just left just left just to leave. I didn't see my family many years, we don't go to Tigray, because you don't go in out, speak Tigrigna. If you have dancing something, a cassette with your language they kill you yes for your language yes. So so horrible that's why Ethiopian people come to America, to Sudan. Sudan is open they hide, go this way, go this way, go this way . . . Sudan I can't, I have nobody. They scare me, they cut you over there, they cut you, better to stay in Addis. I don't try, my friends go but no me from Addis to Tigray, because they are fighting Mengistu and then I don't go they cut me they kill me . . . The Bishop he knows the guy, he's from Axum, he says can I send her? I'll pay I do everything, the money, he said ok, ok and then I'm out (Interview 2012).

Corruption was so widespread that people had to pay to claim the bodies of

relatives killed, "[they] had to pay one Ethiopian dollar for each 'wasted bullets' in order

to have the body returned" (De Wall 1991: 103).

### 4.6.3 The Red Terror and the Threatening of Values

I am a little girl at the time, my parents were gone; they died. So my brother, and his brother [her husband brother] got together and they married me off. He's older, but they sent me away with him because of the Dergue, the war, the Red terror. Everything was upside down, everything was terror. Everyone died!
(Interview 2012)
I was in University, at night they came they took people away, then there were bodies; they were worried, my mom, my dad, my brothers. No one asked me what I wanted to do, they just shipped me off!

(Interview 2012)

Rene LeFort (1983) in his book, "Ethiopia: An Heretical Revolution (Third World

Studies)", when writing about the victims the Mengistu's era created, observes that

anyone who had the most elementary of education, who was age 20 or less was in grave

danger because the authorities authorized the arrest of anyone suspected of being

educated, even children between eight and twelve years (LeFort 1983: 202). LeFort's

observation confirms the tragic narrative of yet another participant to my study. The informant, a first generation refugee male from Gondar region, confided that during the Mengistu's era, no one was safe, no one! (his emphasis). As for himself, he was waiting for his turn to come, for what, he did not know, imprisonment, and torture, even death. He was, after all, educated (at the time, he knew how to read and write, as he had attended primary school). Several of his acquaintances, who had received primary education like he had, had already disappeared.

Kidist made several references to mothers being in a a state of constant terror for their young children. They were terrorized that members of the Urban Dweller's Association (UDA) would snatch their sons and daughters and kill them to receive compensation, or kill them for being accused of siding with counterrevolutionaries. The Red Terror was able to destabilize Ethiopia's traditional core values because it instigated neighbors against each other. Indeed, members of UDA were neighbors, part of the community, and friends. In Ethiopia, particularly in rural areas, neighbors are more than neighbors, because they are considered as a part of the extended family; therefore, there is no distinction between a nuclear family and an extended family, family is family. There is no us them, somebody else, it's all us (Medhanit 12. 20. 2012). Neighbors are an important component of one's life. Women in Ethiopia have informal neighborhood associations (Moussa 1993; Brinkerhoff 2011; Wayessa 2011), circles of women getting together to talk about family, social, and or political matters while having coffee and doing their work. During those daily gatherings women helped each other and advised one another on issues concerning their children, health, or marital issues. However, this

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value of togetherness, of helping one another and of getting together, was greatly diminished during the Red Terror.

Homes were searched and ransacked by the UDA, or by Kebele officials; if one of the women found in the home was suspected of counterrevolutionary affairs, all the other women became suspects, as well. Being together under the same roof was proof of association, and thus, of being guilty of doing activities against the government. Neighbors could no longer be trusted. As a consequence, The Red Terror engulfed every relationship "[t] he family and the neighbourhood (sic) were no longer havens of safety and protection" (Moussa 1993: 120). The threat of breaking traditional values was present within the family structure as well because, if a family member was suspected to be against the government, the entire family was persecuted.

To counter such persecution, families would separate, and suspected family members would flee without informing their loved ones in the hope of sparing them from persecution. Daughters and sons who were in schools or universities were "shipped off," as one of my informants poignantly grieved, and young girls were "married off," and sent far away; out of the country. As all my informants emphasized, the closeness of family relationships were and are of extreme importance; separation from one another was considered and felt, as the dissolution of one's very self. Kidist fled on her own, leaving behind everything and everybody she ever knew. Still today, she feels the ache of being away from Ethiopia and separated from her family. As a coping and integrative strategy of her resettlement experience, she welcomes newcomers from her region, giving them hospitality, and helping them get settled in the Denver Metro area. Helping each other

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and the cohesiveness of families are core values of Ethiopian women. The Dergue, threatened these values by family disruption, and by separation, and have become important elements for the rebuilding of continuity in the face of the discontinuity Ethiopian women refugees/migrants experienced.

Enforced separation, shattering of family life, fear of imprisonment, torture, and death had become the new reality of the Mengistu's era. One's own sufferance and the sufferance of others engulfed the lives of all first generation informants. Ariam tells that the 'most painful' was perhaps the sense of impotence individuals felt; living in the unknown; especially not knowing who, or when, you or your loved ones would be arrested. Kidist remembers the unspeakable conditions detainees were kept in. Any suspect was arrested, tortured, and kept in abysmal conditions for an indeterminate time. Relatives were usually allowed to bring food and clothing to prisoners. They would find out about the killing, or the transferring of their loved one when the guards informed them to no longer bring food and clothing, or to bring those items to a different location. My informant was familiar with the prison conditions and policies because, for seven years, she had brought food to a family friend, who, for reasons unknown to her, had been arrested, tortured, and detained. A Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that detainees were packed by the hundreds into airless, lightless cellars, living in terror of being tortured, killed, and have their bodies discarded on the side of the road as was the custom of the Red Terror regime (HRW 1994).

**4.6.4 Villagization**

As mentioned before, another form of displacement that created tremendous
numbers of refugees was implemented with the so-called policy of villagization. The
objective of villagization was to group scatter farming communities into small villages to
form conglomerates of several hundred households (Human Rights Watch 2012). The
regime planned to move more than 30 million rural peasants, that is, two-thirds of the
total population, into newly created villages over a nine year period (Human Right Watch
1991). The resettlement policy was publicized as a method to ameliorate services and
socioeconomic infrastructures, improving food and water distribution; and, thus, bring
relief to needy populations. By 1989, thirteen million people had been villagized (HRW
2012), and resettled against their wishes, away from their homes in the highlands, and
placed into southern lands of Gambella, which were already occupied. Relocation
policies did not take into consideration basic human rights such as ownership, property,
and privacy, nor did they consider the disruption brought to those populations already
living in the receiving lands. Rather than benefit from such policy, the resettled
populations suffered displacement, while, the receiving one, the habitants of Gambella
region[25] experienced occupation (Bulcha 1988; Van Arsdale 2006; Human Rights Watch
2012).

Highlanders became sick from malnutrition and malaria, as they did not know
how to farm in the hot and humid climate, since it was much different from their
mountainous homelands (HRW 2012; Van Arsdale 2006). People from the southern

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[25] The indigenous population of those areas are for the most part Anuak, which livelihood
has been severely affected by the villagization process (Human Right watch 2012).

regions felt oppressed, and deprived of their own lands, which was not enough to sustain

such an exodus of highlanders. This state of affairs caused animosity between the two

groups, resulting in destabilization of ethnic unity. Villagization served two main

purposes: (a) to remove homogenous groups from politically- sensitive areas and to mix

them with ethnically distinct people; thus, breaking up politically troublesome groups in

the northern Ethiopia; and (b) to break the autonomy and self-allegiance of indigenous

groups so as to garner total control over the entirety of the land (Ochalla and d'Entremont

2001). The population of the south and southwest were deprived of their ancestral lands

for development projects. The settlers were deprived as well of their lands and their way

of lives, and the resettled highlanders were also faced with a different culture and

language. Both groups felt the loss of community and their community's cultural identity

(Jason and Holcomb 1986; Ochalla and d'Entremont 2001).

> Mulatu Wubne, a leading scholar on villagization wrote,
>
> The verdict on villagization was not favorable. Thousands of people fled to avoid villagization; others died or lived in deplorable conditions after being forcibly resettled . . . There were indications that in the short term, villagization may have further impoverished an already poor peasantry (Mulatu Wubne 1991: 63).

The catastrophic situation exacerbated the historical animosity between the diverse ethnic

groups. Hostilities developed, and villagers, from both sides, took up arms. Women of all

groups bore the brunt of the situation by frequently suffering abuse. This state of affairs

compelled villagers to escape risking abuses and death. Another sizable number of

refugees was thus created; division between ethnic groups deepened and persisted across

the ocean. While I was conducting my study, I contacted the Oromo Cultural Center,

expressing my hope to meet Ethiopian women willing to share their experiences for the

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purpose of my research. The receptionist replayed, "I am sorry, but you will no find Ethiopian women here" (BGV FN 2012). When weeks later I had the opportunity to dialogue with a young Oromo gentleman during our conversation, he told me,

> The largest group in Ethiopia is the Oromo. They (the Oromo) have been oppressed, so here in USA they usually isolate themselves, and they don't even call themselves Ethiopians. So if you get hold of an Oromo do not refer to them as Ethiopians they would be offended. They don't like to speak Amharic, so that group is against any one that is close to Ethiopia (Matteus 2012).

The multiple ethnicities resettled from Ethiopia to the United States, therefore, still face conflictual relationships, which is evident in the division of their churches. The sampling of my data correlates this division insofar as that the majority of my respondents are from the northern regions, particularly from Tigray, rather than being representative of Ethiopia as a whole. Consequently, the data cannot be equally representative of all groups. This shortcoming is most likely reflected when I talk about historical events and key figures by which my group sample claims allegiance and have a stronger correlation.

Those historical events of Ethiopia's present/past generated conflict, anguish, and displacement. However, my informants insisted that what they left was a nation and a culture they loved. They fled a murderous regime, but they also left a country, and a collective history they loved; a history that imbues them with pride and shapes their Ethiopian identity. If the events of the present/past can be sources of despair, events of a more ancient past, such as the Adwa's battle, were instead determinants for shaping both women's and men's sense of being.

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# 4.7 Ethiopia of the Past

It does not matter if one is rich or poor, Ethiopians walk like Kings and Queens.

(Interview 2012)

Our children have to know that they come from ancient lines of Emperors and

Empresses.

(Interview 2012)

We are one of the ancient people!

(Interview 2012)

We were never colonized!

(Interview 2012, 2013)

### 4.7.1 The Battle of Adwa

On March 1, 1896, the Ethiopian army, led by King Menelik II, defeated the

Italian military at the Battle of Adwa, who, seeking to expand their colonial empire in

1885 had invaded Ethiopia. Although Menelik II's army was not as well equipped as the

Italians, the Italian army was defeated. The Battle marked, as many Ethiopians like to

underline, "[t] he superiority of the Ethiopian people" (Jonas 2002: 113). More

importantly, the Battle was instrumental on three points: (a) it preserved Ethiopia from

being colonized; (b) it marked the beginning of Africa's decolonization; and (c) it rose

the status of an African nation rendering Ethiopia as an equal to any European nation

(Jonas 2011; Marcus 2002). "Whereas previously Ethiopians shared sloth, ignorance, and

degradation with their brothers, they suddenly became energetic, enlightened, and

progressive. [...] The major powers now recognized Ethiopia's sovereignty and

independence" (Marcus 2002: 100,103). Adwa was significant then, as it is significant today. For Ethiopians it became a symbol of proudness and superiority. It continues to be remembered as an emblematic victory fought by valiant soldiers. That valiancy reflects the fortitude of today's Ethiopian people and how they see their selves, and is an integral part of Ethiopians' identity.

While I was conducting my research, newspaper articles written on March 4, 2012 caught my attention; they were about the victory of the Battle of Adwa's 117th anniversary. The front page of newspapers and magazines alike reported in big print the valiancy of the soldiers who fearlessly fought and won the battle. I am including two small excerpts because they capture an identity of Ethiopia and its people that sharply contrasts with the constructed identities of Ethiopians refugees/migrants as victims per se, rather than as people victimized by events. By reading and reflecting on the words below, we garner a better understanding of the lives, history, and culture of Ethiopia, and in turn, enable us to peek into the social fabric that molds the identities of Ethiopia. It is an identity that still shapes the lives of Ethiopian refugee/migrant women and men alike.

> In 1896, eleven years after the Berlin Conference, the Ethiopian army decisively defeated the Italian military at the Battle of Adwa. [...] "The terrible defeat" sent shock waves throughout Europe and the colonized world. It was the first time that a non-white people had defeated a European power. According to Teshale Tibebu, the victory the Ethiopians had achieved over Italy was different than other battles won by African forces. This was permanent (Bekerie 2013, Tadias Magazine).

And a brief excerpt from the abugidainfo's blog: "March 1st, 1896 is the 117th anniversary of the Battle of Adwa. The decisive victory at Adwa is a tale to be told every

year on this day of its commemoration because it warms the heart and lifts the spirit of every black person in the world" (Abugidainfo.com 2013).

Indeed, the Battle of Adwa marks a central point of Ethiopia history. It is a fundamental landmark, which shapes Ethiopian refugees/immigrants' identity, and to borrow from Van Arsdale, "[h] as gained legendary status among Ethiopians" (Van Arsdale 2006: 42). During my fieldwork, almost every person referenced the victory of Ethiopians at the battle of Adwa, and proudly underlined that Ethiopia was the only African country to maintain independence and state sovereignty, as it had never been colonized. More importantly, the defeat imposed to a European colonial power by the Ethiopian army is largely viewed as the prelude of Africa decolonization and the end of colonialism (Jonas 2011), this point of view is not only shared by scholars, but by Ethiopians alike. While recounting the historical prowess of Ethiopia, Tomas, a second-generation participant, told me the following,

> The European powers were stunned when the armies of Emperor Menelik and Queen Taitu defeated the Italian army. It was a historical moment that still lives in people's hearts. After all, Ethiopia was the first and only African nation that had the force and ability to repel a Western power. The Battle of Adwa is still a significant symbol in the imagination of the Ethiopian people and of the idea of Ethiopia (Interview 2012).

In the beginning of my fieldwork, my informant, while introducing me, explained to her friends the scope of my research. One of her friends, a male in his early thirties, as he was shaking my hand said, "Oh, so the Italians are still trying to come to terms with their defeat by studying us eh!" At the time, I was a bit stunned. Today I interpret the remark as the negotiation of a scrutinized identity, an identity that has to assert itself because it is repeatedly questioned. The self is no longer the self, but has becomes a

refugee, a migrant, a victim; in other words, a scrutinized Other. Hence, as Weiss writes, "My appearance in the [restaurant], my pursuit of a particular purpose, my attempts to elicit responses from others, my inquisitive detachment-in short, my presence-were antagonistic" (Weiss 2009: 44).

Ethiopians relocated in the Unite States experience a racism that they had never experienced before, since they had never been colonized. As a result of the discrimination they experience, they feel that the very core of their nation and culture is being attacked, and thus, as participants to my study shared, they have a moral obligation to defend their Ethiopian identity. As the majority of my informants underlined, they are "Ethiopians, not Black, not African Americans, but Ethiopians, Habasha, or Ethiopian/Americans" (BGV FN 2012). To this point Ainalem Tebeje (1989) writing an article on the experience of Ethiopians in Canada, observed reactions of Ethiopian/Canadians, which can easily be encountered in the United States:

> Having come from an independent nation that had no colonial past, Ethiopians are new to the attitude against black in society . . . They feel an overwhelming sense of humiliation when they are discriminated against as Blacks . . . They commonly expect their country's history is universally known and that they will receive recognition everywhere . . . [They] express shock and anger when they experience discrimination . . . [They] are inexperienced in dealing with situations of racial discrimination (Tebeje 1989: 12).

The social discrimination Ethiopians experience in the host society generates sentiments and perspectives that serve to hold individual Ethiopians together, by emphasizing their Habasha identity. This identity is drawn from history, which reaffirms their Ethiopian collective identity, "we use the term Habasha more than Ethiopians or Eritrean because its easier, especially now . . . When you say Habasha, you know who

you are, and where you come from (Interview 2013). However, the Habasha identity "[l]ike anything historical ... Undergo constant transformation . . . Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned" (Hall 1994: 397). Ethiopian women and men refugees/migrants' identities are a process, a negotiation of who they were, particularly in view of the discrimination they face in the host society, which labels them as refugees, migrants, blacks, and finally, as inferior beings.

**4.7.2 God-Chosen Nation**

Therefore, when faced with so many difficulties, and struggling to renegotiate and repossess their Ethiopian identity, the Battle of Adwa becomes a landmark for the renegotiation of this identity. The victory at Adwa bestows Ethiopians with the symbol of the anti-colonial movement throughout the world. Furthermore, it imbues the country with self-determination, and reinforces the belief among its people that their nation was indeed chosen by God. This last belief permeates Ethiopia's history and is recounted in the Kebra Negast, or Glory of Kings; a pastiche of legends and accounts translated in the fourteenth century from Arabic into Ge'ez. The Glory of the Kings tells the origins of the Solomonic line of the Emperors of Ethiopia. It recounts how Queen Makeda, better known as Queen of Sheba, met Solomon and bore him a son, Menelik I. In turn, Menelik I is attributed with bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Ethiopia (Marcus 2002). According to the legend, Menelik I, with the help of Israeli courtiers, stole the Ark. "The larceny was apparently approved by God, who levitated the youth and their holy cargo across the Red Sea (...) the messages are clear (...) God had consigned his covenant with man to Ethiopia, making it Israel successor" (Marcus 2002:18). No matter what version

one hears, the message remains the same, -- if the Ark must remain in Ethiopia by God's will, then Ethiopians are necessarily the chosen people. These stories endow Ethiopians their identity with a sense of accomplishment, a feeling of being unique, and of truly having being chosen by God. Medhanit, during an interview, told me that God is close to her people as Ethiopians are close to Him. As she explained, it is enough to gaze at our language and one sees God transpiring; our language marks our identities, who we are as individuals, and as people,

> It is just enough to listen to our language, the way we speak to each other. As you know to say How Are You? We say Salam DehnaNehs and then we replay Exbary Mescam and that means "to God be the glory" that is how we say, I'm fine, so it is in our language, it is in our communication, it is the way we communicate with each other, so God is a huge part of our culture (Interview 2012).

History shapes the identity of who Ethiopians are, influencing their cultural, collective, and self identity, because they take great pride from the histories and cultures they come from, therefore, Ethiopia's ancient history is symbolic of who Ethiopians are. History is a definer of Ethiopian women's identity that is much different from the victim subordinate identity western feminist theories assign to them. In the Battle of Adwa, Menelik and his wife, Empress Taytu, equally share the praises for their strategic acumen, and both are praised for their historical craftiness. Taytu, however, was not the only woman engaged in the war

**4.7.3 Women in Adwa**

Picture reused from Wikimedia Commons. Jpg 2141058909 "Battle of Adwa" Author: A. Davey posted on Flickr (5 October 2012)

Figure: 11 Women at the Battle of Adwa

The Battle of Adwa, even though was fought by an army composed of men was, nevertheless, masterminded by Empress Taitu, Menelik's II spouse. Women were present at the Battle to bring support and sing the praises of the fighting men, and became involved in battle as both civilian participants, and as military combatants. The presence of women was often a decisive component for Ethiopia's military victories (Adugna 2001). For example, during the Fascist invasion (1936-41), the underground work was organized and performed by women. Ethiopian women refugees/migrants in Denver are part of this history, and reflect their ancestors' personalities and identities. Furthermore, the Ethiopian women refugees/migrant I met, are part of a history that present Ethiopian women as participants in public affairs.

During the 1974 revolution, many women were active members of the resistance and fought alongside men (Moussa 1993), and were active members of both liberation movements, the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF). Moussa writes that women "[h] eld 30 percent of the administrative posts in the EPLF and 40 percent of the TPLF's Peoples Council were women" (Moussa 1993: 157). Women's membership in those organizations opened a

dialogue between the two sexes about patriarchy, and its stifling effect on the status of women, which resulted in major societal changes. For example, the dialogues resulted in the achievement, on the part of women, to receive equal rights in marriage and divorce. Child marriage was made illegal, and education programs were implemented to teach and inform women about the health hazard of infibulation and clitoridectomy in the attempt to curtail those practices (Firebrace and Smith 1982).

The accounts I collected and the historical articles and monographs I read forces me to reconsider the role imposed on Ethiopian women refugees/migrants by Western standards, which insist on their subjugation. Hence, throughout my thesis, I argue that the subordination of Ethiopian women is partly imposed by EuroAmerican's stereotypes that result from a specific European historical context. Indeed, Oyěwùmí writes that African women's stereotypes of subjugation is derived from "Western experience and history, a history rooted in philosophical discourses about the distinction among body, mind, and soul and in ideas about biological determinism and the linkage between the body and the 'social'"(Oyěrónké Oyěwùmí 1997: xiii).

History plays a fundamental part in the formation of Ethiopian identity. By looking at history we discover that Ethiopian refugees/migrants women's identity is a complex fluid contextualized matrix of indeterminate factors and forces in constant change. Hence, it cannot be a bounded static label, such as the refugee label, or the victim label, which requires Ethiopian women refugees/migrants to be first subjugated by their male counterparts, and then, victims of society, lacking agency of their own. Throughout history, Ethiopian women have negotiated the power relation between genders.

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Resistance against cultural subordination was actively sought by developing a

consciousness of their potential through the pursuing of education, involvement in

political affairs, and by resisting traditions that called for women subordination.

# Chapter 5 Literature Review

## 5.1 Introduction

The literature works I consulted provided the historical examination of the land, and the socioeconomic and political situation of the Ethiopian terrain. Then, I reviewed an array of literature that informed me about the people's position within the political and socioeconomic contest of their past and present conditions. I offered particular attention to the position held by women in Ethiopia in order to have a parameter of measurement, comparing their past social position in their country of origin with their social position in the Denver Metro Area. Lastly, I considered ethnohistorical literature so as to accrue an inside into the cultural forms of the Ethiopian people. Core values and beliefs of the people can illuminate and bring to the surface, more deeply, the people's consciousness as Ethiopians. Through ethnohistory, the human condition is richly illustrated; and thus, it enabled me to attain a deeper understanding of the people's experiences through the interpretation of symbolic meanings that pervade Ethiopian cultural essence. African novels helped me understand the ambiguities, particularly in gender relations, that I encountered during my research in ways that, if I would have only consulted African theories and scholarly articles, I could not have garnered. Also, I widely consulted refugees-based research and works to frame my argument about identity and identity construction.

Thus, I began my literary review with the examination of Ethiopia's past and present history to gain knowledge and understanding of its people, and to contextualize an Ethiopian identity that is drawn from historical events and historical people, an identity that most certainly reflects my sample group. Three authors have framed my historical background: Harold G. Marcus' History of Ethiopia (2002), widely regarded as one of the best short histories of Ethiopia, helped me to better understand the region, and guided me with a variety of historical matters; and Solomon Addis Getahun's The History of Ethiopian Immigrants and Refugees in America 1900-2000: patterns of migration, survival, and adjustment, was a very important source. Getahun's book was particularly helpful, as a reference, to understand the heterogeneity of Ethiopian refugees/migrants entering the United States. Finally, Paulos Milkias' Haile Selassie, Western Education and Political Revolution in Ethiopia provided extensive insights on Ethiopia's education system.

I used postcolonial literature to frame socio-cultural issues in discussing integration strategies. The main authors framing this part of the study are Appadurai (1990), Bhabha (1994), Spivak (1992, 1998), and Loomba (2005). However, as the development of my analysis progressed, more authors were used and cited, to provide a holistic framework to my final work. The socio economic situation is illustrated through Wolf's (1982) theoretical development of Marxism and Gramscian's ideas. Filomina Chioma Steady (1981, 1985), Okome Mojubaolu Olufunke (2003), Oyěrónké Oyěwùmí (1997, 2003), Niara Sudarkarsa (1981), Chandra Mohanty (1988) and Aihwa Ong (1988) frame my discussion of gender issues, gender relations, patriarchy, and its related issues

of power struggles. The premise of the argument made by these last authors is that Western scholars deny African women localized power within an African relational world (Chilisa and Ntscane 2010). Western works are imbued with 'othering" ideologies, which results in a serious constraint on how they write about nonwestern people (Mohanty 1988). Because of the approach taken by western authors, they exclude nonwestern women's autonomy and economic productivity, negating them power and agency; thus, reducing their experiences to the category of victims (Oyĕrónké Oyĕwùmí 2003). Finally, the trust of the argument raised by nonwestern scholars toward western writings and research is that the latter research processes and methodologies are centered on culture, history, and philosophies based on Euro-Western ideas and thoughts, which do not take into account non western localized knowledge and thus, hegemonic toward non-Westerner research and people, particularly women (Filomina Chioma Steady 1981, 1985; Spivak 1989; Mohanty 1988; Oyĕrónké Oyĕwùmí 2003; Chilisa and Ntscane 2010). Social science research "needs emancipation from hearing only the voices of Western Europe, emancipation from generations of silence, and emancipation from seeing the world in one color"(Guba and Lincoln 2005: 212).

I then consulted refugees' studies, which provided me with an understanding of the emotional implication of experiencing exile, and the bureaucratic process involved in resettling policies. In addition, refugee studies informed my thesis on issues pertaining to the ideological construction of "becoming a refugee," and the implications associated with being labeled as such. Being labeled a refugee has implications of identity transformation, and of social and political power relations. Roger Zetter (1991) elaborates

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on this point by noting that refugees, in order to receive social and economic services, have to maintain their refugee status, and rather than present themselves as people with lives and histories, have to present themselves as "cases." The consequence of such policies is the reframing of refugees' identities, which can restrict and hinders their attempts to rebuild their lives (Zetter 1991: 55; Morrice 2011). Furthermore, Zetter argues that policies instituted by the UNHCR and donor policies create environments of control and dependency. Geof Wood (1985), to this point, writes that the label refugee refers to "[a] relationship of power between the giver and the bearer of the label" (Wood 1985: 353).

## 5.2 Ethiopia's Past: Education Reforms as Power Struggle, Famines, and Societal Unrest

Paulos Milkias, along Getahun's work on Ethiopian migratory patterns, provided helpful information to understand the Ethiopian education system, which, in 1905, started undergoing a series of reforms to reflect a Western educational system. Reforms were implemented as a way to put in motion processes of modernization (Markus 2002; Getahun 2006; Milkias 2006). As a result, Amharic became the Lingua Franca for primary education, while English was implemented for secondary and higher education. The implementation of Amharic and English as the academic languages gave way to second-and third-order consequences. Peasants, particularly non Amharic speaking, already a minority in the traditional education system, were greatly disadvantaged with the modern education system, with the results that their already low enrollment in school, diminished even further. The gap between elite members of society and the peasants widened further, since fewer and fewer peasants obtained an education. Finally, during

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the 1950s and 60s, droughts disrupted entire crops, causing famines and the deaths of hundreds of thousands, particularly among peasants who flocked to the cities in search of employment. However, unemployment was rampant, and because non-Amharic-speaking peasants lacked modern education, they were further setback (Gilkes 1975)

Haile Selassie's modernization policies served to progressively alienate a substantial part of the Ethiopian population. The mandatory Amharic in both first and secondary grades and the mandatory English language in higher grades were detrimental for the majority of Ethiopians, since Amharic was spoken only by about 35% of the population. Thus, if English acquisition was difficult enough for Amharic-speaking students, it was acutely harder for non-Amharic-speaking students, who in addition to their native tongues, had to learn Amharic and English (Milkia 2006). One of the teachers reporting for the Ethiopia Observer, Girma Amare, made the following comment,

> The early employment of English as a medium of instruction puts the Ethiopian at a real disadvantage ... [it] remains a purely classroom language. As soon as the child leaves his classroom, he uses his own mother tongue. Thus, the environment is not conducive to learning English at all. [...] The eager child, however, anxious to pass his examinations, discovered that the only way out was to memorize what he was taught and not try to understand. Many, however, gave up altogether and dropped out on their way (Amare 1963).

The use of Amharic as a medium of instruction was problematic on two fronts. (a) It was very difficult for children to learn in an unfamiliar language, which was not spoken in the household; and (b) the imposition of Amharic was felt as a political, cultural, and psychological domination, which infringed upon the rights of the population. The education reform aimed to Amharize the entire Ethiopian population neglected the needs of the rural masses, and disregarded demands of the educated elite, who worried about

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Ethiopia's lowest enrollment percentage of school age population in all of Africa. The so-called educational development of Haile Selassie's monarchy lacked far behind the rest of Africa, creating mounting social upheavals (Getahun 2006; Milkia 2006; Haile 2008).

The Amharization of Ethiopia can be understood under the Foucauldian explanation of different modes in which culture attempts to transform people into subjects. Foucault comments that power's worst diseases are Fascism and Stalinism. As explained by Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (1982), Foucault outlines three types of power struggles: the first power struggle is against forms of domination such as ethnic social and religious domination; the second power struggle is against exploitation; and the third one is against forms of subjectivity and submission (Hubert, Rabinow 1982: 212). Language is involved in all these forms of power struggles. Systems of communication, that is, language as a system of signs may be imbued with power relations (Foucault 1980). The imposition of Amharic as the Lingua Franca was indeed a tool to implement uneven power relations, which, as I illustrate in the preceding chapter, resulted in the alienation and displacement of a large part of the Ethiopian people, who immigrated into the United States. If history provides a medium for understanding the events leading Ethiopians into the diaspora, and provides insights into an Ethiopian identity, other Ethiopians writings, postcolonial, and African theories illustrate, instead, the power relations between genders with a localized knowledge that offers insights rarely observed by western standards.

**5.3 Theories in Postcolonial Literature**

The analysis of Ethiopians refugees/migrants' coping strategies, and level of integration into the host society viewed through mimicry and hybridity is derived by postcolonial theories and post modernism. Although mimicry and hybridity had been in use for a long time, they have been widely popularized in postcolonial and post modern discourses as a rebellious form adopted by colonized people, and is used as a tool of agency and resistance. Gayatri C. Spivak (1988), who is one of the most influential figures in contemporary critical, and feminist theories, is most concerned with the agency of subalterns, and like Bhabha (1984), with peoples who have been colonized and marginalized. She is a crucial critic of colonialism and of western writings, because, as she notes, the latter is another form of colonialism and hegemony trusted upon non-westerners. Conversely, she champions the voice and writings of those she considers marginalized by western cultures. Spivak explains that western scholarly research marginalizes non-westerners by depicting them as the Others, and by dismissing non-westerners' academic work with authoritative western-European structures that do not take into account non-western structures of knowledge (Spivak 1989).

Spivak observes that the fundamental problem with western theories is that, "[t]he best disciplinary definition comes from a Western man" (Spivak 1989: 209), who cannot speak adequately and intelligently about non-westerners, particularly marginalized non-westerners. She insists that the voice of the marginalized, the subalterns, and, or the "Third World" women have to surface unhindered by hegemonic ideas of western writers. She also criticizes the notion, put forward by western writing, that the western

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world is more democratic, civilized, modern, and developed than the nonwestern one. Because I share Spivak's viewpoints, I believe that her point of analysis is more appropriate for the examination of Ethiopian women refugees/migrants' experiences than western postcolonial writings. However, Spivak is, but one of the non-western postcolonial theorists I use in the analysis of my thesis.

And, although I use Bhabha's (1984, 1994) mimicry and hybrid theories, and no matter my preference to these postcolonial theories, I also posit myself alongside the argument Ania Loomba (2005) and Robert Young (1995) raise, when they warn that we cannot homogenize, oversimplify, or universalize hybridity, and I also pay particular attention to the critiques Benita Parry (1994) has raised. Parry criticizes Bhabha's work insofar as that he limits the analysis of hybridity within colonized/colonizer, and he leaves everything outside colonial culture extremely fuzzy. I had to be particularly attentive to this critique, and, also, to the fact that Bhabha's theoretical framework omits the issue of gender and class, when, both, gender and class play a critical role in people's life experiences. Loomba's cogent analysis of postcolonial writings captures perfectly the dilemma postcolonial's concepts and terms (such as hybridity) present when she observes that none of the terms and theories truly capture the postcolonial condition in so far that, "[t] hey do not allow for differences between distinct kinds of colonial situations, or the working class, gender, location, race, caste or ideology among people" (Loomba 2005: 19) to name only a few possible sources of differentiation. Notwithstanding the critiques posited toward mimicry and hybridity, if they are properly used, without universalizing

their meaning of experience, and, being careful not to let them become fixed and stable identity descriptors, they can serve as nuanced terms of analysis.

## 5.4 Theoretical Aspects of Mimicry and Hybridity in Postcolonialism

Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage.... It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled -- exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare.
(Jacque Lacan 1981: 99 'The line and Light,' Of the Gaze)

Postcolonial studies have been preoccupied with the issue of hybridity and the formation of hybrid identities generated by colonialism (Loomba 2006). The hybridization of identities is, however, an ongoing process, no longer generated by colonization, but from mobility, Diasporas, labor migration, forced migration, and the cross over of peoples and ideas. The newly formed identities generated by mobility and contact are a composition of multiple elements that come from both the external context and from the internal perceptions that the person or group has (Bergeron 2010: 110).

Although the notion of hybridity existed prior to colonization, the peculiarity of colonization is that it is constructed as a discourse of binary oppositions, first-world/third-world, colonizers/colonized, white/black, European/non-European. The hybrid identities stemmed from the negotiations of such binary relationships, insofar as the binary oppositions instigated the formation, or alteration, of individual and or group identity, in which both groups internalized aspects of its binary opposition. It is important to notice that both groups internalized aspects of the other group. Hence, Homi Bhabha (1994) argues that European colonizers and non-European colonized were mutually dependent in constructing a shared culture.

Another aspect that is again peculiar to colonial discourse is the intensification of a racial discourse, which reified the Othering of non-European, and non western people, branding them as backward and inferior (Loomba 2005: 53-4, 91, 119; Tuwihai Smith 2012: 8, 12, 31, 41, 45, 63, 70-1, 94, 167). Thus generating, or attempting to generate, a fixed racialized identity formulated upon stereotypical imageries created by colonial powers. It is here that the post colonial theory of hybridization came to the surface, as several critics, most notably Homi Bhabha, assert that colonial discourses failed to produce stable and fixed identities of the Others; and, instead, generated new forms of hybrid identities. Thus hybridity, as formulated by Bhabha's discourse, is an attempt to provide a way out of binary thinking. Bhabha in his introduction to The Location of Culture (1994) writes,

> The move away from the singularities of "class" or "gender" as primary conceptual and organizational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions – of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation – that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world. What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These "in-between" spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself (Bhabha 1994: 1-2).

According to Bhabha then, the 'in-between' spaces rest where and when new identities begin to be formed, assuming aspects of both cultures, in Bhabha's words, the new identities create a culture, which is a hybrid of the two opposing cultures (Bhabha 1994). Bhabha suggests that there is a Third Space of Enunciation in which we can conceptualize international cultures based on culture's hybridity rather than on cultures'

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diversity (Bhabha 1994: 38), which is less antagonistic than the focus resting on the cultural differences. The in between spaces, he continues, "[c] arries the burden of the meaning of culture [and in the] Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (Bhabha 1994: 38-39). The hybrid identity is formed and appropriate by the act of mimicry.

## 5.5 Mimicry and Resistance to Racialization

Mimicry in postcolonial discourses is a form of subordination, of disobedience, "[m] imicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal" (Bhabha 1984: 126). Through mimicry, individuals inhabiting a subordinate space assert their agency, because, through mimicry, one keeps her or his own self, by using the act of mimicry to her/his advantage. "The effect of mimicry on the authority of colonial discourse is profound and disturbing" (Bhabha 1984: 126). In general language, mimicry refers to the imitation of one species by another, and, in scientific terms, mimicry serves to disguise or conceal an organism from its predators. The disguising of the organism in the process of mimicry brings the term closer to camouflage. The art of camouflage was used during warfare. Camouflaging, as the dictionary explains, implies concealment, as during warfare, troops disguise themselves. Although, the two terms are different, Jacques Lacan (1981) in his "The line and Light Of the Gaze" established a relationship between mimicry and camouflage where he brings the term mimicry closer to the warfare device of camouflaging. It is from this Lacanian theory that Bhabha borrows his concept of mimicry.  He opens his writing Of Mimicry and Man with Lacan's (1949) quote,

Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage.... It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled -- exactly like the technique of camouflage practised (sic) in human warfare (Bhabha 1984: 1).

Bhabha conceptualizes mimicry as camouflage resulting in colonial ambivalence.

Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference (Bhabha1984: 126).

Ambivalence is detectable in the contradictory colonial discourse and contradictory relationships established by European powers whom"[n] eed both to 'civilise' its 'others' and to fix them into perpetual 'otherness'" (Loomba 2005: 145). Furthermore, European colonists constructed a Manichean allegory, "[i] n which a binary and implacable discursive opposition between races is produced (JanMohamed 1985: 60). Those binary oppositions were crucial for forming imageries of inferior non - European others. The binary oppositions: civilized/uncivilized, modern/non-modern, superior/inferior are the same oppositions that my sample group had to face in their resettlement.

Refugees/migrants, as they relocate to a host society, are faced by binary oppositions and by the constructed hierarchies of race. The constructed hierarchies presuppose the superiority of the white western citizen, and the inferiority of the non-white, nonwestern refugee/migrant. When Ethiopian refugees/migrants relocated to the U.S., they experienced this very hierarchy of race, and were exposed to racial discrimination. First generation informants were indignant by the racism encountered in the United States, and commented about the pervasive racism they felt everywhere they

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went: offices, schools, bureaucratic institutions, health clinics, and even in grocery stores. Resettlement in the United States was traumatic on several levels, and was further traumatic by the alienation and loneliness that was provoked by racism.

Newcomers were faced with new beliefs and value systems to which they had to come to terms alone, because they had no social capital(s) or networks. The 1974 revolution had caused Ethiopians from disparate backgrounds, different classes, educational levels, and ethnic origins to flee their lands. Because of this high heterogeneity, it was difficult to build a support system; hence, newcomers felt terribly vulnerable and alone. For many first generation informants, the racism they had to confront in the United States was incomprehensible and disturbing. It was vexing on many counts; but, what disturbed Ethiopians the most, was the equation of black with inferiority. Ethiopians are extremely proud of their national identity, and they do not feel inferior to white people. In addition, they do not perceive themselves as black or white, but they think of their selves as Habasha, a separate non-black, ethno-racial category that emphasizes their Semitic origins (Habecker 2012). Ethiopians resist American racialism through mimicry, and by actively repossessing their Habasha identity

Although, currently, we cannot talk about colonialism, and uneven relationships between colonized/colonizers, the reality remains of a hierarchical relationship where the subordinate, in this case, Ethiopians refugees/migrants, rather than submit to an uneven social relationship destabilize hierarchical relationships through mimicry. In turn, mimicry gives form to hybrid cultures, which, as observed before, retain and reject norms of both cultures. For example, the pursuing of higher education, which is particularly

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widespread among Ethiopian women, can be viewed as mimicry in order to actively obtain upward mobility, and to reject the hierarchical inferiority implicit in patriarchal societies.

## 5.6 Hybridity

The relationship between the dominant society and the resettled society is similarly the relationship between colonizer/colonized complex, nuanced, politically ambiguous, and in a continuous state of negotiation. Hybridity is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination [...] that turns the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of the power (Bhabha 1994: 112). Thereby, hybridity is yet another version of subversion of disavowal that antagonizes power. Power, in order to succeed, cannot be undermined by uncertainties, such as the fragmentation of identity that is brought about by a binary Other, who through mimicry, and hybridization, becomes a blueprint of the white colonizer. Power has to be maintained by creating stable and fixed identities of binary oppositions: civilized/savage, enlightened/ignorant, modern/non-modern etc. However, the colonial encounter alters everyone and everything involved through "[a] n intricate mix of visible and invisible agency, of words and gestures, of subtle persuasion and brute force on the part of all concerned" (Van Dommelen 2006: 111-112).

If colonial identities become blurred with a mixing of symbols and values from the colonial encounter between the white presence and its black semblance, then the authority of those who retain power becomes blurred, as well. A black sameness induces uncertainty among the colonizers, and as Bhabha writes,

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It is the effect of uncertainty that afflicts the discourse of power. [...] Hybridity is the name of this displacement of value from symbol to sign that causes the dominant discourse to split along the axis of its power to be representative, authoritative. [...] The presence of colonialist authority is no longer immediately visible (Bhabha 1994: 113-114).

Through hybridity, Bhabha sees the breaking down of the "[s] ymmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside" (Bhabha 1994: 116). The destabilization of binary opposition, through Bhabha's concept of hybridity, offers a way to look at modern migration and the interrelation between groups in more nuanced and pluralistic ways. Hybridity offers an analytical framework that facilitates the understanding of cultures' interactions in much more complex manners than the traditional binary opposition allows. In theoretical discourse, hybridity has helped to unpack terms such as creolization, mestizaye, diaspora, and mobility; and, further, it provides agency to subalterns and minority groups. Finally, interpreted as a theory that provides a way out of binary thinking, it can be extrapolated from the colonial discourse and be used to analyze and combat oppressive forces faced by migratory people. In the following pages, I illustrate how hybridity, as a theoretical concept, can be conceptualized with hybridity as a social reality, and also, as an empowering form of behavior. I chose to be careful, however, as I wrote in my introduction, to refrain from its universalization, because "[t] he insight of the now considerable literature around the issues of masking and mimicry ought always ... to be measured against conditions that are unavoidably local and immensely variable in the possibilities they allow" (Nixon 1994: 24).

**5.7 Migration and Mobility**

In 2008, Karraker wrote that 3% or 175 million of the world's population lives outside their country of birth, and further reported that the "United Nations estimates that 20 million people worldwide are refugees" (Karraker 2008: 48). A study conducted in 2012 for the World Bank that analyzed The Global Bilateral Migration and World Development Indicators & Global Development Finance Data Sets indicated that, "[i] n 2010 the total number of people living outside their country of origin was estimated to be nearly 214 million people and projected to potentially reach 405 million people by 2050" (Davis et al. 2013: 1). The two authors continued by pointing out that international migration is presently occurring at unprecedented levels, and indicated that the number of international migrants "[r] ose from 92 million to 165 million between 1960 and 2000" (Davis et al. 2013: 1). The authors added that, in the last five decades, the number of migrants from developing countries to developed ones has increased markedly.

The causes for such a large-scale movement of people are various and complex, including political, economic, environmental, and cultural reasons, and most notably mobility follows the patterns of globalization, and thus, migration is a key component of globalization. Giddens (1990) defines globalization as "[t] he intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa" (Giddens 1990: 181).

For my thesis it is not necessary to delve into the reasons why people migrate, but it is enough to grasp the magnitude of the number of people who are mobile. The

numbers are so substantial that, in 2000, Sociologist Urry proposed to look at societies as no longer a bounded unit, but as mobile entities, since mobility, for an array of reasons, is replacing sedentary living, with people increasingly forming multi-directional connections (Wallerstain 1974; Urry 2010). Such connections, as I will present, have strong implications on the question of identity formation, and the question of identity alterability.

The historical one-way path migration is no longer accurate, and is replaced by multi- directional connections, each forming links and series of networks. These links are called multi- nodal systems, and are important to note since the type of links and the topology and behavior of their networks influence and determine the characteristics of group formation and consequent group identity. Identity, as Bergeron writes, "[b] ecomes significant in the presence and the gaze of an external other (and) it changes as the identity and the gaze of the other change" (Bergeron 2010: 110). Notwithstanding the sheer movements of today's populations, mobility is not a new phenomenon and migration is an integral part of social life. As Wolf wrote, contact and connection, linkages and interrelationships have been the norm rather than the exception, "[t] he world of humankind constitutes a manifold, a totality of interconnected process" (Wolf 1982: 3). Henceforth, today, as in the past, large-scale interactions have taken place. What is different today is the rapidity of movement and the intensity of the world intersections, thus as Kearney, writes, "Globalization entails a shift from two dimensional Euclidian space with its centers and peripheries and sharp boundaries, to a

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multidimensional global space with unbounded, often discontinuous and interpenetrating sub-spaces" (Kearney 1995: 549).

I will add that with the intensification of social relationships we are experiencing an intensification of identity hybridization. The migration of people results in social and economic restructuring, alteration of gender roles, as well as, an alteration of values and traditions. As a result of mobility identity, rather than being fixed it is transformed, becoming dynamic, hybrid, and relational. However, mobility and migration bring a plurality of situations, which can simultaneously induce the loss of one's voice, and the feeling of fragmentation (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Karraker 2008). These different kinds of situations cannot result in the same hybridization, but will be locally and experientially specific to the individual, as we see, for example, in the different hybridization forms created by Ethiopian refugees/migrants women and men.

## 5.8 The question of Identity in Refugee Studies

Understanding the stages of the sociopolitical history of Ethiopia is important because each stage provoked the emigration of fairly different groups, and each group, in turn, hybridizes and integrates at different stages and levels. Each group inhabited a particular social sphere that helped to model individual identities, which, in turn, shapes their present experiences. However, as stressed throughout, resettled individuals are neatly compartmentalized in western conceptual boxes (Brubaker and Cooper 2000), and are administered a fixed identity, that of refugees. However, the narratives of my informants reveal that their identities are not fixed, and static, but are in "[a] continuous process of re-definition as people interact with their social world" (Moussa 1993: 253).

Informants, when talking about their experiences emphasized their uneasiness of being considered only as refugees. That is because the status of refugee takes away their past and their history, and what remains is a label that only reminds them of traumatic experiences.

However, those experiences, as informants observed, are only a part of their lives. Before those events compelled them to flee Ethiopia, they had a life, a history, and a culture that they loved and still love. Moreover, participants noted that they would rather not dwell on their tragedies, even though they will never forget them, but they rather dwell on their future, and on the opportunities they can offer to their children. Regrettably, resettlement offices do not perceive refugees as individuals with past histories and plans for the future, but see them as waves swelling our shores. Waves of homogenous groups made of an amalgamation of helpless people, lacking agency, and in need of guidance (Harrell Bond 1986; Voutira and Harrel Bond 1995; Daniel and Knudsen 1995). These attitudes homogenize each individual that experiences refugeness as one and the same.

As a consequence of these resettlement policies, peasants and Ethiopians, who were part of Haile Selassie's entourage, became, in the eye of the American bureaucracy, one and the same amalgamated with all Ethiopians who have resettled in the United States. Political dissidents, people fleeing conflicts, famines, economic, and ecological disaster all become one entity; that is, refugees, who are stripped of their own personal experience, and of their specific cultural and ethnic identity. However, personal experiences are woven into the social fabric of every individual, who has become a

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refugee, of whom s/he was, is, at present, and will become. Personal experiences are intertwined with social events, which are intertwined to the social contexts one inhabits, which in turn mold one's identity (Morrice 2011). However, the labeling process gives validity to the stereotyped identity of refugees, and constricts the self into a static bounded group (Zetter 1995, 2005).

Zetter brilliantly captures this reality when he writes,

> A popular conceptualization of the refugee is readily to hand. To the extent that some 14 million or so forced migrants are categorized - labelled - as refugees with an internationally recognised legal status, given credibility by an international agency specifically charged to safeguard their interests, endorsed most powerfully of all by spontaneous philanthropy - the meaning of the label seems self evident. Refugees are, like the places described in Waugh's first travel book, 'fully labelled' in people's minds (Zetter 1991: 40).

Still each individual forming the conceptualized group, to borrow Bourdieu's theoretical analysis of habitus, brings his/her social and cultural capital, which inform how individuals reacted to their past environment and react into their present environment. Different fields and intellectual discourses argue that identity acts as a rooting point from which individuals make decision (Elliot, Kratochwill and Cook 2000) insofar as that identity constitutes an act of performance (Foucault 1977, Hall 2000) that comes from the cultural, social, and economic structure in which one develops (Bourdieu 1977, 1980, 1986).

Moreover, variables of one's experiences have to be considered to understand an individual's copying mechanisms, and degree of integration into the host society. In other words, the agency of each individual is derived by her/his experience. As my analysis demonstrates, different variables will dictate different copying strategies, and the

redefinition of the self-inhabiting a new social space. Knudsen (1995) narrating about Vietnamese refugees writes,

> Once in exile, when children, men, and women all experience new freedoms as well as new constrains, socialization turned out to be even more complicated. Ultimately, for the Vietnamese refugees, in settling in which 'who I have become' present a threat to the concept of the self, 'in whom I trust' is irrevocably linked to 'who I am' (Kudsen 1995: 13).

Knudsen, like Marfleet and others, writing about the refugee experience, explains that experiencing refugeeness is experiencing the loss of trust, simply because the entity that should protect its citizens, thus, the government, is the very entity one flees from to escape persecution. Therefore, the government, rather than being trustworthy, is deceitful. Hence, the refugee who has escaped has to relearn how to trust. However, the process of resettling and being approved for refugees status has many encounters, such as camp officials, immigration officers, and various bureaucrats, who can be more antagonistic than trustworthy, as the refugee attempts to prove her/his right for asylum. Women at this point are disadvantaged, because sexual violence oftentimes is not considered as persecution. Moreover, for women to talk about sexual violence is very difficult; thus, many times they prefer not to share such experiences and their explanations of why they need protection become awkward, and can be seen as fake (Harrel-Bond 1986; Daniel and Knudsen 1995; Marfleet 2006). Because of these experiences, women will develop different coping strategies than men; and further, each woman and individual depending on her/his life experience, will cope differently, and will trust strangers on different levels. But trust and the feeling of belonging have to be present in order to rebuild social networks, even though, in many cases, trust is often

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difficult to reestablish. As a case in point, among first generation Ethiopian women refugee/migrant feelings of mistrust toward official agencies and non-Ethiopians is present.

An additional point noteworthy to make because, it is reflective of my field findings is the relationship of roots and rootedness, discussed by Liisa Malkki (1986). Ethiopian refugee/migrant women reinvent their homelands through memories; and, metaphorically speaking, plant their roots deeper and lay claim to their native land through a narrative of culture, that is "[t] he idea of culture carries with it an expectation of roots, of a stable, territorialized existence" (Clifford 1988: 338). Clifford's territorialized existence is reproduced by first generation Ethiopian women refugees/migrants in their performance of culture, such as in maintaining collectivism, rather than assuming a more western individualistic attitude, and by maintaining close family relationships. Women's collectivism is representative of the specific values, beliefs and traditions that unites them in diaspora with their shared past (Malkki 1986; Marfleet 2006). Finally, to be able to trust and to rebuild continuities necessitates the ability to repossess a voice that, in some cases, has been shut out for decades, such as with the imposition of a Lingua Franca.

**5.9 Silencing voices Shattering Identities**

The overlay of my oral culture wearing dangerously thin. ...Writing of the most anodyne of childhood memories leads back to a body bereft of voice. To attempt an autobiography in French words alone is to show more than its skin under the slow scalpel of a live autopsy. Its flesh peels off and with it, seemingly, the speaking of childhood which can no longer be written is torn to shreds. Wounds are reopened, veins weep, the blood of the self flows and that of others, a blood which has never dried.

(Assia Djeban 1985: 156 Fantasia an Algerian Cavalcade)

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Identity as a wound, exposed by historically hegemonic languages. For those who have

learned the double-binding 'practice of [their] writings.

(Assia Djeban 1985: 181 Fantasia an Algerian Cavalcade)

Fantasia: An Algerian Cavalcade is Assia Djeban's (1985) autobiography. I quote

her since I believe that her definition of losing one's land, and the way of expressing

oneself through the loss of one's language expresses the experience of people in diaspora.

Although her writings focus on Algeria, as the title implies, I posit, without risking to

homogenize the experience of different groups, that the voiceless experience of Djeban's

compatriots reflects the global silence inflicted and experienced by migrants and refugees

alike, regardless of their country of origin. Their silencing is endemic in the policy

making, in how both groups are represented with standardize discourses and with

representational forms, which, even if unintended, silence the peoples' voices inasmuch

as they find themselves in the categorical space of migrants and refugees. Hence, their

accounts are silenced, replaced by the languages of refugee relief, policy makers, and

national and international organizations that claim "[the] production of authoritative

narratives about the refugees" (Malkki 1996: 386; Zetter 1991, 2007).

In Fantasia, the author expresses the fragmentation French occupation brought to

Algeria and the Algerian people. The fragmentation of people's lives was rendered more

poignant by the silencing of their voices. The silencing, both real and metaphorical was

inflicted upon the people by imposing French as the Lingua Franca while attempting to

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extirpate the people's native languages. This particular reality reflects the accounts I was given during the interview process of my research study. Indeed, many of my interviewees lamented this very reality, having to abandon their own language, while being forced to speak Amharic. If one did not comply with the language imposition, the implications were dire; rebelling against speaking Amharic could result in death. *We did not speak Tigrinya, our language, we spoke only Amharic. We are scared; we can be killed just by speaking it* (Kidist 2013).

Another example comes from Abrinet. Abrinet is a 1.5-generation young woman, who at the age of 12, moved with her family from [---][26], a small town in northern Ethiopia, to the United States via Sudan.

> I hardly spoke any Tigrinya growing up, we spoke only Amharic. My mom forbade us to speak Tigrinya, she was scared . . . Yes now I speak both languages . . . When she speaks Tigrinya she has a lightness that she didn't have when she spoke Amharic. It was a difficult time, and she worried a lot. She always worried about us children (Interview 2013).

This quote, I believe, encapsulates what it means to lose the ability to speak one's language. Abrinet's mother, though familiar with both languages, expresses two different ways of being, two identities, one lighter, when speaking Tigrinya; one sterner when speaking Amharic. The two personalities of Abrinet's mom reveal her negotiation with the suppression of her Tigrinya's identity. The imposition of Amharic triggered her decision to behave differently. That is to eliminate one's language is to eliminate the individual's familiar way of being. Hence, the oppression of a person's language results in the oppression of his or her identity. Moreover, her decision to behave differently

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[26] I do not provide the town's name to assure her anonymity.

suggests that refugees, migrants, and subaltern identities are in a matter of flux, as well as, agony (Loomba 2005: 148). The forced incapacitation of having one's own identity produces Bhabha's hybridity, which, in the case of Abrinet's mom, describes resistance against the tempted obliteration of her native language.

## 5.10 Identities, Hybridity, and Self Representation

As I aforementioned, a person's identity is composed of multiple elements. Those elements are a compendium of diverse experiences and life practices. Identities change over time, and to borrow once again from Bergeron (2010) "[a] re transformed in dynamic processes of fragmentation, integration, and cohabitation" (Bergeron 2010: 111). Therefore, identities tend to follow the dynamics of migration, since process of interactions between different groups, and networks creates space for different sets of identities. As Hall suggests, we should think of identities as "[a] 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (Hall 1990: 392). In other words identities evolve, are relational and fluid. Thus to return to Bhabha's assertion, we have to distance our discourse from binary oppositions, westerns/others, migrants/citizens. More importantly, we have to refrain from essentializes the immigrant identity into a homogenous identity. The binary narrative is no longer sustainable to understand the varied cultural contact and interactions, but has to be replaced by a more fluid discourse of hybridity (Bhabha 1994, Giddens 1991, Gilroy 1993, Spivak 1988).

Through hybridity, minorities can re-appropriate institutions of oppression and use it as counter hegemonic political space. However, though hybridity and hybrid

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identities "[a] re indeed potentially counter-hegemonic, they are by no means always resistant" (Smith and Guarnizo 1998: 5); that is, as Smith and Guarnizo (1998) warn, because the asymmetry of domination, inequality, racism, sexism, class conflict still remain, and thus, the dialectic of hybridity and resistance needs a nuanced analysis that takes into account important differences, "[b] etween different kinds of diasporic experiences and exile" (Loomba 2005: 151), to discern how different experiences affect power relations. With that warning in mind, I take Bart Moore-Gilbert's analysis of Bhabha's writing, which postulates that we can look at the agency of today's migrants in the same way that was observed in Sign Taken For Wonders to observe and analyze the sample group of my research study. In his analysis, Moore argues that like the natives encountered by Anund in the grove trees outside Delhi, posed questions that the colonial discourse was not able to answer, "[s] o the contemporary migrant both interrogates and 'hybridizes' the dominant culture's current narrative of self-representation and self-legitimation" (Moore-Gilbert 2005: 460).

## 5.11 Conclusion

Refugees and migrants, as subalterns, experience the silencing of their voices starting from the labeling practice they are subjected to when relocating from their places of origin. The labeling process undermines one's identity, because, as Roger Zetter (1991) writes, when refugees/migrants are labeled, they are stereotyped, the "[l] abelling is a process of stereotyping which involves disaggregation, standardization, and the formulation of clear cut categories (Zetter 1991: 44). Furthermore, as the author continues, "[l] abelling is a process of designation, for it involves making judgements and

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distinctions; crucially, it is non-participatory (Zetter 1991: 45), which entails the absence of agency. Jeffrey M. Peck writes that refugees are "literally stuck in a 'permanently temporary' state, not belonging to their homeland and not fitting into [their host country] ... they are temporally and topographically imprisoned in between, in an area whose walls are racial and economic rather than concrete" (Peck 1995: 116). However, this in betweenness, as Peck formulates, imprisons the refugees or subalterns, namely "[a] ny marginalized or minority group, particularly on the grounds of gender and ethnicity" (Young 2001: 354), without giving them Bhabha's hybridity option.

To conclude, I believe both mimicry and hybridity are very useful to understand refugees and migrants' agency and the emergence of new cultural forms. I, however, believe, like Loomba and Spivak or scholars pertaining perhaps more to the second modernity frame of mind, that when using concepts such as hybridity and or mimicry, we cannot generalize and universalize the terms, but we have to keep in mind the different experiences people face, their place in society, their sexes, affinities, social and class status.

As more academic writing and scholarly research have shown, the experience of minority groups, refugees, migrants and the likes differ dramatically depending on their class, provenience, gender, and sexuality. As Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) posit "[t] he class distinction between 'migrants' and 'cosmopolitan transnationals'" (Bryceson, Vuorela 2002: 11) dictates a remarkably different experience the two groups experience in the receiving country. The educated and skill endowed 'cosmopolitan transnationals' are expediently provided with residency, and are quickly invited to be part of the host

society. However, migrants are left hanging amidst the interminable paperwork and bureaucratic madness with no certainties and no residency. European migrants receive different treatments than Latinos, as Latinos receive different treatments than Middle Eastern migrants. In other words, the immigrant or refugee's provenience determine, even if not entirely, how he or she is viewed in the host society. Consequently, their personal experience will carry different meanings and so, their personal agency will differ making the resonance of both 'hybridity and mimicry enormously variable (Loomba 2005: 150).

A Poem by Lena Bezawork Grönlund

**Father Used to Say Mother**

Father used to say mother
is like the river
as lucid, as fast. There is no truth
in such words. Mother resembles the sky,
light blue, enclosing, immense
without end. He is like the river
dark blue, as lucid, as ready
to leave. A day, a bundle of clothes.
The days have passed quickly since then.
They fall in between the brick stones
of the walls. I have seen them myself
through the magnifying glass,
(—Here, look at this, look at this family here.
My wood cars on the grass, the blue, blue sky,
over this place. This laughter
from this boy who is me, Nathan.)
constantly becoming pieces of a life.
But this house forgives the days
he is gone. It talks of him
in between these rooms.
And he has been gone for so long.

# Chapter 6 Data Analysis

This is not a good story, but it is my story. It is the only one that I have!

(Interview 2013)

The effect of mass migrations has been the creation of radically new types of human beings: people who root themselves in ideas rather than in places, in memories as much as in material things, people who have been obliged to define themselves-because they are so defined by others-by their otherness; people in whose deepest selves strange fusions occur, unprecedented unions between where they were and where they find themselves. The migrant suspects reality: having experienced several ways of being, [s]he understands their illusory nature. To see things plainly, you have to cross a frontier. (Salman Rushdie Imaginary Homelands: Essay and Criticism 1981-1991: 124-25)

## 6.1 Introduction

The aim of my study was to investigate strategies Ethiopian women refugees/migrants have adopted to reach a properly harmonious lifestyle in the United States, specifically in the Denver Metro Area. The participants of my research first regard a harmonious lifestyle a life where the quotidian of the every day is fluid, void of the constant pressure of not knowing. The Ethiopian women refugees/migrants, with whom I conversed and interviewed, confided that they started to feel in harmony with their life in the great Denver area when they became proficient in the American ways. Or to use Bourdieu (1992) after they acquired "the cultural capital" of their new host country, and thus, gained the confidence, and cultural understanding to navigate the American system without feelings of insecurity and anxiety.

Ethiopian refugee/migrant women begin to reach a properly harmonious lifestyle in the countries of resettlement when the dealing of simple things presented by life at every moment of every day is no longer traumatic. Harmony is reached when refugees and migrants no longer feel isolated, nor, as a foreign minority, alienated from the host society within which they live. Finally, harmony and tranquility are reached when their own values and beliefs coalesce with values and beliefs of the host society's sociocultural frame; without causing strife within their Ethiopian family structure. Hence, a balance is reached and pluralistic patterns are reached. Simply put, while Ethiopians continue to maintain aspects of their ethnic heritage in values and beliefs, they also participate within the public institutions of the dominant culture. More importantly, as more Ethiopian refugee/migrant women enter the productive force, they gain power in socioeconomic matters and within the family structure. Although not all households have reported the same experience, an increasing number of Ethiopian men refugees/migrants, albeit not all, recognize the importance of their spouses' economic power. Nevertheless, the process is slow, and as Dahlak, a first generation refugee confided, men have difficulty giving up their authority. However, in some instances, women are economically more successful than men; and, thus, have become the ones to provide the family with upward social mobility, and as a consequence, men are compelled to give up authority.

Integration in the United States, particularly for first generation Ethiopian refugees/migrants is a constant negotiation of values. Through mimicry, and during the negotiation of values, women actively begin to integrate into the host society by rebuilding networks and family stability, which, in turn, helps them cope with the loss they experienced, and imparts on them confidence, a sense of continuity, and they start to feel a sense of belonging in their new lives. Furthermore, through mimicry, Ethiopian women refugees/migrants can transform and subvert the hierarchical exclusion of the host society by achieving familiarization with the host society's norms while exploring its values. During their process of exploration and familiarization, Ethiopian women critique, reinterpret, and decide which characteristics of the host society are suitable to absorb into their own value system, thus, creating a hybrid culture (Bhabha 1994; Weiss 2009: 26, 28). Through mimicry and by forming a hybrid cultural identity, women consciously keep and reject norms of both cultures. Conversely, men, almost as defiance to the social inequalities they face and as a struggle to maintain their Ethiopian identity intact, seemingly reject a priori the host society cultural values while attempting to maintain their traditional values unaltered.

Moreover, the experience of losing social status coupled with the experience of resettling in a more egalitarian society provokes in men, who are underemployed and can no longer be unquestionable patriarchs, a sense of frustration that results in poor and inappropriate behavior, if not all together violent, towards the women of their family. For example, women during a focus group discussion, noted that their husbands and, or fathers, since resettling in the U.S. when they find employment, do not share their earnings as they did in Ethiopia. This behavior puts women, who are in charge of the

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wellbeing of the family, in a position of having to plead to receive money, and as several informants commented, they felt like beggars toward their own husbands, thus gaining socioeconomic independence became, in their view, imperative. To this end, several informants noted that they gained employment, or achieved earnings by helping each other, and more importantly, by forming lucrative women-centered networks.[27] The formation of social networks reflects women's agency in reestablishing collectivity and reaching autonomy.

Hence, as my research advanced, I began to observe discrepancies between the traditional Ethiopian woman depicted in literature, inhabiting the reproductive sphere, passive, docile, and subordinate to male authority, because inhabiting a patriarchal society, where the conditioning reinforce and perpetuates relationships of male dominance and female subordination (McDowell and Pringle 1992; Njogu and Orchardson 2005), and the Ethiopian women refugees/migrants among whom I was conducting my study. The narratives I collected tell of a dichotomy, even a paradox, of women hindered by patriarchy, yet never passive, but, instead, social actresses, central figures of the family unit, and active participants of the household economy and decision making. Because of the patrilineal system, a man is almost always the head of the household; however, women have considerable authority over the children, and like their male counterparts, Ethiopian women gain power and privilege based on their age.

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[27] A Little Something Refugee Crafts is one such cooperation that came about in 2007. It was organized by a group of Somali Bantu stay-at-home women and mothers, who struggled to receive money from their spouses. Helped by a group of American women, ELS teachers, they successfully created an enterprise that helps refugee women earn their own money by creating crafts.

Thereby, in Ethiopia, as it remains the case in the United States, senior women have strong voices in many issues; and, as I noticed among my sample group, women resettled in the U.S., seem to be more resilient than men. This resilience is brought about in part, by the agency women depict in their negotiation of the two cultures, which results in hybridization. I decided, therefore, to focus upon the processes of identity formation taking place in their new cultural space, an identity formation that moves from a traditional Ethiopian identity toward a hybrid identity. Bhabha (1994) reminds us that traditions bestow a partial form of identification, and further, construction of identity and difference are essential components of social organization (Bhabha 1994: iv). He continues by reminding his readers that, "[t] he social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities (sic) (Bhabha 1994: 23). Identities are always hybrid, produced performatively in contexts that can be either antagonistic or affiliative (Bhabha 1994).

Furthermore, identities are formed by a composition of experiences derived by a shared history, and also by the relation a population has to its historical figures. Ethiopian women's identity formation follow these same patterns, and women, like men, draw their identity, in part, from literature and historical figures, notwithstanding that there is a lacuna on Ethiopian women in literature. To this point, Belete Bizuneh (2001) comments that the dearth of data on Ethiopian women representation in literature is due in part to the overuse and over emphasis on the written records, while neglecting the oral tradition. According to Bizuneh (2001), and James Quirin (1993), the overuse of Ethiopian written documents results on a skewed history highly representative of the monarchy and the Orthodox Church, but poorly representative of common people and women. According to

Quirin, Ethiopian written documents have "[a] centrist and elitist focus on the royal monarchy and Orthodox church" (Quirin 1993: 297), as such the documents focus primarily on political, military, and religious events concerning the monarchy and church, and thus, lacking space for women unless they were Empresses. Conversely, oral tradition can fill the lacunae left by the sole use of written documents.

Notwithstanding the dearth of writing depicting common Ethiopian women observed by Bizuneh (2001) and Quirin (1993) some Ethiopian sources dedicated their efforts for revealing common women's successes. Sylvia Pankhurst, a feminist writer and founder of the "Ethiopian Observer," attempted to fill this gap by publishing several articles dedicated to Ethiopian women's achievements. However, those articles, being in archives in Ethiopia, are not available to the general public outside of Ethiopia, and thus, are for the most part unknown. Articles that are more easily accessed are, indeed, treaties on Empress. Although it is regrettable that there are no more writings about common Ethiopian women, the articles and treatises on Ethiopian Empresses feature prominently in Ethiopian history, and are a source of pride to many Ethiopian women.

1.5-generation informants often commented about the prominent roles Ethiopian Queens had in the making of history, observing that those Queens and Empresses bestow Ethiopian women a truer identity than the ones western writings portray when discussing issues of patriarchy and subordination. Abebech, commenting on this issue, observed that many common Ethiopian women identify with historical women such as Empress Taytu, who was well educated, self-assured, and deeply nationalistic. This is important to note because the identities of Ethiopian women refugees/migrants are more strongly connected to their ethnic and historical origins than to their labeled identities as refugees. Moreover,

the identities of Ethiopian women refugees/migrants are closely linked with their role in the community as wives and mothers, and rather than being subjugated by those roles, they are empowered. To see and understand such power, as African feminists postulate, I had to seek awareness of my sample group's specific contexts and culture (Chioma 1981, 1985; Sudarkasa 1981; Oyěwùmi 1998; Chilisa and Ntscane 2010).

Hence, as I analyzed Ethiopian women through the lens of an African localized power, I saw more easily that they have participated, and have been equals to men, in the active engagement with nature and with the reproduction of social ties, by participating in multiple-reproductive and income-generating activities. However, Ethiopian women's recognition in society becomes problematic once they relocate in the U.S. This is because their spaces of power are no longer defined by a society that understands their cultural values, resulting in the denial of Ethiopian women's agency. The question about women's recognitions is more acutely problematic when an African concept of women's agency is absent.

Moreover, the shift in gender roles provoked by economic reasons, rather than cultural ones, as it is readily assumed, results in Ethiopian refugees/migrants experiencing a dissonance within their family values; values that are rooted in the Ethiopians' religious beliefs of the family and of helping one another. These are duties that are strictly feminine. When women are unable to fulfill those roles because they are employed outside the home, disharmony within the family structure arises. For the most part, as informants observed, conflicts between women and men arise because Ethiopian men refugees/migrants feel disempowered as they feel no longer able to support their family. Ethiopian men in diaspora feel that their power is reduced and their authority is

no longer in place; the sheer frustration caused by this new reality can result in physical abuse against their wives. A substantial bodywork of scholarly articles, as well as medical studies, are analyzing this state of affairs to reach an understanding and try to find possible solutions to help end this situation and the added burden on women. Because of the privacy of this argument, both women and men informants were very reticent to talk about it; however, neither gender denied the unfolding of abuse. The problem of abuse is partly provoked and certainly exacerbated by a series of interconnected reasons; namely, the loss of capital(s), social, cultural, and economic.

The loss Ethiopian men refugees/migrants experience is not only the loss of an economic power, or the reduction of economic capital, but is the loss of habitus, which is inherently connected to Bourdieu's cultural and social capital. With the loss of habitus, one is deprived of cultural capital, which is "[t] he form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body" (Bourdieu 2004: 17). In one own habitus, such dispositions are integral to the individual, but when one relocates, such habitus is lost and has to be re-learned. In other words, Bourdieu posits that the culture of the dominant society has to be received, internalized, and learned. Cultural capital is comprised of linguistic and cultural competence. Social capital consists of the social ties and networks that one possesses and these attributes can help those who have them. Hence, I believe, there is a hierarchy of integration that can be reached by refugees/migrants that is contingent to Bourdieu's capitals; economic, cultural, social, and symbolic. Hence, the resources one has or can obtain, such as financial stability, or the social resources one reclaims in the forms of employment and social networks can affect the level of integration.

Ethiopian women refugees/migrants reproduction of informal networks in Denver helps them recreate habitus and a sense of belonging. Furthermore, within their roles as mothers, and keepers of the family, they experience a deeper sense of integration than men. That is, because, even though their role of mothers in Denver has changed, due to additional demands, they nevertheless derive deep satisfaction in rebuilding a sense of family stability. About this issue, Moussa (1993) contends that since Ethiopian men's identity and strength are largely connected to social status, while, women's identity and strength are derived from their 'subordinate' position, then the loss of status Ethiopian refugees/migrants experience in the host society does not affect women's self-esteem and confidence as much as it affects men's confidence and self esteem (Moussa 1993: 231). This state of affairs renders Ethiopian women in diaspora more resilient than their male counterparts. Indeed, the Ethiopian women I interviewed were tremendously active in giving support to one another, to family members, and to friends, and these activities imbued them with strength, and denote their agency. However, both genders have to continuously negotiate values and beliefs of both countries and have to come to terms with the inevitable changes relocation entails, particularly in view to the alterations men and women husbands' and wives' relationships experience.

## 6.2 Questions Directing my Analysis

My primary research question, therefore, was: how do women redefine their selves once they are resettled in a new cultural space, a new environment, and in relationships with culturally different people? Throughout my research, I first sought to understand how the definition of their selves as Ethiopian refugee/migrant women was in relation to the understanding of their new environment by examining their use of and

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participation in social structures, such as resettling agencies, schools, the church, and the Ethiopian Community Centers (ECC).

Then I asked the question: Do women take advantage of American social structures or do they tend to rely more on culture-based structures, such as the Ethiopian Orthodox Church or the ECC and, if so, why? Finally, I looked at what use do they make of the structures available to them? I then explored the types of networks and relationships women form that can ease integration, give them a sense of belonging, and allow them to rebuild continuities. The methods I employed to reach an accurate composition of their lives have an implication on the gathering of my data and on the methods I used to analyze my findings. I used both qualitative and quantitative methods. The data used for this study were obtained from fieldwork conducted between June 2012, and March 2013 in the Denver Metro Area. I started the gathering of my data at the Ethiopian Orthodox Churches

There are three main Ethiopian Orthodox Churches in the Denver Metropolis: Kidane-Meheret Curch, located at Sixth Avenue and Pennsylvania; Kidist-Mariam Church, located at East Colfax Avenue; and Medhane-Alem Church, located at east 17th Avenue. After several weeks of going from one church to the next, I realized the need to focus on one, so as to facilitate and expedite making rapport with its parishioners. It soon became evident that, by visiting the three churches, I had difficulty establishing relationship with the congregation, as my visits were too far apart and sporadic. Instead, I needed to become a regular participant, and thus, more of a familiar figure.

An interesting fact, which I was able to integrate into my analysis, surfaced concurrently to choosing one church to carry out participant observation. As I

commenced to attend mass regularly at Kidane-Meheret Church, and gained familiarity

with the church's etiquette, canons, and assembly, I started to introduce myself rather

than just greeting the women. Invariably, the introduction elicited puzzlement, even

perturbation, accompanied by summoning a male counterpart. At first, I thought a

language barrier provoked the reaction; however, I soon discovered that I was wrong.

Generally speaking, first generation Ethiopian women will not engage in private

conversation with strangers, particularly strangers of a different ethnicity, without the

approval of a male counterpart. As I considered the behavior, at first I perceived the

manner of conduct as the cultural proper norm. It is, after all, amply illustrated in

scholarly articles and literature that Ethiopia is a patriarchal society. As such, it follows

strict social rules and behavioral norms, which elevates the patriarch as the authoritative

figure, who is in charge of all social organizations including economic matters and the

acceptable social norm for women's socialization. However, a deeper scrutiny revealed a

more subtle and less discernible matter. Namely, generally speaking, Ethiopian

refugees/migrants have a pervasive mistrust towards American service providers, which

translates into a general mistrusting of non - Ethiopians, and thus their reticence for

talking to me. Moreover, as I soon discovered, Ethiopians, though friendly, do not like to

engage in conversations with strangers, and particularly about their private matters.

## 6.3 Observations of Parishioners

### 6.3.1 Kidane-Meheret Curch

Apart from serving as places of worship, the parish churches function as cultural,

educational, heritage, and community centers. In addition to practicing their faith,

Ethiopians take advantage of the opportunities to socialize among themselves, and as

many of my informants told, churches serve as vehicles to teach traditional values to the younger generation. Thus second generation Ethiopians have the opportunity to experience their parents' belief systems, customs, and traditions, while interacting with other people from Ethiopia, learning or practicing their native language, and professing their faith. I give special attention to Kidane-Meheret Church where I conducted the majority of my fieldwork.

The congregation meets every Sunday morning at ten o'clock for liturgical service and each Wednesday evening for prayer services. Family members arrive together for Sunday services, and as they enter the church, women move to the right of the church where they will sit; whereby, males sit to the left side, and children, for the most part, stay with their mothers or female relatives. It is, however, not uncommon to see children freely moving between the two sides. Prior to entering the church, all parishioners remove their shoes. Parishioners sit facing East where the altar stands and where the Ark of the Covenant resides. It is traditional to wear white, which symbolizes purity, or traditional Ethiopian clothing. Women's heads are covered, but men's heads should not be covered.

As the service progresses, children move to the basement of the Church where they attend Sunday school. Sunday school does not refer merely to religious instruction, but emphasis is placed on the learning of their native language.[28] As the children congregate downstairs, they first say the Lord's Prayer; and then, they receive religion instructions; as the biblical teaching dwindles to an end, the children are separated into

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[28] At Kidane-Meheret Curch children learn Tigrigna since the congregation comes from the Tigray region

separate groups according to age and language knowledge. They proceed to separate rooms where the teaching focuses on Fidel alphabet, language, and culture acquisition. At times, I saw instructors, who are all volunteers, reading stories to children and then asking the children questions about the meaning of the story. The latter exercise served two purposes: first, teachers established reading comprehension among children, and second, they imparted cultural notions. Children were actively involved in such activities and seemed to enjoy the learning activities.

My gatekeeper, who I refer to as Abebech[29], shared with me that the objective of the program was *to teach children their language, their culture, their religion, and help them to identify their identity and create a forum whereby they can get together to create social bondage and friendship*. This shows that the church is not only a place where parishioners and their children worship, but also a venue where they maintain and reproduce their Ethiopian culture and language. Many of the parents I conversed with, asserted that the church is a place where their children learn Ethiopian languages, Ethiopian cultural norms, prayers, and the liturgy, as well as other forms of praising God (BGV-FN 2012). Nevertheless, during interviews among the second generation, I was told that the second generation, once they reach independence, leaves the Orthodox Church, because of its politicization, to join Evangelical Churches. As I noted in my introductory chapter, the Orthodox Church though plays a pivotal role in the rebuilding of an Ethiopian community, it is also a a source of division between the different ethnic lines of the Ethiopian people. 1.5 and second generation are attempting to eradicate this division as they conceptualize Ethiopia as their homeland.

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[29] All names have been changed to pseudonyms.

Notwithstanding this discrepancy, the Church remains a place of worship as well as a performative, cultural space. The downstairs of the church is an educational space where children learn cultural values and behaviors by witnessing their parents and family members asserting their cultural identities; thus, the space becomes an avenue of cultural practices. Children concurrently participate in social practices while corroborating their cultural heritage performed by first generation parishioners. As children interactively learn with teacher volunteers, a designated group of parishioner women provides, prepares, and cooks traditional food for the entire congregation. At the end of the liturgical service, the assembly, at different intervals, moves downstairs to share the food, previously prepared.

As I observed upstairs during the service, downstairs, the division of space is again evident as women gather in certain spaces and men in others. Usually, men are divided in two groups. One group gathers and sits at tables located to the front of the space, or to the north, while another group gathers to the back, or the south side of the space. Among the former male group, the Abba or Priest always sits with the males gathered to the north. Abebech reported that the circle of men, sitting with the Priests, will discuss matters regarding religious practices, whereas, the second group takes care of the Church financial matters. Women, on the other hand, sit everywhere else. The ones, who prepared the food, gather and sit by the kitchen taking turns serving the congregation. When I inquired about the division of space, and about the participation of women into the discourse of the Church religious, social, and economic matters, Abebech giggled. The Ethiopian hierarchical social structure, that excludes women from social and

political positions, is transposed through time and space (Getahum 2006, Marcus 2002, Weiss 2009).

Abebech, however, informed me that the Church gatherings were a time of sisterhood, and of coming together, where women establish their agency. Although women seemingly do not participate in decision-making, while coming together they establish solidarity and use the relational "gender roles as sites for resistance and source of empowerment" (Chilisa 2010). Abebech related that the time of sisterhood is more than just enjoying each other's company, but is a time for women to sit together to discuss familial matters; and, since the family forms the nucleus of society, problems related to the family, are problems related to society; and thus, by resolving family issues, the women engage in societal matters and establish their collective power. Abebech's narrative serves me as a composite reflective story. As outlined by Wertz et al. (2011), the composite is interpretative rather than being a simple re-telling of a story. Thus, as the researcher, after listening and hearing the stories told by my study's participants, I interpreted the narratives using my knowledge of the literature regarding the phenomenon under inquiry, as well as, through my own reflexivity (Wertz et al. 2011: 2). It is important to note that the composite narrative served to maintain a collaborative endeavor throughout the research process, while refraining my voice to be singularly heard. Although I completed the process of data analysis, I maintained and included my participants's knowledge, which was indispensable to the correctness and robustness of my final analysis.

# 6.4 Gender and Family

## 6.4.1 Gender Roles

The female gender is the centre of life, [the] magnet that holds the social cosmos intact

and alive. Destroy her and you destroy life itself.

(Sofola 1994: xviii *In* African Womanism)

It is true that a child belongs to its father. But when a father beats his child, it seeks
sympathy in its mother's hut. A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and
life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland.
Your mother is there to protect you. [...] And that is why we say that mother is supreme.
(Achebe Things Fall Apart 1958: 94-95)

Although neither Sofola, nor Achebe are Ethiopian, but Ibo, their quotes capture,

and are reflective of the narratives many of my study participants related when talking

about mothers and motherhood. The following anecdote demonstrates the validity of both

Sofola and Achebe's quotes among Ethiopians. Gebre, as his wife told me, is very, very

traditional, the head of the family unit, par excellence. When I inquired what she meant,

she replied, well even after 20 years in America he won't give up his authority, he is the

Boss. Gebre is old fashion he likes it that way! Nevertheless, Gebre, while conversing

outside their home, sipping coffee his wife, Enana, had prepared, he shared with me the

following remarks:

> They love me [his 11 children[30]]. I'm their father, they have to love me, but it is
> more respect than love. I provided for them, they all went to college, all of them,

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[30] Seven of the children are their biological offsprings. While, four are children of
relatives who Gebre and Enana have welcomed into their home. These types of family
settings where children live with someone other then their biological parents are
commonly seen in the Ethiopian communities. When I inquired about it, the general
response was that the family unit is not as strict as in the West. Different reasons dictate
the separation of youngsters from their biological parents, varying from economic
reasons, to literally the sharing of children. One of my first generation respondents, for
example, shared that, because one of her sisters had already had four daughters, while

but my first-born. I worked I always worked. I had one job in the morning, I drove a taxi during the day, and at night, I took care of the liquor store. I left at dawn every day . . . My wife was at home with the children, she raised them, I worked, I disciplined them, she loved them, and they loved her. They all go to her. Without their mothers, children are lost . . . Mothers protect their children, Mothers give life (Interview 2013 emphasis in original).

Gebre is from a patrilineal society; his role is to be the provider and the undisputed head of the household. Thus, he embodies what westerners perceive to be Ethiopia's traditional society: female oppressive, which Gebre, as the undisputed patriarch, transposes into the United States. However, his narrative, like others I collected, illustrates not the oppression of women, but a gendered division of roles, where women gain power through family-care responsibilities, and through being mothers. Indeed, even in those societies where the organization is based on patrilineality and patriarchy "[t]here is often a paradox: male dominance on the one hand conflicts with the structural significance of women as 'mothers' on the others. As a result, even women in male-dominated societies have a certain degree of autonomy" (Steady 1981-1985: 29). The majority of female respondents claimed that the women of their households, in both the past and currently, were and are active participants of the household's financial matters. Abebech, who is in her early thirties, was born and raised in Ethiopia. Her family, originally from a rural area of the Northern plateau, was, as she reported: A very traditional Ethiopian family. To my inquiry of what she meant about 'a traditional Ethiopian family,' she replayed, oh, you know a family just like any other family, not peculiar or different from the rest of our neighbors. Yet, contrary to the vast majority of

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another one had none, at the birth of the fifth child, a daughter, the childless, though, married sister, was given the responsibility of raising the child. That she did! The girl grew up with her aunt, uncle, and the children her relatives eventually had, and visiting regularly her biological parents.

literary writings, and what westerners perceive to be the traditional gender roles, she had

the following narrative to share. I report her narrative in detail, while also analyzing it,

because it is highly reflective of my n sample, or the sample size of my population.

**6.4.2 Abebech's Narratives**

For the most part, women in Ethiopia do not work outside the home. Men are

most often the sole breadwinners; however, here in the U.S., the situation is different.

Women once relocated in the U.S. are more likely to work. Nevertheless, though, women

in Ethiopia are closely associated to the domestic sphere, while men are the providers,

women manage daily finances. Women make daily decisions, and organize the household

budget. However, I tell you a story focusing on my aunt, because she and her story

represent my Ethiopian friends, and also Ethiopians in general. My aunt, who lives in

Ethiopia, manages household finances and daily expenses, but she cannot make big

decisions without consulting her spouse. Big decisions about money have to be decided

together, between husband and wife, with the final decision coming from the husband.

Nevertheless, husbands and wives have a complex power relation. On the surface, it

seems that men have more power, but women, being in charge of every day finances,

have power of decision in every day situations.

Abebech's aunt, like many of her friends, have a different power decision-making

from their spouses, as she tells they make all of the daily decisions without having to

consult their spouses; what women decide on a daily basis, is never questioned by their

spouses; but, the opposite happens, since women have the power to curtail their

husbands' spending. However, there are paradoxes, as well. For example, a few years

ago, while Abebech was traveling in Ethiopia she visited her aunt, and the two wished to

take a day trip together. Her aunt spoke to her husband about the trip they were

considering taking, and his replay was: No you cannot go, and as Abebech commented,

that was the end of the discussion. There were no questions asked and there was no

insistence on the part of her aunt to pursue her wishes. The answer was, no! Thus, she did

not go on the journey with her niece. This instance clearly reflects patriarchy; however,

as Abebech continued: the finality of the discussion represents the different power

position within Ethiopia patriarchy. If on the one hand, my aunt's husband forbade her to

travel; on the other hand, my aunt decides how much of the family finances her husband

can have, and also what he can or cannot do with the money. This situation is not a

singular expression of power, but is a commonality in the Ethiopian households' share of

power. Ethiopian women's responsibilities of daily finances assure them bargaining

power within the household and community. Peggy Sanday (1981) suggests that different

cultures must select "[a] sex-role plan – that is, a template for the organization of sex-role

expectations . . . sex-role plans are part of the system of meanings by which a people

explain their successes, . . . [where they gain] a sense of people hood" (Sanday 1981:

163).

Before delving into the examination of power and power relations, I would like to

introduce another anecdote brought forth by Abebech. Meseret, her friend, lives in

norther Ethiopia with her husband and, together, they work as farmers. Because Meseret

feels that her husband spends too much money on drinking, she keeps all the money.

Meseret only gives her husband a small allowance; and hence, she manages and makes

all of the family decisions. Although she is the household's decision maker and has more

power than her spouse in the domestic sphere, Meseret is still not considered the head of

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the household. Furthermore, outside of their home, in the public sphere, her husband is viewed as the decision maker, and the retainer of power. If I analyze the above narrative within the Western feminist constructs, I discern antagonism between the two sexes; and, more importantly, I determine that solely men hold real power, because according to a western worldview, individuals who dwell in the public sphere retain power.

However, if I analyze power relations with a more localized framework, I can demonstrate a different access and a different type of shared power. I illustrate this through the critique of African feminist writers such as Sudarkasa (1981), Steady (1981-1985), Chilisa and Ntseane (2010) among others, how western feminism negates power to African women by considering political, and public sphere power as the only indicator of agency power. Since men in traditional societies retain political power it is assumed that they retain all social agency and powers. However, as Steady particularly points out, and I align myself with her, we can divide power in two-forms: formal power and real power. Formal power is associated with political power; whereas, real power is associated with survival. In societies with scarce resources, such as in Ethiopia where most activities are geared toward survival, the ones whose activities are geared toward survival retain what Steady calls "real power." And as Ethiopian women's roles are crucial to their permanence and the survival of their families, it is they who have real and relevant power (Steady 1981-1985: 31). Ethiopia depends heavily on agriculture, and "[r]ural women in Ethiopia represent a tremendous productive resource in the agricultural sector. They are major contributors to the agricultural workforce, either as family members, or, in their own right, as women heading households" (Aregu et al. 2011:1). Furthermore, rural women form women-based associations geared towards the well being

of the community, and geared towards helping one another. These women social networks established in Ethiopia demonstrate the agency of women. The social networks created by Ethiopian women refugees/migrants in Denver are geared to reestablish permanence, continuity, and belonging, and to once again demonstrate their agency.

Nevertheless, though women's roles are pivotal to the survival and wellbeing of the household, and thus, the community, the official discourse renders women's contributions invisible. My informants stressed this point by suggesting the importance of recognizing a localized power relevant to the Ethiopian worldview. Western feminism, like official discourses, disallow nonwestern women' agency by dismissing a priori what my sample group pointed out to be women's pivotal powers: motherhood, keepers of the family, and, now, here in Denver, providers of family stability. 1.5 informants observed that for Ethiopian women, the division of labor is normal and acceptable; what they find unacceptable is the western feminist discourse that implies the inferiority of women's roles, which reifies a status of weakness. Hence, while the western feminist discourse claims to empower women by universalizing a western discourse, they disempower all other discourses. Chandra Mohanty (1991) points out that western feminism, by universalizing formal political power as the only real power silences non-western women; and, rather than empowering them others them. This state of affairs results with serious constrains on how non-western people are heard and written about (Mohanty 1991).

Ethiopian women's participation in family and economic matters varies and is dependent upon the household's socioeconomic conditions and on many occasions, is dependent on the absence of the father. An absence that can be categorized in three ways:

(a) the father was, or is pursuing higher education; (b) the father was, or is pursuing a career path that forces him to travel; (c) the father has left the family to be with another woman. Hence, we could say that males have greater control over their lives, and they have a greater choice on what they wish to accomplish; whereby, women do not since they support their husbands' or fathers' career paths. However, as Steady (1981-1985) claims, the question of gender roles in African societies can be better analyzed based on a framework of autonomy and cooperation (Steady 1981-1985: 28). As a case in point, my study participants in Denver do not see themselves in competition and opposition, as western feminism claims, but rather, they view themselves in cooperation with one another based on Ethiopian cultural values.

This cooperation, in turn, reflects what Ethiopian women consider forms of power negotiation: (a) women gain power and prestige while supporting their husbands, who relinquish authority to their wives to follow their aspirations; (b) women gain power when abandoned by their husbands, by becoming heads of the family. This occurs when infidelity is present and a child is born from the liaison. However, in many cases, infidelity even, when it is accompanied by the birth of a child, or children, does not constitute a separation. Among women informants, one-third reported to have had what can be considered co-wives, as well as, stepchildren. The majority reported that the family did not dissolve, as a consequence of the infidelity and birth of children, but rather, a new family unit was formed. Paradoxically, the first wife gained power, as she came to possess the vestige and benefits of a first wife, and rather than having the entire responsibility of feeding and rising the family on her shoulders, she received support from the co-wife. At times this marriage situation, as Meseret commented, was sought by

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women in rural Ethiopia so as to receive help in their work. However, this marriage arrangement is not sought in urban areas; and men's infidelity can result in divorce, though, divorce is seldom sought after. Only a minority asserted that their mothers were, and, still are subordinate to their husbands, not because of the above-mentioned situation, but because they lack education, which was in the past, a situation more prevalent among women than men, and as a result of resettling in the U.S., has dramatically changed.

## 6.5 Resettlement in the United States and Constrains

I came to America because I was educated like an American!

(Interview 2013)

### 6.5.1 Introduction - Education –

The presence or absence of education is complex and highly heterogenous. The lack of education can be acute, insofar as the individual, a first generation refugee/migrant, is illiterate and does not pursue education once s/he has relocated in the United States; or, it can be moderate where the individual has received some education, usually primary education, while still living in Ethiopia, and s/he may or may not pursue additional education once resettled in the United States. Finally, there is not a lack of education, and the individual has received higher education in Ethiopia, and/or in the U.S. However, notwithstanding the number of years one has dedicated to education, the value placed on it is, for Ethiopians, very important. This is because education is seen as a door opener to better opportunities and to upward mobility. However, the discourse of education is highly complex because of the dichotomy between perceiving education as an assurance to social mobility, and the reality, instead, encountered by refugees/migrants

in resettlement, who, for the most part, encounter discrimination in their pursue of employment regardless of their education. Furthermore, though through education women resist and challenge the socially constructed gendered subordinate position, they still consider the family and the raising of children as equally important.

Westerners, however, tend to perceive non western family values as stifling and backwards, and perceive education an inherent western value that does not easily coexist within non western, non-modern, inferior values. Consequently, Ethiopian refugees/migrants, particularly first generation, who have accents, and at times have difficulties expressing themselves in English, encounter incredulity when pursuing higher education. To this point, Thomas commented, in this country the color of your skin, your accent, and where you come from can determine what people think of you, and I assure you, an educated black refugee/migrant is considered an exception rather than a rule. The rule comes from the prejudice that blacks, refugees, migrants, non westerners, and the like are intellectually inferior, but there is no consideration to the constrains and barriers these individuals face. I insist on education and the different aspects of it, because they are important on two fronts: First, Ethiopians who were American educated in Ethiopia selected the United States as their first resettlement choice since they reasoned they would easily gain employment. However, once, they relocated in the U.S., their American education did not asure them employment. Second, many first generation Ethiopians, who had not received an American education encountered difficulties learning the language because of time constraints, socialization practices, and, language barriers. This in turn curbs their employment opportunities and hinders their upward

mobility, which can raise a barrier between first-and second-generation Ethiopians. I start with this second issue.

A number of informants from the second-generation group expressed disappointment about their parents, and in particular, their mothers' lack of English proficiency. The disappointment stems from the parents' lack of involvement in their children's academic development. Enku, recalling her primary school years, regretted that her mom could not be as active in school activities as American mothers were because her mother's English was poor, and, consequently, her mother had difficulty navigating the American school system. This, she recalled, was a sort of stress in her life; however, she also pointed out that not all of her friends felt the same way. The language incompetence first generation refugees/migrants may experience can create barriers between generations, and can create different levels of integration between parents and children, who socialize and integrate at different levels into the host society.

The phenomenon is not a phenomenon exclusive to Ethiopian refugees/migrants, but is a problem that pervades the lives of migrant populations at large (Pedraza 1991; Vertovec 1999; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Calavita 2005). In addition to language barriers, economic difficulties hinder mothers and fathers involvement in school activities because both parents have to work several jobs and long hours. Parents who feel that they cannot guide their children as adequately as the Ethiopian culture requires particularly regret this situation. However, lack of English proficiency and knowledge of American ways are not the only barriers for refugees/migrants integration. The pervasive racism they encounter in the United States and the racial ideologies with which they have to content are exclusive and erect huge barriers for refugees' sense of belonging.

As I illustrated before, the first Ethiopians that resettled in the US were part of Haile Selassie's entourage, elite students, and intellectuals, who had received an American education, and had enjoyed preferred treatment when they first arrived in the U.S. However, their upper-class origin and level of education were no longer helpful when they assumed the refugee label, and they also experienced discrimination in their job acquisition. This state of affairs resulted in their downward mobility, high level of stress, and rising frustration.

**6.5.2 American-Educated Ethiopians**

In my previous chapters, I emphasized the changes the Ethiopian school system underwent, because those changes, the incorporation and application of an American curriculum, were decisive forces for Ethiopian refugees/migrants preference to resettle in the United States. When confronted with the choice to relocate in the United States or elsewhere, the majority chose the U.S, believing that their American-based education would insure them with white-collar positions, or employment, commensurate to their education. I include a long quote from an informant, as it captures the feelings of my study sample at large. It illustrates the expectations educated Ethiopians in the American system had; that is: one, to find employment; two, it manifests their disbelief that they would be faced with rejection and racism; and three, the sheer frustration they felt. The feelings experienced by men are important to note in full because they can be attributed to the rising of violence against women, even though, the violence cannot be excused. Here are Awate's observations:

> When I arrived in Denver my English was excellent, I was fluent. In Ethiopia I
> was educated like an American. I worked with Americans as an engineer. I started

working from 1971 to about 1998 [The year he fled Eritrea[31]]. I have a bachelor's degree from the University of Addis, but when I came here, I started to work for $8 an hour. I had, I think, about 15 interviews at the time I came. Every one of them failed . . . I cannot tell you exactly why, but my suspicion is that, number one it was because I was educated in Ethiopia. Interviewer, so where did you get your degree? Awate, In Ethiopia. Where did you work? In Ethiopia. What did you do in the United States? Well nothing, because I just arrived. Interviewer: How does your education relate to the American education? Awate: No difference, because even my instructors my professors were from the United States, the curriculum was written by American professors. The school was run by American instructors, and professors, so no difference. But when you come to this country if you don't have any kind of connections here in the United States, either by schooling or experience, you are doomed (Interview 2012; emphasis in original).

Awate lived all his life in Addis, but was born in Asmara when the war broke out between Ethiopia and Eritrea; he was deported to Eritrea, and was persecuted in both countries. After one year of harassments, uncertainties, and entering and exiting imprisonment, he had a chance to escape. An American colleague, who sponsored his entry into the United States, helped him. As he escaped persecution, perhaps death, he was forced to leave behind everything he and his family had,

Here [in the US] even if we worked hard, we just couldn't make ends meet, we just didn't have enough. Even my wife, had to work three jobs (...) . . . We were doing well in Ethiopia, we lost everything when we came from Ethiopia[32] here. We had to start from square one, just from scratch, from scratch (Interview 2012; emphasis in original)!

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[31] Awate is Eritrean/ Ethiopian. He was deported along with many others by the EPRDF during the Ethiopian Eritrea border war. Official figures say that the Ethiopian government exploited public sentiment and deported 75,000 Eritrean's/'Ethiopians of Eritrean descent. Individuals were arrested at night in their homes; families were split up, assets seized, and following varying periods of detention the 'aliens' were driven to the Eritrean border and forced to walk across the battle field (Byrne 2002; Campbell 2009). Awate had moved from Eritrea to Ethiopia, at the age of 5, with the rest of his family.
[32] His wife was still in Ethiopia, since she was not of Eritrean descent, and had not been deported. However, she suffered harassment, because she had married an Eritrean/Ethiopia.

As our conversation continued quite rhetorically he asked, why do you think I came here instead of going to Italy where I have family? Why do you think so many Ethiopians opt for the United States? When I asked him to please tell me, he replayed that it was because of Ethiopia's and the United States' long relationship. More importantly, it was because the Emperor had switched Ethiopia's education into the American educational system. They came here because it is a continuation of their studies. The Ethiopian system follows the American system, as I told you, it does not change! However, as Thomas alluded before, Awate's negative experience was in his opinion, not only attributed to his recent arrival, and the inexperience of the American system, but it was caused by the color of his skin. He poignantly expressed this harsh reality with the following remark:

> My friend, I had all the requisites for the position, but I have the wrong color! . . . Two reasons affected my abilities, [to get the jobs] one is accent, and the other one is color. I mean we have to be realistic all of these things combined were preventing me from penetrating the system, and I say this because when I go for a written exam, I was always, always, without fail, one of the five, first five people. In one or two I was actually the first one in written exam, but then when it comes to the interview they take a look at you, and just tell you, ok we will call you, but then no one will call you back (Interview 2012)!

Tsega, another male participant from the 1.5 generation, during our interview, corroborated Awate's narrative. According to Tsega, a number of Ethiopians living in the Denver Metro Area came to the United States as Haile Selassie's emissaries, and, to achieve higher education. Many, he continued, after enduring the inability of returning to Ethiopia, worked all of their lives to afford sending their children to college in America. However, he warned me with the following,

> The Ethiopians here in America do not represent Ethiopia at all. Most of them are from Addis, or if not from Addis, they are people who have connections with

someone in America, who went to a private school, who have mostly educated parents. Hum so yeah, most of the people in Denver are educated individuals. Many came as students while Haile Selassie was in power, and did not go back. Any Ethiopian book you read was written by a member of the Ethiopian elite, who came here to establish diplomatic ties with the U.S., thus, sent by the Emperor. Or they were students, part of the elite class. The lion's gate's author, she comes from elite, when I say elite is when they came as Haile Selassie's elite. Those people are of that connection, the Emperor connection. Most of them came here in the early times. In the 60s they came here [to the US], and went to private schools. They were and are very advanced, and they never returned, they couldn't (Interview 2012).

Both interviews emphasized that the Ethiopian school system, being reflective of the American one, was a determinant for Ethiopians to relocate to the US. As a case in point, the majority of first generation informants noted that when they had the opportunity to flee Mengistu's dictatorship, they were determined to reach the United States. They believed that by reaching the United States, they could attain education for themselves and for their children, and thus, have the assurance for social mobility. As Awate pointed out, when he first relocated to the U.S., his expectations were to find suitable employment commensurate to the bachelor's degree he had obtained at the University of Addis Ababa; unfortunately, his bachelor's degree did not help, because of his skin color.

Indeed, there are divergent social and economic opportunities held from one group of refugees/migrants to another, which are important to note, because the type of relationships instituted between immigrants and the host society is highly dependent on the immigrant's economic, and sociocultural provenience. Attitudes toward white elite members of immigrant groups are dissimilar from the attitude reserved towards low-wage low-skilled immigrants, and immigrants with darker complexions (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002, Karraker 2008). Thus the provenience of immigrants, the color of their skin, and

the status they enjoyed in their country of origin are important determinants for the type

of relationships they can develop with the host society.

### 6.5.3 Immigrants versus Entrepreneurial

Many first generation Ethiopian immigrants were part of the Emperor's

entourage, and as such, they were considered *entrepreneurial* rather then *immigrants.*

That was, because they were affluent, highly educated, and coming from a privileged and

elite class. For those reasons rather then feeling anomie and alienation, they enjoyed

enhanced entrepreneurial opportunities and social and economic integration. However,

the seizure of power by Mengistu compelled both intellectuals and aristocratic against

their wishes, to remain in the United States indefinitely, Tsega commented that if the

situation in Ethiopia had not worsened as it did during Mengistu's regime, Ethiopian

elites would never have settled permanently in the United States:

> They loved their country [Ethiopia] they had everything there. They had no
> intention to indefinitely settle in America, they only came to obtain higher
> education. They decided to stay [in America] only because they knew that with
> Mengistu's policies, their lives were in terrible danger. Now they will never go
> back, because they will never have that life style again (the life style they had as
> the Emperor's attaché). Sadly, their life style has changed here as well. They no
> longer benefit from their privileged status (Interview 2012).

Their new position as refugees, and their consequent inability to return to Ethiopia caused

them to lose their entrepreneurial *status quo* of which they had benefitted from earlier.

The labeling system transformed their identity in the host society from Ethiopian

intellectuals and entrepreneurial into the collective identity of refugees. The imposition of

a refugee-constructed identity stripped them of their identity, hindered their socialization

process in the host society, and removed their ability to pursue high-power careers.

### 6.5.4 Downward Mobility - Changes in Gender Roles

As noted before, in the majority of instances, the work available to refugees/migrants is in low-paying, low-skilled jobs, and, most often, in undesirable positions that native borns will not take. Many of my informants pointed out that, regardless of their education and skills, once resettled in the United States, they faced downward mobility. The majority had to accept positions beneath their education and training, and their salary was not sufficient to maintain a family.

In light of these circumstances, Ethiopian women had to assume the same responsibilities that, in Ethiopia, are attributed to men, or to the household patriarch. Namely, they had to obtain employment, and assume equal responsibilities to the economic well being of the family; and, as a result, altered and destabilized the traditional husband-wife relationship. However, it is the downward mobility experienced by men that destabilizes the traditional husband-wife relationship, and not women's contributions to the well being of the family. Men's inability to properly provide for their families implies that women's salaries are equally as important to the salaries earned by men; and, this undermines patriarchal's values. That is, the culturally bound male image that requires men to be the sole breadwinner for the family. This situation leads men to feel a sense of diminished control over their personal lives, as well a diminished control over the structure of their families' values and laws. Accordingly, all Ethiopian men refugees/migrants informants lamented experiencing a loss of social status; autonomy, power, and they're feeling a profound sense of sociocultural isolation. In most cases this state of affairs resulted in emotional stress that caused an imbalance within the family structure.

Additionally, many informants noted that because, for the most part, both parents have to work long hours, and parents often have to work several jobs, when children return home from school, they are alone, without any guidance. Older siblings are in charge of younger ones, and daughters, as traditional values require, are responsible for house chores, and for taking care of their siblings. Young boys, who have more freedom than girls, spend many hours watching television, which according to their parents, is problematic, since they become too Americanized; while older boys go out and get involved in troublesome activities. Parents, who are compelled to work so many hours, do not have time to discipline their children, and this results in the dissolution of a proper Ethiopian family structure that is in accordance with Ethiopia's cultural values.

**6.5.5 The Ethiopian Family Women's Culturally-Localized Power.**

The dissolution of a proper Ethiopian family structure can lead to the demise of a proper social structure, as the Ethiopian family in Ethiopia is the point of convergence, the basic institution of society (Getahum 2006, Haile 2008, Holtzman 2008). "Relationship between men and women, young and old center on the family, which is the focus of both social and economic activity" (Holtzman 2008: 72) the family is intertwined with the wider social networks of support, and as the individual is part of a collective group bound with others, so is the family unit. Each family unit is part of a collectivity that gives support to each other. The collectivity of the families is bound to the collectivity formed by women who support each other and offer support to all members of the community.

These forms of community support are an integral part of the Ethiopian worldview, and further, the help provided to one another stems from the moral core value

that denotes the We versus the I. Solidarity and support are part of a values system that is transported from Ethiopia into Denver and their new social spaces of resettlement. Women, as the keeper of the family, are socialized from early age to act together as a cohesive social unit, and as my women informants commented, taking care of family members, younger siblings, and elderlies, is not only a duty, but is a way to express their love and care for the family. Caring for one another was in Ethiopia a way to overcome difficulties; as, it is, today, among my informants living in Denver.

It is through women's interaction and coming together that familial problems are brought to the surface; and thus, societal problems are brought to attention and resolved. Moreover, the family is seen as an instrument of continuity of social norms and customs, which are particularly important to maintain a solid family unit. Since it is the mother, or the eldest female, in charge of maintaining harmony among family members, then, she is also the one maintaining harmony in society. However, when Ethiopian women resettle in the U.S.; because of the differing values between the two cultures, they lose importance in society. That is, because motherhood in the West is not considered as such an important role as it is considered in Ethiopia, and harmony in the family is not attributed with harmony in society as it is in Ethiopia and other African cultures.

Additionally, the Ethiopian society is hierarchically organized from ruler to slaves, and both cultures and politics of Ethiopia emphasize this hierarchical and vertically stratified society. Hence, each member's sociopolitical position and status are clearly defined and respected. The ranking of the individual is defined by seniority and age, as is the position of family members in the home (Oyěwùmí 1997; Getahum 2007). The father is the head of the household, and as such he has control over the family

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members. The mother and elder women, though they enjoy privilege status over their sons, and younger family members, they rest under the status of the patriarch. However, the majority of my informants alluded to the shared responsibility family members hold; but, more importantly mothers, though, undeniably rest under the patriarch, they surfaced as the ones who hold the final authority in daily matters.

At first, it was difficult to see this authority because I held preconceived ideas about the topic, insofar as; I tended to view authoritative power through a Western, or EuroAmerican point-of-view. Thus, equating power to career paths, monetary retributions, and the like. However, by formulating a deeper and more nuanced analysis, I soon discovered that women's power is in their role as mothers, as well as, in their domestic duties. Ultimately, my findings contradict much of the existing literature. Hence, I insist that the contradiction is spurred on by the preference of a Western analytical stance. The biggest challenge I had in extrapolating female authority was due to anthropology reliance on a European-derived model for interpreting non - European people's lives, and by marginalization of anthropologists of color. I, therefore, distanced myself from a Eurocentric analytical framework, and based my analysis on an African feminist framework as articulated by Mojubaolu Olufunke Okome (2003), Oyěrónké Oyěwùmí (1997, 2003), and Niara Sudarkarsa (1981).

The latter when analyzing women's position in pre-colonial West Africa ask the question: if more women work outside the home are their overall positions in kinship and residential groupings to which they belong more important? (Sudarkasa 1981: 49) Her answer is that in pre-colonial West Africa, the distinction between domestic and public often overlapped, since "the economic roles of women in traditional West Africa were

part and parcel of the overall domestic roles of wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters, around which the lives of most females were ordered" (Sudarkasa 1981: 49), she concludes that women's status cannot be appraised by their "entering the world of men" or by their work "outside the home" as the public sphere in pre-colonial Africa was not conceptualized as the "world of men" but as one in which "both sexes were recognized as having important roles to play" (Sudarkasa 1981: 54 - 55). Sudarkasa cautions Western scholars that ignoring the crucial contributions of women's domestic duties is not only problematic, but also inaccurate in the study of women's economic activities in Africa, and not only West African women, but also all African women.

I present here excerpts from my fieldwork from which one can garner women's roles in society, and the cooperation between women and men. These cases, however, if posited in contraposition to a Eurocentric frame of analysis, would identify conflicts rather than cooperation, because if I analyze gender roles using western perspectives, the role of women, as mothers, becomes less relevant in relation to who exerts influence within the family structure (Brantley 2003). The cases presented suggest mother's authority, rather than submission. The first excerpt comes from a conversation I had with Lielit, a first generation Ethiopian woman refugee/migrant. Lielit immigrated to the United States with her husband, who is about 15 years her senior; she was, as she narrates, a child-bride. Her family had sent her away when she was about 13 years old:

> They married me off so I could escape. I'm younger, 13, no, maybe 15, I was a bride child. They sent me away because of the Dergue, the war, the Red Terror. Everything was upside down, everywhere was blood . . . After 4 months, I was pregnant, I was scared I was vey young. It was very hard, it was the first baby, and I'm little I'm 13. I am alone [she and her husband were resettled outside of Africa, where they had no family or friends]. There is a problem with young girls having babies, because they are small and the baby cannot get through and the

baby dies, the mom dies, but I'm in the hospital. They check every thing and my health is good, and my baby's health is fine. Good hospital, good, good hospital (Interview 2012).

As she recalls, she was just a kid when her first child was born, and, because in their first country of asylum, they were alone, without family or friends, she had to go to the hospital to deliver her premature baby, alone.[33] Additionally, although, they lived within an established Ethiopian community, they did not have much contact with other community members, as individuals were still fearful of the Dergue, and of people who could have been associated with the regime. Nevertheless, when Liliet returned home with her baby, the women of the community, first covertly, and then, openly, helped her, by bringing food, and by giving her advice, but, more importantly, as she recalled, by giving her moral support.

The people in her community, as she noted, were all Habasha, the neighborhood was Habasha and they worshipped in a Habasha church. Nonetheless, there was little social interaction, and relationships were difficult to make; and, as she observed, only women developed meaningful relationships among themselves, while men rarely did. Men, as she recalled, did not form relationships, but only made acquaintances. Liliet's husband was all alone, and after nine years of living in the Habasha community, he had not developed any real friendships, as she had done, and he was happy to relocate to the United States where he had friends from his native region. They have now been married for about 35 to 36 years. They have ten children, and have raised four more. She never

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[33] Because the baby was premature, her husband was at work and she could not reach him.

worked outside the house, and she does not have American citizenship, since she failed

the test, because of her inability to study:

> It was too difficult. We took the citizenship together, me and Mulu. We went together. First I took care of the children, while he went in the room, and passed the test. Then he took care of the children, Mulu did! I went in, and I failed it. I do not know the questions, I do not know the history, I do not know anything of the United States. Mulu beat me, he got it, he got citizenship in 1980, maybe 83. Me, I did not try again. Every year I had a baby, every 10 months, babies, babies, I did not even ask to try again (Interview 2012 emphasis in original).

When I asked if Mulu ever helped around the house, or if she ever talked to him about

birth control, she bursts out laughing, she was laughing so hard she had tears streaming

out her eyes, and she commented,

> No, no, never, ever, he never do anything of a lady's work. Men never ever ever enter in the kitchen, they do not. Mulu is old fashion he is my way or the highway. He never helps, but I'm old fashion too. He's strict, very strict, but he's the best, the best husband, the best father . . . He worked three four jobs to take care of us, to put all the children to school. He worked, and I stayed home with the children (Interview 2012).

She also points out that, though, Mulu would never participate in roles deemed

exclusively feminine, in the interview for their citizenships, he took care of the kids! In

her worldview, that was extraordinary. In Ethiopia, and in her household taking care of

children, is strictly a woman's role that a man does not know how to accomplish.

I asked her, who was in charge of the family?

> Mulu is in charge of everything. He is good. I only listen I do not say anything. I listen. When they get in an argument [her husband and children] I'm listening and when they finish I go to the children and I talk to them, or I go to Mulu and I talk to Mulu, but I want do it in front of them [the children]. I tell either to the child or Mulu why did you say that? Or that was not right, I tell them, but not in front of each other. I'm not in it, but I tell them. Mulu is very good anyway he knows a lot. I had a good time with all the children, I'm happy, Mulu tells me I'm like the children I tell him hey what you talking about, that is my job and I have a good time (Interview 2012).

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The conversation I had with Liliet, if analyzed through a EuroAmerican framework, will, in my opinion, reveals an oppressed female subjugated by her patriarchal spouse. A European-derived model of analysis will illustrate a traditional form of gender control. However, I would argue that such analysis is inattentive and overlooks specificities pertaining to the Ethiopian family structure. Liliet asserts her authority by maintaining harmony within the family. When an argument strikes between Mulu and one of the children, Liliet does not intervene during the altercation, but will intervene later, when she can talk to each of them separately; thus, she mediates between the two. Not only does she mediate, but also she takes part in the argument by expressing her opinion regarding who is at fault, and thus, who needs to apologize, and, who is in the right, and thus who needs to receive the apology. A few days later, while talking about her parents, one of Liliet's daughters asserted that her mom always has the final word, particularly about family matters. Furthermore, she contended that, although her father is the patriarch and the authoritative figure of the home, he, nevertheless, consults his wife before making any family decisions. Finally, she claimed that her mother's role as the family keeper and as a stay-at-home mom is considered the focal point for the children's success. Liliet, as a mother, keeps harmony in the home, and she provides the guidance for her children's success, which in turn, makes possible a prosperous and successful society through the successes of the younger generation.

Western-derived analysis ignores women's domestic roles as a crucial contribution to the family's success, and thus, a successful society. The perception of power comes from Liliet acting out her responsibilities of motherhood, supporting a fluid

relationship between father and children, and thus, maintaining the children close to the family unit. She asserts her power with her husband and children by asserting her opinions in family matters, by making sure that both husband and children respect one another and understand one another. Her intervention in quarrels and family dealings assures that the argument ends in a constructive and positive manner, thus maintaining harmony, not only within the family unit, but within the community, as well.

Here it is particularly important to note that a salient problem discussed by many study participants refers to the conflictual relationships between parents and children. The conflicts, many asserted, are due to the economic constrains faced by refugees/migrants families, which compel both parents to gain employment, and, this prevents mothers from properly raising their children. This situation, in turn, causes the distancing of second-generation boys and young men from the family's traditional values. The distancing from traditional values causes youth to adopt cultural practices that are different and contrast from their parents. More importantly, because of economic constrains, there is a lowering in the refugees/migrants original social status; and this causes young men to adopt negative behaviors of inner-city youth. On the one hand, boys seemingly integrate at a faster pace to the immediate American environment; and on the other hand, they display problematic behaviors, which provoke the diminution of academic achievements that often lead them to a path of downward socioeconomic mobility (Hirschman 2001). The majority of informants noted that girls and young women, because of their specific roles within the domestic sphere, remain closer to Ethiopian cultural values, and learn to better negotiate norms and behaviors of the two cultures. Because Ethiopian mothers actively engage their daughters in the cultural values of their home country, while negotiating

cultural norms of the host society, assure their daughters the ability to float between the two cultures, without questioning or doubting their transnational hybrid identity.

Carola Suárez-Orozco, Marcelo M. Suárez-Orozco, and Irina Todorova (2008) in a study conducted among first generation immigrant students, concluded that immigrant students who are able to "float between identities, as opposed to complying to a single, fixed identity or to a hybrid of multiple identities at a single point in time" (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2008) are more likely to achieve high academic achievements, which leads them to upward mobility. As a case in point, 1.5 and second Ethiopian refugee/women, who negotiate more easily between layers of identity, have higher rates of upward mobility. Therefore, academic achievement, among other things, is dependent on the ability to negotiate different cultural values and identities. Once again, it is the mother's, in this case Liliet's ability, to maintain a strong family unit necessary to forge, what Bourdieu's calls, a strong cultural capital, that enables her children to achieve upward mobility. By having a strong Ethiopian cultural capital, 1.5 and second generation participants develop a strong Ethiopian identity that enables them to 'float' between an Ethiopian identity, alongside an American identity.

Bourdieu (1986) fixes the family as central in the acquisition of various forms of capital, including cultural capital. The acquisition of Bourdieu's cultural capital through the family unit is well illustrated by the American Sociologist Wilkes Karraker, who writes:

> Cultural capital is articulated through the family in the form of socialization of values and norms, habits and customs that then, in turn enhance or inhibit the accumulation of educational, economic, and other forms of capital. The family, which is maintained together by the mother, that can provide access to many diverse cultures can enable its members to accumulate symbolic capital in the

form of language, education, and other traits that increase cultural   adaptability (Wilkes Karraker 2008: 154).

Women' s agency rests in their traditional roles, and, also, as we saw in the case of Liliet, in their ability to form intimate relationships, which helps them to cope against the social isolation they experience when relocating in unknown social spaces and helps them to feel a sense of belonging. Their role as mothers, and their women-centered associations, transforms them into a collective force that gives support and affirmation to one another, and enables them to provide culturally-approved role models to their daughters. On the other hand, the loss of status experienced by men results in the loss of their identity, and their ability to provide appropriate cultural role models to their sons. This situation is aggravated by American laws that regulates parents' relationships with their children by curtailing their disciplinary styles, which is what Ethiopian men refugees/migrants feel as an additional displacement of their power.

## 6.6 Generational Conflicts

### 6.6.1 Rearing of Children: Disparities Between American Family's Laws and Ethiopian Family's Values

Several informants observed that the different discipline styles between Ethiopia and the U.S. for child rearing can be troublesome. Ethiopian parenting styles are considerably different than the American ones, and their family's values are significantly different as well; this causes tensions and conflicts to arise, and thus, becomes stressors within the Ethiopian family. The most important aspect to be considered, because it can create very difficult situations, pertains to America's laws and regulations about the family. In Ethiopia, parents, particularly fathers, have total control over their children, and corporal punishment is widely accepted as being a method to curtail children's

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behavior. However, corporal punishment in the U.S. is equated with domestic violence, and, thus, considered unacceptable under American standards. Corporal punishment can lead to charges of child abuse resulting in severe legal consequences.

For the majority of Ethiopians, this state of affairs is frustrating and paradoxical, and as a first generation male interviewee related, is an abuse of power by US's authorities. Ethiopian men perceive that the political and legal framework of the United States seriously contrasts to the Ethiopians' values. Disciplining children becomes a source of stress. Ethiopian parents feel that, by submitting to the American laws and regulations, they lose respect from their children, who no longer obey them. The fathers, being the discipliners, are placed in a peculiar situation, where their patriarchal authority is questioned, both by their children and by the American law. This is a reality faced by other refugees/migrants coming from patriarchal societies. Jon Holtzman (2008), for example, reports the same situation unravelling among the Nuer resettled in Minnesota, who struggle to find an acceptable balance of raising their children between Nuer and American practices.

Another aspect of child rearing that is significantly different, and again problematical refers to the Ethiopian upbringing, which stresses kinship rather than independence, as the American style promotes. However, school-age Ethiopian children are constantly engaged with mainstream American culture, and this often results in generational conflicts. Mainstream American society emphasizes individuality rather than kinship, and bestows more freedom to its youngsters. These differences cause Ethiopian youths to rebel against their family. This is particularly true among Ethiopian/American boys, who, although enjoy more freedom than their female counterparts, they are,

nevertheless, more curtailed than American youths. These pervasive differences in the value system between the two cultures cause grave disruption within the family unity (Getahun 2006; Haile 2008); a disruption similar to the disruptions experienced by other migrant and transnational households (Al-Ali 2002; Espiritu 1999; Karraker 2008; Fresnoza-Flot 2009). Those combined conditions exacerbate an already difficult situation, that of being resettled in a rather dissimilar cultural space of one's own, and to the coming of terms with the several changes daily life presents.

Consequently, men face increasing difficulties enforcing what they see as a desirable pattern of household organization. Their authority not only is questioned by their own offsprings, as illustrated above, but is questioned as well by the authority of the dominant society. Lastly, the authority over their wives is greatly diminished as well, as not only do women enter the workforce, and thus, become economically independent, but, as Espiritu (1999) points out, there is a rising trend toward labor markets favoring immigrant women over immigrant men, and this causes the latter to experience a diminished sense of self-esteem. This state of affairs provokes familial turmoil and marital conflicts. Hence, marital conflicts can be inherently linked to economic power and modes of production. Structural obstacles to social and economic integration are central issues pervading the lives of refugee and migrant groups. Hajdukowski-Ahmed et al., (2008) writing about women refugees, illustrate how harsh working conditions such as night shifts, and, or, juggling several part-time jobs, as the majority of my study participants do, contribute to the heightening of familial conflicts, and renders the rearing of children highly problematical. Because parents are too busy, and because women have to enter the workforce outside the homes, they do not have the same time to dedicate to

the family and children, as they did in Ethiopia. To curtail the problems arising from their absence, parents rely on the Church to impart solid, cultural values to their children.

## 6.6.2 The Role of Women and the Church

Part of the discourse that takes place in the Church is the relational problems between children and parents. The Church, as discussed previously, is a place of worship and a performative site for culture. Parents confided that they bring their children to church to raise them in the Christian tradition, and in the Ethiopian traditional values, as well. Several parents, I interviewed, worry about the notion of their children becoming too Americanized. The main concern for both first generation Ethiopian women and men refugees/migrants is the distancing of their children from Ethiopian cultural values. They see the distancing from traditional values as the primary cause for the increasing rise of generational conflict, which according to many, brings, in turn, the erosion of a traditional social structure and family unit. Women, in their traditional roles as mothers and family caretakers, are the keepers of Ethiopian social structures. The majority of second generation confessed that they are closer to their mothers than their fathers, and only one said she is closer to her father. Mothers, according to 1.5 and second generation narratives, always strive to maintain alive their Ethiopian identities by teaching their children strong family values. They further related that the love for their mother translates into their love for Ethiopia. Moussa et al. (2009) write that women and girls are more vulnerable than men in flight, refugee situations, and in resettlement, but are, nevertheless, the most resilient, taking "[on] additional roles in caring for family members and maintaining the family and the community" (Moussa et al. 2009: 1, 2).

Interviews among all three groups, as well as interviews conducted with male respondents, confirmed women as the pillars, and stalwart supporters of the family, even in the most dramatic of situations. One gentleman talking about his family commented: I am the sole authority figure, but my wife is the pillar of our family (BGV FN 2012). Another man noted,

> Children respect their father; they address him in the formal way. In my household I make the rules for my children and wife. There can be only one head of the house and that is the father, but the father is the least loved. The mother is greatly loved. Girls are particularly close to their mothers (Interview 2012).

Tsehai declared,

> My father makes all the decisions, but there is no doubt that real important decisions, the ones concerning the family, are decisions where my mom will have the last word. My dad can say everything, but ultimately, she decides. You know she lets him make all types of decisions, but there are some that only she will make. Then, of course, my dad gets the acknowledgment (Interview 2012).

When I inquired which are the decisions she ultimately makes, Tsehai replied that, for example, mothers make all the decisions regarding girls, since they are the one in charge of their daughters' socialization practices. Furthermore, boys, although, freer than girls, are required to let their mothers know their whereabouts. Finally, the roles of women being closely linked to the well being of the family, children, and community bestow them with the daily responsibilities for decision-making. It is noteworthy to mention that 1.5 and second generation women, for the most part, have gained success and upward mobility, as one informant said, I do not know why, but girls, for the most part, are more successful and driven, yes girls are more driven than guys, it is interesting (Interview 2012).

However, during field work, women and girls alike told me that gender roles are still very conventional, not only that the roles are conventional, but the view held by the majority of my research participants is very traditional. Hence, men are seen as the primary breadwinners, even when they are not, while women are seen as being responsible for domestic work. After school, young girls are expected to be home to help cook, clean, and take care of younger siblings. As a consequence, girls are kept much closer to the family than boys. Boys are granted more freedom; they are not expected to be home right after school, and they are not required to let their parents know their whereabouts as precisely as girls are requested to do. The freedom allowed to boys results in their distancing from the family values. That happens because they do not have role models, and they develop the tendency to mimic problematic behaviors of inner-city youth, which often results in their dropping out of school. Girls, on the other hand, remain much closer to the family and to their mothers, and, contrary to boys, they pursue higher education.

Girls do not question their heritage as boys do, because as Abebech commented, by growing up close to their mothers they learn about their history and culture. Once again, it is the mother who imparts the knowledge; a knowledge, which is no longer, rooted into a regional or ethnic homeland, but is rooted in the perception of Ethiopia as the homeland. The mothers are the agents that negotiate between different aspects of cultures, and thus, rather than instilling a pure original regional or ethnic root, they instill in 1.5 and second-generation youth a love for Ethiopia that is pluralistic rather than monolithic. Like Rushdie writes in his Imaginary Homelands, 1.5 and second generation Ethiopians, thanks to their mothers' active negotiation of cultural differences, choose

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plurality and hybridity, and thus, choose Ethiopia as the homeland, with all its differences integrated into the idea of one Ethiopia. This is evident in the types of organizations 1.5 informants create to benefit the community. Organizations such as the Ethiopian Community Center offers cultural and language classes that include all the different regions of Ethiopia, the different dress styles, hair braiding, as well as, the three main languages, thus Amharic, Tigrigna, and Oromo.

## 6.7 Ethiopian Women In Denver

### 6.7.1 Women as Story Tellers

It is about time that we start singing about our own heroic deeds.

(Buchi Emecheta Intruduction to: From Orality to Writing: African Women Writers and the (Re) Inscription of Womanhood 1994: 137)

Several informants shared that parents tell stories about Ethiopia and their lives prior to resettling in the U.S., to their daughters more often than to their sons, because girls are more present in the homes than boys, who are often absent. Storytelling serves two purposes: it recovers the parents' cultural past, and it enables 1.5 and second-generation youth to become part of their parents' cultural heritage. The habit of preferring daughters as the recipients of stories deepens female cultural knowledge and enhances women's abilities to move back and forth between the Ethiopian and the American culture. It shouldn't be surprising that life narratives are transmitted from mother to daughter, Obioma Nnaekema writes, "[i] n the beginning was Africa/orality/ the world and the word was women's" (Nnaekema 1994: 137).

Storytelling thus becomes a source of empowerment. Indeed, girls, being recipients of cultural knowledge, are rooted more firmly in the family structure, which, in

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turn, enables them to achieve self-fulfillment and independence, because, by remaining

close to their Ethiopian heritage, they do not question their identity; but, on the contrary,

they develop a strong sense of who they are and where they come from. Once again,

Nnaekema (1994) writes, that in Africa's oral tradition, women are very visible, and not

only as performers, but as producers of knowledge. She continues by affirming that

several studies conducted about African oral tradition confirm and testify the active

participation of women, "[a] t professional and nonprofessional levels, in the crafting,

preservation, and transmission of most forms of oral literature (Nnaekema 1994: 137).

More importantly, the author stresses the importance of "[t] he centrality of oral

performance at important junctures in the life cycle, (e.g., birth, wedding, death) and the

visible presence of women in such ceremonies makes their active participation

imperative"(Nnaekema 1994: 137). Ruth Finnegan, in the same vein, writes that not only

are women central, through narrative performance, in important junctures of life cycle,

but they are prominent figures in areas of narratives that are not linked to life cycles.

Thus, this corroborates the role of women as disseminators of cultural traditions.

**6.7.2 Women as Mothers**

I don't know how to explain my mom....well she is... She is the **most** loving and caring

for her children! (Interview 2013; emphasis in original)

Fathers rule, but Mothers are the most loved! (Interview 2013)

My study demonstrates that cultural knowledge and strong familial bonds

correlate with upward mobility. Here, I present a few excerpts that illustrate the agency of

women as producers of knowledge, and how, through their storytelling, they transfer cultural knowledge and traditional values to their children, particularly to their daughters. Medhanit's recollections:

> The women in my family were the ones that kept everyone together so my mom, and my aunt, and my grandma, we were with them a lot. My grandma was always there she told us stories, so my first memory of a human being was my grandma she was always there, and my aunt was always there, and my mom, of course . . . She never disagreed with my father, they both wanted us to be successful . . . but she cared more about our emotional wellbeing and how that was going to translate into our work, versus my dad who was very practical and there is no emotion involved either you get an A or you don't and that is it! My mother was more loving. Ethiopian women are emotionally in touch, they go beyond just being moms, they have a way to emotionally connect that it is difficult to put into words . . . I cannot put my mom into words, the type of mother she is. She goes beyond just being a mom . . . And my grandma, she is even greater . . . Ethiopian women are very nurturing, emotionally knowledgeable, though strict, they emanate love, it is amazing and it is good to be raised in that (Interview 2012).

Medhanit was born in Ethiopia and moved to Denver when she was 12. The relationship among the women of her family was, as she states, unique, beautiful, and loving, and the love of her mother gave her self-assurance, and provided a solid base for her success in life. The value of education was important for both of her parents, and because of it, she and her sisters always strived to do well. However, she recalls that the emotional support her mother gave her was very important for her academic achievements; I wanted to do really well to please my mother! During my conversation with Medhanit, the importance of her female relative was apparent, and her observations illustrate the important role they had in her upbringing and development, My grandma told us so many stories, we just set there listening ... they were beautiful. Her female relatives were always present, and always supportive. The loving relationships they provided for one another are attributed to Medhanit's and her sibling success. Her father, on the other hand, was absent. When I

asked about her relationship with him and other male relatives, she replied that though

she loved him, he was always gone, and she only began having a relationship with him as

an adult. The other male relatives, as she recalls, were passing figures, who did not have

an impact on her upbringing.

Enku, a second-generation participant while, telling her story, like Medhanit,

stresses the impact female relatives had in her life:

> I'm close to both of my parents, but I guess I'm closer to my mom. I can talk to
> my mom, I can confide her things . . . She always told me stories, stories of
> her life before coming here, stories of her women's relatives. ... I don't know why
> her women relatives, I guess is because she was more with her female relatives
> than with her male relatives . . . I love my dad, but when he gets angry I guess we
> are more afraid of him than her, but they are both in charge I would say equally,
> yes, but in different ways (Interview 2012).

> I think it is easier to control girls than guys . . . girls are kept closer to the family.
> For example, when I was younger, I had a lot of chores at home, and my mom
> kept a real close watch on me . . . and ... it's easier to keep a girl home versus a
> guy who is not necessarily used to do house work . . . My boyfriend is the oldest
> son of only boys. He was the one to help in the home and babysit his younger
> brothers... But, if he had a sister, she would be the one doing house work
> (Interview 2012).

> Girls are definitely more driven than guys. Guys drop out more easily, they are
> not high achievers. Girls seek better education that is definitely true, yes
> absolutely. But is not always the case. For example, my boyfriend went to CU of
> Boulder and has a degree in Civil engineering, but generally that is not the case
> (Interview 2012).

Here it is interesting to notice that Enku's boyfriend, being the oldest of only

brothers, assumed the responsibility that is usually associated with girls, and thus, he was

kept closer to the family. Contrary to the general trend that sees young men taking

downward paths, he pursued and completed higher education.

When I asked yet another informant about education, here is what she told me,

Education is definitely a priority, but girls are more driven. I know some successful guys, but it is true that girls, for the most part, are more successful and driven, I don't know why, though, it is interesting. That is a weird one to understand. That's why the community center was started, you know, by [...] Yes that's why she started it, because so many of them, of guys are not doing well, young guys yeah so that is one of her goals that's why she started it. It is a mystery for all of us of why they are not doing so well you know, and then the women are (Interview 2012).

Abebech, who has a sister and a brother, confided that her brother, who was never required to stay close to home, was influenced by street gangs and got involved in more or less organized crime. She observed that, because her brother was never at home, he did not have the opportunity, like she and her sister did, to listen to their parents telling them stories of Ethiopia, and of their life prior to resettlement. She recalled, how her mom loved telling her and her sister about her life as a young girl in Ethiopia. Although her mom was young when she fled Ethiopia, she, nevertheless, had fond memories of her family life before the military junta, where everyone was in a closely-knit community. Her mother shared with her how everyone was like a family, and women got together to do work, and the children helped and played. The community was more than a community where one lived, but was a place that provided support and love, and where life, her mom said, was easy and made sense. Through her parents' narratives, she learned the history, values, and costumes of her parents and of Ethiopia. Through their stories, she learned to love their land, and learned about their sacrifices that urged her to achieve success. Those were feelings that the majority of women informants shared with me.

Undoubtedly, the power of mothering and the power of storytelling are revealed through the success stories of female informants. Unfortunately, as Abebech often

reflected, the freedom reserved to boys and young men, when in the American environment, becomes problematic. Many informants regret that boys are lost and become detached from the family structure. Martin Delany, a black, nineteenth-century philosopher, in his 1852 political treatise, The Condition, Elevation, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered, brilliantly wrote:

> Our females must be qualified, because they are to be the mothers of our children As mothers they are the first nurses and instructors of children; from them children, consequently, get their first impression, which begins always the most lasting, should be the most correct (Delany 1852: 204-205).

As Delany wrote, my informants, both women and men, observed that the role of Ethiopian women as mothers is important, since they are the ones teaching their children, and giving them self-assurance, and guidance. Many observed that, since women had to enter the work force, the family is experiencing trouble, and children are no longer being raised appropriately. Indeed, to curtail the parents' absence in the homes, Ethiopian women, from the 1.5-generation group, have opened Ethiopian organizations such as the Ethiopian Community Center, and the Ethiopian Cultural Center where they attempt to teach children about their heritage and languages. However, as Abebech commented, the community centers, though helpful, cannot replace a mother, or a mother's knowledge. African literature accentuates the point of motherhood and the important roles mothers inhabit within the family. Mariama Bâ (1980) writes,

> Those women we call 'housewives deserve praise. The domestic work they carry out, and which is not paid in hard cash, is essential to the home. . . . Their silent action is felt in the least useful detail . . . The management of the home is an art. . . . Managing the family budget requires flexibility, vigilance, and prudence in performing the financial gymnastics that send you from one more or less dangerous leap to another, from the first to the last day of the month. To be a woman! To live the life of a woman (Bâ 1980: 64)!

The financial gymnastic figures dominant because of the economic difficulties refugees/migrants face in their resettlement. As I stated in the introduction to this chapter, Ethiopian women refugees/migrants have organized themselves in different ways to give support to each other. Women-centered networks offer different services from providing housing for newly-arrived Ethiopians, to the offering of affordable child care, where children are cared for by Ethiopian women and are taught proper Ethiopian cultural canons. The women of my sample study are responsible for the household budget. Liliet's husband works three jobs, and she is responsible for the allocation of money, making sure that money is saved for their children's education, as well as, for helping family members in need. Ethiopian refugees/migrants are closely connected, and, if a family experiences hardship, the people in the community, particularly women, will pull their resources together to help. During Sunday's worship, the women of the community take turns cooking for the entire community, using their money, and not taking from the church budget. Women, as Bâ writes, are the ones that silently make sure that their family and community members are cared for.

## 6.8 Dichotomous Discourses-Distorted Perceptions-

### 6.8.1 Constructed Identities

However, we cannot discard the dialectic about Ethiopian women, or, for that matter, women in general. The perception of women's power undergoes a process of change in which a contradictory portrayal of their persona surfaces. In other words male participants praised their spouses, daughters, and sisters for their roles in the community, and for their roles as wives, and mothers. They placed high values on the responsibilities women have toward the well being of the children, family, and community; and further, they recognized women as indispensable to the well being of society. However, at other times, they portrayed women as weak and subordinate to men. Not only men tended to denigrate women, but a vast academic body of work does it as well; namely studies and writings with a Eurocentric American conceptual framework, that do not recognize, the diversity and specificity of African realities, and insists on Western constructions of knowledge as universal (Chilisa 1980, Nnaekema 1994, Okome 2003, Oyěrónké 1997, 2003, Sudarkarsa 1981). Filomina Chioma Steady (1981) reminds western scholars that the situation of African women "[s] ets the black women apart as having a different order of priorities" (Steady 1981:22–23). She further calls on western scholars to recognize the uniqueness and diversity of African women in order to grasp a better understanding of African women's position in society, without, however, negating that the position of women as mothers is paradoxical, because mothers inhabit both a central and marginal location (Nnaekema 1997). However, what is important to emphasize is that mothering as a social construction, and not as a biological construction, requires agency (Nakano Glenn et al. 1993).

In the following pages, I illustrate how the roles of African women, rather than being viewed as an asset to society, are transformed and rendered null by the Euro-American conceptual frameworks and point of analysis. That is, because Euro-American scholars and feminists lack points of reference about African women; and, thus, cannot recognize the specificities of African women's lives, such as religion, ethnic background, socio-economic, and class, which shape their realities (Steady 1981;Oyĕrónké 2003). By universalizing the position of women, and imposing western specificities to all women, the subordination of their roles gets reified, and is particularly salient as they resettle in the United States. That is because it interferes with women refugees/migrants reconstruction of continuities that is reflective and respecting of their identities as African women, which do not always conform to the identities of western women. There are several aspects and reasons for this issue, which I present as I proceed in my analysis.

African women continue to be viewed as subordinate to men, and as I was conducting my research, male participants would denigrate their counterparts through stereotyping discourses, depicting women as being gossipers, false, and submissive to their will. Yet, the women in my study do not appear to be subordinates to men; and thus, I argue that the denigration of women results from the diminished social status Ethiopian men refugees/migrants experience in the U.S. The lack of employment, or underemployment, provokes a diminished sense of authority in the family, and a diminished self-esteem, which, in turn, is exacerbated by women entering the salaried workforce, and their rising to the position of financial providers. A woman as financial providers, strips Ethiopian men of their identities and pride, and provokes their denigration of women. Thus, it is this frustration that provokes the denigration. The

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division of roles specifies each gender with her/his place in society, but, when this division is altered, and men are deprived of their roles, their role in society is lost, and, with this loss, they experience a loss of identity.

As illustrated in literature, Ethiopian men are patriarchs, and, as such, they receive the status of rulers. The father, or male member of the household - the patriarch - is the head of the family that retains control of all family's matters, resources, and decision-making. Because of patriarchal norms, as western literature posits, women are necessarily considered inferior, and as having little or no social power. However, I believe, as Steady (1981) insists, that it is in the division of roles that African women assert their autonomy, and as Sudarkasa (1981) asserts, it is through western writings that women's domestic functions are judged inferior, while men's public functions are deemed as superior.

Hassen (2002) writes that the characteristics of the Ethiopian family structure are patriarchal, and reflect the culture and politics of the Ethiopian society at large. Both culture and politics of Ethiopia emphasize a hierarchical and stratified society where its members's social and political positions are clearly defined and respected, as are the positions of family members in the nucleus of the home. Social interactions are regulated on the basis of class, ethnicity, age, and gender, which affirm and validate patterns of inequalities, since the position occupied in society determines for its members either a status of superiority or inferiority. This hierarchical order of the Ethiopian society is firmly rooted and can be traced back to the expansion of the Abyssinian empire in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, when the Amhara people established their authority (Hassen 1999).

As confirmation to the inferior position women held in patriarchal societies, Getahum (2006) writes that women are first required to be obedient to their father, when not yet married, and their movements need to be controlled, and then after marrying women "[a] re required to be submissive to the will of their husband" (Getahum 2011, 139). However, power, or the lack thereupon, is culturally recognized. For example, Bartholomew Dean (2003) when writing about the Urarina society, illustrates how power among Urarina women is recognized "[t] hrough their participation in gender-specific productive activities . . . and through their primary roles in critical aspects of horticulture, fishing, and foraging" (Dean 2003: 220). However, those gender- productive activities are not recognized as a form of power in a Euro-American theoretical framework. Furthermore, as Dean continues his analysis of the Urarina social hierarchies, he confirms the importance of oral tradition, discussed above, which is held by women, "[w] omen posses their own oral genres, most notably ritual wailing" (Dean 2003: 220). However, Dean's recognition of women's power rests on his analysis based on indigenous knowledge system, rather than a western knowledge.

Additionally, the discourse of women disempowerment is caused by the shift of mode of productions from non-capital to a cash economy, which disempowers traditional gender-specific productive activities, because as Huston (1979) writes,

> The need for cash is so pervasive and acute that it has also changed attitudes about the relative value of specific types of work. In the past, neither men nor women were paid for performing traditional family duties. Today the availability of work for money is a critical issue because some family needs can only be met with cash. Unpaid traditional roles no longer evoke respect, and women - who frequently have assumed an even larger share of these traditional family tasks - consequently have seen their authority erode within the family (Huston 1979: 24).

Ethiopian men feel that their authority is eroded as well because, as they resettle into the United States, they are forced into menial and low paying-jobs. The difficulty in finding and holding a job that pays enough to support a family is meager, if not all together inexistent. Because of this situation, female counterparts have joined the workforce, and this creates conflicts in the family structure, as men feel diminished (Getahum 2006, Espiritu 1999, Pedraza 1991 Pessar 1995, 2003). Hence, instead of forming cooperation, as we see in societies in which cash is not essential, e.g. the Ache people of Paraguay; who are a successful foraging culture in existence today (Münzel 1973; Bribiescas 2012), conflictual relationships arise between men and women.

To gain a holistic understanding of Ethiopian refugee/migrant women, as I mentioned before, I integrated in my research, Ethiopian men refugees/migrants, as well. I made this decision, because women always related their experience in relation to the experience of their spouses. This is due to the Ethiopian cultural worldview that conceptualizes the individual as bounded with others, like the philosophical view of African cultures expressed by Goduka (2000), which corresponds to "I am we; I am because we are; we are because I am" (Goduka 2000: 75). Therefore, I believe that I could not have had a robust analysis without incorporating Ethiopian men's points of view. Here I present a few cases that illustrate the conflictual relationship that arises between Ethiopian men and women in resettlement. Some of the comments my informants shared with me reveal a viewpoint that diminishes women. However, such comments, I believe, were elicited by the loss of privilege men experienced, and not because they are culturally embedded, and, as such, there is an embedded lack of respect.

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I present part of my interview with Adhane, as it captures the complexities

Ethiopian couples refugees/migrants face when they resettle in a different cultural space,

while it illustrates, as well, men's respect of women's traditional roles:

> In Ethiopia, the husband is the absolute authority and the wife is a subordinate, and each has specific roles, where here is more or less equal. This change is very difficult, because as a man you don't usually like to give up your authority. You would like to continue having the saying, having control of the affairs in the house. Although, you want to give up your authority, it is difficult to give up . . . In Ethiopia we *prefer* if they stay at home taking care of the children . . . It is a very important task, better than their going to work, because as you see here we both have to work and kids are lost (Interview 2013).

He continues by telling me that to give up power, when you have always had it, and, it is

sanctioned by society, is very hard; thus, when the wife gains economic power, equality,

and independence, it is culturally difficult to accept. That is, because as I mentioned

before, men derive their identity from the social status they have in society, if such status

is lost then they feel diminished. As he continues his story, he tells me that in Ethiopia, he

was the sole provider, able to financially provide for the entire family, including his

parents, and his parents' in-law. However, since relocating to Denver, his economic

power has been reduced dramatically, and he can no longer take care of his family, not

even his immediate family without the help of his wife. That, as he says, is hard to

accept, and diminishes his self-esteem, and the pride he derived from his male image, as

the provider. His new situation, as is the situation of the majority of men I interviewed,

does not comply with the cultural image of the Ethiopian man, who is the ruler, the

patriarch, the provider, and the head of the family.

Moreover, he tells me that, *as Ethiopian women enter the American work force,*

*they become immediately emancipated, whether it is a good job or not, whether it is a*

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*menial job, or it is an intellectual one, but for Ethiopian men it is the opposite* (Interview 2013)! There are two reasons for women in Ethiopia to refrain from working: (a) women stay at home to raise the children; and (b) men earn enough income to take care of the family; and, so, as he observes, women in Ethiopia are not required, like here, to work, which is preferred, so that children are properly taken care of. Adhane continues and observes that children here are lost, because they do not have proper guidance. Thus, the work and roles of women are no less, than the work and roles of men (Interview 2013). Kaleb's excerpt, illustrates the pervasive feelings men experience when losing pride, status, and position:

> In Ethiopia I took care of everything, Bilu my wife, stayed home, she took care of the children. All the women of the family took care of the children. It was a big cooperation. I did not need to come home right away, I could visit my friends, she did not need to know all my whereabouts, because she was with her kin and the other women. . . In the village the kids are watched by everyone; every one is responsible. Here you have to work you have to pay for your children [childcare]. Here you make money, but it is not enough so your wife has to work, and now she tells me what to do, and she does not respect me the way she respected me back home. Here women get together they complain, and they gossip, in Ethiopia it was different, it was better (Interview 2013)!

The frustration of Tsega, a first generation participant, surfaces as well in his exclamation: *oh women, you can't leave them, they get into troubles!*

A common justification, I received from male interviewees, for controlling women's whereabouts and social interactions, is that, if they are let free, they cause trouble, as by nature, they like to gossip and gossiping can lead you into troubles. However, from Kaleb's comment, and the comments of several participants, before being resettled in the United States, it did not transpire that women whereabouts needed to be so closely controlled, or, that women, are by nature, gossips. The issue here in the United

States is that both men and women have to work outside the house, and also have to be responsible for domestic work. Thus, there is more monitoring of the whereabouts from both sides. However, men resent this situation more keenly than women, which prompt them to asperse their wives.

As a case in point, one day while having coffee with a male participant, he confided that their[34] women can easily get into trouble because of their habit to gossip, but more importantly, gossiping leads women into becoming disrespectful to their male counterparts, which is absolutely unacceptable. One particular gentleman added that there are myths telling about women being castigated by gods for their wicked tongues. When I searched for the story, I was unable to find any such tales. However, a while after this particular conversation, I stumbled upon an article entitled, "The Concept of Masculinity in Ethiopian Culture" written for the "International Journal of Social Psychiatry" by Donald Levine, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the University of Chicago. The article was written in 1966. In his report, Levine (1966) writes that a number of Ethiopian legends narrate tales of women turned into stones, because of their vile tongues. Although I still could not find the story, it is interesting to note that males assert their superiority as reflected in what it might be said in their mythology. In Levine's article, the legend accredits males' discourse of women's inferiority, emphasizing women's speech as trivial and unnecessary. I, however, like to underline that, although Levine's essay comes from research he did in Ethiopia, the story telling of women as vicious beings was found, nevertheless, in a Western writing.

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[34] The possessive noun is for my credit, since he did not want me to think he was talking about me as well, being a woman.

**6.8.2 Cultural Form versus Social Control**

I now present a communication I had with a first generation participant, Enana, which took place at the outset of my research. If I analyze the conversation through a Western conceptual framework, it reflects, on the one hand, women's empowerment and independence as derived from being single women without a husband, or of having husbands depicted as equals. On the other hand, it reflects man's authority, which is assumed through Enana's comment to ask Assefa, who is her friend, Besrat's husband, for permission for her friend to participate in the study. As the interview was ending, I inquired if my participant knew women who would be interested in sharing their stories. Here is her answer:

> Yes, maybe Emebet, she won't have a problem. Emebet is like a man, she doesn't ask permission to her husband, no not Emebet, and her husband helps, he helps in the kitchen. He learned. Or I can ask Yogit, she lives here with me, her husband is in Ethiopia. No husband is good. Maybe Azib she's not coming now, though she comes maybe around three o'clock, yeah talk to her, she drives a cab [a taxi] all night, yeah all night. She's good very good, no husband. And Besrat, yeah Besrat she knows. She is good to talk to . . . we know each other from Addis Ababa. She's good for interview maybe Anne can call Assefa [the husband] to see if it' s ok, yes (Interview 2012)?

When, at a later date, I phoned Enana and inquired about the interview, the following transpired from the conversation: You spoke with Anne yes? And Assefa gave blessing, good good. We do Saturday yes? Saturday is good for her and Assefa (Interview 2012).

We met the following Sunday after Mass, and both Enana and Besrat wore their traditional clothes. During our conversation, Besrat explained that she had asked her husband's permission to participate in the study out of respect to her husband; and not because she is subservient to him. She continued, by explaining, that as they still respect

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the traditional values of the Church, such as, for example, dressing in their traditional clothing, so, they also respect traditional values of behavior between women and men. Sharing one's activity with a male counterpart is respectful and does not denote subservience. Ethiopians are very private and do not easily share personal information. However, by participating in my research study participants had to forgo their reluctance to share private and familial stories. Hence, asking a spouse for permission, is, as I argue, respecting the family and family practices.

As I conducted more interviews among first generation Ethiopian women, it became evident that the Ethiopian system of patriarchal ideology is still rooted in the minds and lives of the interviewees. Patriarchal power, as we have seen, privileges men, while penalizing and oppressing women. However, the patriarchal behavior I witnessed in the Ethiopian community not only varied, but was also at odds with my findings. The idea of Ethiopian women being inferior and subalterns to their male counterparts, and as such, victims of a social product, did not always align with my findings. Without dismissing numerous frictions that exist in the Ethiopian gender relation, through data gathering and analysis, I found evidence of women's agency and power. An agency that goes unnoticed if the data is analyzed purely through a Western theoretical framework. As African feminist theories criticize, Western theories universalize western gender theories and deny power to nonwestern methods of resistance and empowerment.

## 6.9 Perception of women's power

### 6.9.1 Where the Power Lays According to Ethiopian Women

Some of the questions I asked were: "As women enter the extra-domestic workforce, do the attitudes toward marriage, family, and children change?" "And, if there is an attitudinal change, does this change reflect a gaining of power?" "Does this change reflect a positive gain Ethiopian women refugees/migrants feel they have acquired since resettling?" "Does their attitude towards marriage, family, and children change upon entering the workforce in Ethiopia as well?" "And, if it does, can it be attributed to a natural process of change taking place, regardless of migration?" I then researched at what average-age women, still living in Ethiopia, contract marriage and start having children; and then, I compared the findings to my sample group to determine, if the trend was uniform. I made sure to examine marriage and fertility rates of Ethiopian women living in urban areas since my sample group resides in the city. To discern marriage patterns in Ethiopia, I used the article written in 2013 by Annabel Erulkar, who is the Country Director and Senior Associate of the Population Council in Addis Ababa; whereas, for fertility rates, I used the demographics research-working paper done by Tadesse, Fanaye, and Derek Headey (2007) for the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI). First, I present the marriage patterns of women still living in Ethiopia; and, then, I compare them with the findings of my sample group.

Selected characteristics of Ethiopian women, still residing in Ethiopia, aged 20–24, by age at first marriage, 2009–2010:

Figure: 12 Ethiopian women's age at first marriage residing in Ethiopia

| Married before age 15 (N=275) | Married at ages 15–17 (N=500) | Married at ages 18–19 (N=432) | Not Married before age 20 (N=464) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 17.8 | 28.4 | 40.7 | 65.1 |

Then I compared the chart with my sample group, which has an N number of 15

respondents.

Figure: 13 Ethiopian Women age at first marriage residing in Denver

| Married before age 15 (N =15) | Married at age 15-17 (N= 15) | Married at age 18-19 (N= 15) |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 0 | 0 |

I then inferred that marriage patterns, since resettling, have changed, because only one

respondent aged 20, was married, but none of the other informants aged 20 or less were

married. I then compared the number of children born from my sample group, with the

number of children born in urban areas in Ethiopia, and here again, the numbers are much

different. Below is the Table from the EDRI:

Figure: 14 Ferility Rate in Ethiopia year 2011

| Age | # of children born | Children Desired |
|---|---|---|
| 15-19 | 0.07 | 2.79 |
| 20-24 | 0.53 | 3.18 |
| 25-29 | 1.40 | 3.57 |
| 30-34 | 2.49 | 3.84 |
| 35-39 | 3.45 | 4.38 |
| 40-44 | 4.59 | 4.32 |
| 45-49 | 5.64 | 4.39 |

For my sample group, I report the number of children born to informants aged 24-38; none of the informants aged 18-24 had children. I did not include informants from the first generation group, because the majority came from rural areas, rather than from urban areas. The number of women taking the survey from 1.5 and second generation numbered a total of 30 respondents, and the number of children is 42, which is an average of 1.4 child per woman, which is lower than the number provided by EDRI. I indicated the number of children desired, because it reflects my sample group's desire to have a higher number of children. In most cases, the number of children born is lower than the number of children desired, because of economic constraints and lack of family support as understood in the Ethiopian family.

I then analyzed the attitudes toward marriage among my sample study, keeping in mind that the average age at marriage for first generation informants was 15, and that,

currently, in Ethiopia, the average age for marriage is 16.1 (USAID 2006, 2008). Since I had nominal data that is not normally distributed, I decided to do a non-parametric test or Chi Square Test ($x^2$). I selected my critical value at $\alpha$ 0.05 and then again at $\alpha$ 0.01; then, I performed the statistical test to see if, statistically, there is a significance change in marriage patterns. Below are my results.

Figure: 15 Coding Systems:

| Coding | | Coding Marital Status | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1st Generation | 1 | Married | 1 |
| 1.5 Generation | 2 | Separated | 2 |
| 2nd Generation | 3 | Divorced | 3 |
| | | Single | 4 |
| | | | |

($H_0$ )   There is no significant difference in regards to attitudes towards marriage between

First-   1.5, and Second-generation Ethiopian refugee/migrant women

($H_1$ )   There is a significant difference in regards to attitudes towards marriage between

First-   1.5, and Second-generation Ethiopian refugee/migrant women

The results are on the following pages:

Figure: 16 Chi Square Test

Alpha 0.05

| Categories | Married | Separated | Divorced | Single | Total Pop. | Comparison | Difference | Difference^2 | Difference^2/ comparative pop. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| First Gen. | 12 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 19 | 6.08 | 5.92 | 35.0464 | 5.7642 |
| 1.5 Gen. | 3 | 1 | 2 | 10 | 16 | 0.76 | 2.24 | 5.0176 | 6.602 |
| 2nd Gen. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 15 | 2.66 | -1.66 | -2.7556 | -1.0359 |
| | 16 | 2 | 7 | 25 | 50 | 9.5 | -8.5 | -72.25 | -4.4473 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | 5.12 | -4.12 | -16.9744 | -17.849 |
| | | | | | | | 0.64 | -0.64 | -0.4096 | -0.64 |
| | | | | | | | 2.24 | 2.76 | 7.6176 | 3.400714286 |
| | | | | | | | 8 | -6 | -36 | -4.5 |
| | | | | | | | 4.8 | -4.8 | -23.04 | -4.8 |
| | | | | | | | 0.6 | 0.4 | 0.16 | 0.266666667 |
| | | | | | | | 2.1 | 7.9 | 62.41 | 29.71904762 |
| | | | | | | | 7.5 | 6.5 | 42.25 | 5.633333333 |
| | | | | | | | | | | 18.1137619 |

$X^2$ = 18.11376

Df = (3-1)*(4-1) = 2*3 = 6

$\square$ = 0.05

CV of $X^2$ = 12.5916

$\square$ = 0.01

CV of $X^2$ = 16.8119

Since the $X^2$ value is greater (18.11376) at both $\square$ = 0.05 (12.5916) and $\square$ = 0.01 (16.8119) than the critical values, we can reject the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative hypothesis. We can assert with 99% certainty that among the three populations, there is a very highly significant difference in marriage patterns. Thus, the attitude toward marriage is different between first - 1.5, and second-generation informants. From the multiple sets of data I have collected and from triangulating my quantitative data with my qualitative data, I can speculate that as women gain higher education and upward mobility marriage patterns change. Through patterns and themes linked together, I discovered several reasons related to these findings:

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There are three main patterns.

First pattern:

Economic constraints = downward mobility

Women join work force = upward mobility

Gaining of independence

Delays in marriage

Second pattern (which feeds from the first one):

Economic downward

Inability to start a family

Males' feelings of loss of status

Third pattern:

Both sexes receive secondary education

Females pursue higher education in greater number than males = female upward

mobility/

Males' downward-mobility

Intellectual incompatibility

Avoidance of marriage

In addition to performing statistical analysis on marriage patterns, I analyzed childbearing patterns. One of my preliminary findings indicates a shift in childbearing practices due to economic constraints. The majority of informants observed that if, they had the economic means to have more children, they certainly would have more; however, they lamented that life in the U.S. is too expensive and difficult. Therefore, the cost of raising children,

and maternal employment are two of the causes for the diminished number of children born in the Ethiopian community. Moreover, women's higher education and employment opportunities account for later marriages and the reduction in fertility rates.1.5 and second generation informants pointed out that both their parents stressed the importance of education; and thus, challenged traditional values toward early marriage for women.

Finally, an important factor that affects both marriage patterns and child bearing is the disparity in the raising between educated young women and less educated young men, where the former experience upward mobility and the latter experience downward mobility. In most cases, the disparity is due to young men choosing to drop out of school, while young women choose to pursue higher education. Among my sample group of 1.5 and second generation informants, all women either are employed in corporate America, or they are business owners, or they are enrolled in some university, while among the sample group of young men, only one was enrolled in graduate studies and a majority is employed in low skilled work. Among first generation women informants, half of the sample is not employed, but engages in women-centered group activities.

The above activities that women are engaged in are geared toward helping other members of the community, and illustrate the collectivity of women. Women also engage in these activities to gain self-sufficiency and autonomy, and this reflects their agency. Some first generation informants are seamstresses, and others are food caterers. As food caterers, these women cook out of their homes and distribute the food to working Ethiopian women, who have no time to cook proper Ethiopian meals, or proper nutritious meals. Other women offer baby-sitting services, and advertise their services as guiding Ethiopian children to follow proper Ethiopian etiquette. Others yet, as mentioned before,

offer assistance to newly arrived Ethiopians; for example, they welcome them into their homes, they drive them around, and they help them find employment. Once the latter can afford it, they will repay their benefactors.

Among first generation men informants, one is a business owner, a second works as an interpreter at University Hospital, and at the Court House; one, after many years struggling to obtain a job commensurate to his higher education, obtained a second degree from an American University, and is now employed by a federal office. However, as he observed, before obtaining the position he worked in menial positions for two decades, the rest of the male informants work as taxi drivers. Among the 1.5 group, one is pursuing a higher degree, and for the second generation group, only one had completed his bachelor's degree, and none of the others were enrolled in universities. Therefore, I can deduce that economic constraints, men's downward mobility, and the greater value women posit on education, result in changes in the composite of the family, and these changes provide women with greater power in the community. However, Ethiopian informants do not always consider this gaining of power a positive element, since these changes reflect a diminution of human interactions and create a diminution of marriages.

Indeed, these alterations and consequent hybridization are not completely fluid and free of emotional conflicts because: (a) men's loss of status deprives young men of strong role models which results in young boys dropping out of school and experiencing downward mobility to the consternation of their parents; and (b) this, in turn, creates a gap between high-achieving girls and women, and low-achieving boys and men that results in the net diminution of marriages. This situation is in contention with the values Ethiopians posit toward the family and the rearing of children. If on the one hand,

delayed marriages are promoted by parents, who encourage their daughters to obtain an

education, and as such, are reflective of an active resistance to gendered social

construction that hinders girls' advancement; on the other hand, the delay of marriages

and the reduction of births are problematic because fewer families formed and human

relations become weaker, which as many informants observed, is a great loss.

One of my original questions for identifying how Ethiopian women reach a

harmonious life style in the Denver Metro Area was: "What do women feel they have

gained and lost by immigrating?" To answer my question, I compared the following

primary variables with women's answers to those variables:

1) Mothers staying home with children against

(a) Their own daughters entering workforce/entering college

(b) Their own sons entering workforce/entering/college

2) Mothers valuing education against

(a) Their own daughters' educational achievements

(b) Their own sons' educational achievements

I then compared those variables with the women's answers and their emotional states of

mind in regard to education, and in regard to the lower number of marriages. It became

apparent that all mothers highly value education, are extremely proud of their children's

successes, and feel positive about the greater opportunities afforded women in the United

States. But they were also chagrined by their sons' apparent downward mobility, which

creates instability in the family, and causes an imbalance in the community due to the

lower number of marriages. I selected the words they used the most to describe this

situation, and the emotions that surfaced the most. They described the lack of births with

great sadness and disappointment. The words that surfaced the most were: sad, loss, distress, and heartbroken. Women made the following comments: Children are the bread of life, a community without children is a community without life; without children, there is no wealth.

Three women in their early thirties confided that they contracted marriage only to have children; and further, several more informants observed that they had at least one friend, who had married below. When I inquired what they meant about getting married below, the unanimous answer was, getting married to men without a career, or with a lower education than their own. At this point, it is important to note that, for the most part, Ethiopians maintain endogamous marriages. This preference is due to several reasons, which brings forward my second set of analyses, which emphasizes how Ethiopian refugees/migrants navigate race relations in the U.S., challenge racism, contest the imposed static identity of refugees, and through a reproduction of culture reclaim a Habasha identity. The reproduction of culture serves to reestablish a sense of belonging, where continuities reemerge with fluidity, and the Ethiopian cultural values of group unity are reproduced and preserved.

## 6.10 Establishing Belonging in Denver

### 6.10.1 Ethiopian Refugees/ Migrants' Self-Representation

The agency and questioning of self-representation is seen and is expressed by Ethiopian migrants/refugees in their assertion of identity. An identity, which is not a black African identity or an Ethiopian identity, but is a Habasha identity. Notwithstanding, that being Ethiopian, or the Ethiopiannes aspect of their being, is undoubtedly an inherent aspect of their personal identity, their preferred identity choice,

or the way they think of their selves is of being Habasha. This identity distinguishes them from African Americans as well as from all other Africans. Throughout my research process, my informants stated a strong aversion to being called or considered African Americans.

Several informants confided that at their arrival in the United States, they were confused at the racial distinctions practiced in the United States. Many observed that as they landed in the U.S. and were required to complete the immigration form of entry, they were unsure which racial identity to chose because they felt none of the ones listed on the forms, applied to them. Hence, as they were confronted with the U.S. racial categories of Black, White, Asian, Latino, or Native American, the majority opted to specify their ethnicity as either Ethiopians or Habasha.

The term Habasha is usually used to refer to all Ethiopians and Eritreans. However, as I was told, it refers more specifically to the Semitic-speaking people of the two countries. Habasha is said to originate from the Axumite Empire of the first century A.D., when Sabaean traders from South Arabia came into contact with native people and intermarried. The children born from such marriages were referred to as Habasha, which means 'people of mixed blood.' However, several informants disagreed with this etymology and commented that Habasha does not refer to mixed blood, but comes from Abyssinia and means burned face. Undoubtedly, the name retains several different meanings, such as the wandering one, or it describes different localities of Ethiopia, as well as, describing the beauty and intelligences of its people (Marcus 2002). Regardless of its true meaning, through the times, the term has gradually been appropriated by Orthodox Christians of Amharas and Tigrinya's descent to distinguish themselves from

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other people of Ethiopia. In their resettlement, the Habasha identity is used to distinguish themselves from all other refugees/migrants

According to informants, the constructed identity of being Habasha retains the notion of exceptional and unique people. To this point, Michael Dietler points out that, "[d]ifferent communities - or factions within communities — selectively stress and appropriate those aspects that symbolically highlight their own distinctiveness" (Dietler 1994: 587). It is interesting to note, as well, that the name Habasha retains connotations of hybridity. A Habasha identity is a signifier, as Amina's comments demonstrate:

> You know we use the term Habasha more than Ethiopians or Eritrean because it's easier, we know right away who we are. We use Habasha for Amhara, Tigreans and Tigrigna, so it would include all of them, but it would not include Oromo or any other ethnic group, just those three. So my parents are Eritrean Habasha, I am Habasha, but also Eritrean American. Abebech is Habasha, but also Ethiopian American (Interview 2012).

By having and maintaining a Habasha identity, Ethiopian refugees/migrants obliterate the labeling policy, the static identity of being a refugee, and resist American racialization, by distancing themselves not only from other immigrants, but also from African Americans. A Habasha identity insures them, who they are, which is clearly stated in Amina's comment, when she observes that by identifying themselves as Habasha, we know right away who we are. Recognition is an important aspect for the feeling of belonging. Moussa (1993) during her study between Ethiopian and Eritreans in Canada concludes that, "Identity and the feeling of belonging [...] [means] being recognized and accepted by others, by one's group and one's culture" (Moussa 1993: 250). The immediate recognition of a Habasha identity reassures and reinstates a sense of belonging. Medhanit, who migrated to the United States with her parents when she was

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11, while conversing about relationships, confided that, only recently she considered the eventuality, or a mere possibility, to date outside the Ethiopian community, giggling she added, someone who is not Habasha (emphasis in original), clarifying that the preference to date Habasha is not based on discrimination, but on the beauty, to know who one is, as well as to be recognized right away. Enku noted: Habasha are the preferred choice! You may secretly date an American guy, but you would never bring him home, never! She continues:

> The way you look is a Habasha look. I mean you can tell when you meet an Ethiopian/Habasha girl so that kind of things makes you like . . . like it pulls you back and reminds you that you are Ethiopians. And plus it sounds exotic when you tell people 'Oh yes I'm not from here, I'm from someplace else,' they kind of like it. So you have to find someone who is in the middle; you can't date a straight Ethiopians you know, because you like two different peoples you like the way you think is really different, but you cannot get a pure American because they do not understand certain things about you. So you date someone in between so yes my friends and I generally do date Ethiopians, but a different type of Ethiopian, an Americanized Ethiopian, but not totally Americanized either (Interview 2012).

What she means about dating someone "in between" is that second generation Ethiopian girls should date second generation Ethiopian guys, who are somewhat Americanized as second generation girls are Americanized. Second generation Ethiopian women differ from their parents insofar as they have hybridized aspects of the American culture more fully than their parents, or first generation Ethiopians have. However, it is important to point out that their identity is still a hybrid identity. As Enku tells "[a] pure American does not understand certain things about you. When I inquired what she believed the certain things pure Americans did not understand, she replied that:

> The Americanized Ethiopian people who have been here since a young age and got used to the American lifestyle are familiar with the dress codes, and are like Americans, who know how to talk like Americans, if that makes sense, but if you bring them [Americanized Ethiopians] home to your family, they still know how

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to talk to them [how to talk to first generation Ethiopians, namely the parents], they still know how to eat the foods [Ethiopian food], they still feel comfortable in Ethiopia. Those are the kind of Ethiopians you want, because, I mean, it is just being realistic. You know it is like you are stuck in this grey area. It is like me and my friends, we are predominantly Americans, the way we talk, the way we think, the way we act, we act just like Americans, but it is like umm... Just like we are Americans, but not exactly like Americans though, if you know what I mean (Interview 2012).

Enku's analysis of the difference between herself and a pure American is what Bhabha calls the "in betweenness" of hybridity. Before I delve into a more nuanced analysis of the concepts of hybridity and mimicry in relation to my informants, I would like to point out that my findings align with other scholarly articles of research studies conducted outside the Denver Metro Area. For example, Shelly Habecker, reporting on a research study she carried out in Washington D.C. among six groups of first generation African immigrants, writes that her Ethiopian and Eritrean informants from

> Amhara and Tigrinya ethnic backgrounds viewed their Habasha identity as a separate ethnic and racial category that is not black and that emphasizes their Semitic origins. This view, which emerges from historical constructions of Ethiopia's identity, distinguishes them from African Americans and indeed all other blacks, significantly affecting how they navigate US race relations (Habecker 2012: 1203).

These particular similarities are important to point out, because they shed light on the particular ways Ethiopian refugee/ migrants represent themselves, and how they view relationships with other groups. Ethiopians distinguish themselves, not on the basis of race, but, rather, on the basis of ethnicity. Henceforth, the American racial divides and racial stereotyping become for Ethiopian refugees/migrants particularly problematic.

Returning to Bhabha's concept of hybridity, or the "in-betweenness," it is, as illustrated by my informant excerpt, where Ethiopian refugees/migrants find themselves

situated. It is in the in-between spaces, or interstitial space where new signs of identities are formed. As the two cultures clash and coalesce, a new hybrid culture emerges, not a pure American one, nor a pure Ethiopian one, but a hybrid one. As Bhabha postulates, it is in these 'in between' spaces that subalterns elaborate strategies for selfhood. Therefore, as elaborated by Bhabha, hybridity describes the mindset of those who are caught in between cultures. However, if we do not take into account the heterogeneity of people caught in two, or more cultures, we run the risk of universalizing the term.

Rob Nixon (1994: 24), like Loomba (2005: 145-153) warns and admonishes that the discourse of hybridity to represent and be accurate, needs to take into account the particulars of class, castes, sexuality, gender, and other social hierarchies. He writes, "(hybridity and) mimicry (…) are unavoidably local and immensely variable" (Nixon 1994: 24). If we fail to take inconsideration particularities, then hybridity falls short of representation. As a case in point, Ethiopians and Eritreans who view their selves as Habasha had a different way of expressing their identity from the few Oromo I interviewed. More importantly, their hybrid identities varied substantially. If the Habasha I interviewed distinguished themselves more strongly from African Americans, it was not the same case with the few Oromo I met. The latter identified easily to the oppression African Americans experienced, due to their own oppression, which was inflicted upon them by the Abyssinian empire. Hence, although Oromo still do not identify themselves as African American; nevertheless, their relationship with the African American culture differs substantially from the relationship their Ethiopian compatriots have with African Americans.

**6.10.2 Ethiopians in Denver**

The Ethiopian community in the Denver Metro Area, as in other cities of the

United States, experienced a great development, and has been well established for the last

twenty to thirty decades. Thus, it features many Ethiopian restaurants, grocery stores,

liquor stores, and coffee shops, where Ethiopians meet with fellow Ethiopians, and where

few Americans hang out, this makes the need to interact with English-speaking

individuals nearly unnecessary. These spaces provide an arena for cultural performance,

where Ethiopian refugees/migrants redefine their Ethiopian identity, reestablish a place of

belonging, and start to rebuild continuities. Amina, a second-generation participant,

commented:

> When they came here [Ethiopians refugees/migrants] they usually know someone
> from Ethiopia, and then they meet their friends' friends, and become part of their
> click, and of their group. The people who work, [Ethiopian workers] they most
> likely will work with Ethiopian people they know, with Ethiopian friends, who
> have helped them find the position. So they live [first generation and-newly
> arrived Ethiopians] in an environment where they are surrounded by Ethiopians.
> And even if they are in America, they really do not get out of that environment.
> Even with the Church, you know we have Ethiopian Churches. We have
> everything Ethiopian, here so it is easy for them to still be in their culture without
> really getting to know others, I mean Americans. The ones that get a little more
> out [from the Ethiopian community] are the more educated ones, but then they
> have their own group, their own clicks. They might go outside of the community,
> but not much (Interview 2012).

As the conversation progressed, Amina noted (corroborating several other

interviews), that even among Ethiopians of the younger generation, interaction with

Americans can be scarce. She continued by explaining that during college,

Ethiopian/American students interact with American students, and they might date one

another, however, as soon as they return home to their Ethiopian communities, such

relationships end. The tendency is to maintain relationships with Ethiopians and /or

Eritreans, rather than with other groups, thus making regular interactions with Americans less frequent. Regular interaction with members of the host society occurs more likely in job situations, and more rarely as friends; though, friendships among Ethiopians and Americans certainly occur. As a result of these practices, dating outside of the community is difficult, is discouraged, and is somewhat frowned upon. Marriages are, for the most part, endogamous. The closely-knit community that was once in Ethiopia is thus transported into the United States, and continues to main a strong Ethiopian identity.

A central, and salient reason for which Ethiopians emphasize their identity and limit their contact with members of the host society is caused by the racism they encounter in the United States. Ethiopians who resettle in the United States face racial discrimination because of their refugee status, and their skin color. Ethiopians refugees/migrants who resettle outside of Africa, experience, for the first time, a form of colonialism; for example, the civilized/uncivilized; black/white; and white/black dichotomy that colonial powers enforced onto their African colonies. Some women informants were, indeed, shocked by the racism they, and their loved ones, faced on their arrivals. Many commented that their spouses were denied jobs and positions because of their color. This is particularly unacceptable, since they call upon their historic past, stressing the history that endows them the honor of being the chosen people. Habasha link themselves to ancient Israel and to the legend of Solomon and Sheba. They insist upon their identity as being neither African nor black, but superior. They call upon their Habasha identity, which they consider superior to others, and thus, they emphasize it to confront and obliterate their ascribed black racial identification (Habecker 2012). To be discriminated against because of one's color is offensive to one's national pride, and thus,

the Habasha maintain their identity as firmly rooted, preferring not to associate with a dominant society that considers them inferior. The racism encountered, coupled with a pervasive mistrust of American bureaucratic institutions refrain many Ethiopians from taking advantage of what American institutions have to offer them.

**6.10.3 Sociometric Analysis**

As I performed sociometric analysis, it quickly became apparent that Ethiopian women refugees/migrants rather than taking advantage of American social structures, rely on Ethiopian- based structures. The vast majorities of these women who come to the United States after Mengistu's overthrow in 1991, come as Diversity Visa holders, as family reunification cases, and /or are sponsored by family members, friends, or acquaintances. All participants noted that they came to Denver because they knew someone who would give them hospitality, assistance navigating the city, finding a job, housing, and any other needs they may have had at their arrival. Indeed, the homes of Ethiopians refugees/migrants in Denver are open to newcomers to provide help and give them support. Women confessed that by giving support to newcomers, they benefit in numerous ways, such as feelings connected to their homeland, and thus, feeling less homesick. Often newcomers have news from relatives and friends, hence, bringing such persons, metaphorically speaking, closer to Denver. Furthermore, although nowadays in Ethiopian grocery stores, they find almost anything Ethiopian, from foods and spices to clothing and art pieces; to receive these items fresh from Ethiopia is always a treat to them.

Few women noted that occasionally, they visit American-based centers, such as Good Will, or the African Community Centers (ACC) for language acquisition, or if their

friends are not able to help them find work, to inquire about finding employment.

Nevertheless, they also added that when they visit these American-base establishments,

they usually meet other Ethiopians, or Eritreans that otherwise they would not have the

opportunity to meet or visit. Enana commented that she had loved taking English classes

at the Colorado African Organization (CAO), where she felt safe, and had the opportunity

to be with other Ethiopian women, whereas otherwise, she might not have had the

opportunity to visit, because of time constraints and distance of residences. These

American institutions, though helpful, are not used as much as Ethiopians networks.

Participants commented, as well, that newcomers and older generation refugees/migrants,

for the most part, do not seek interaction with the host society, and only rarely have

friends outside of their community. As informants commented, Ethiopian

refugees/migrants find solace in the comfort of the insularity of their churches, their

families, and their long-forged social networks.

On the following page, I show an example of their sociometric map:

Figure 17 Sociometric Map

**Sociometric Map Example:**



Appendix 7: Socio Metrics Example
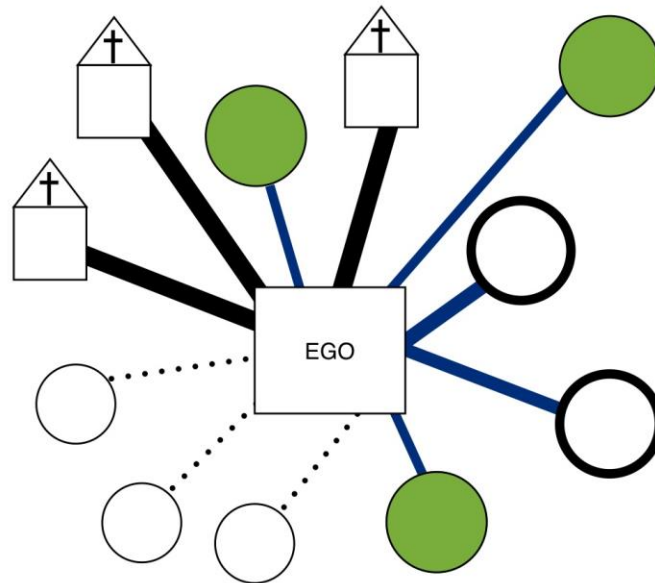
**6.10.4 Habasha Spaces in Denver**

My sample study maintains a Habasha identity in different ways, including the establishment of Habasha spaces, which serve as meeting places. Notwithstanding that their residences are for the most part concentrated in Aurora, they are nevertheless, scattered. Hence, Ethiopians refugees/migrants residing in the Denver Metro Area, as a way to maintain close contact and solidify their community, have established what Chako (2003) calls "ethnic sociocommerrscapes." Along Colfax Avenue, thereby, we find Habasha grocery stores, restaurants, bars and clubs, which play an important social as well as economic role within the community. In these spaces, one can enjoy traditional Ethiopian food, while sipping Harar or Bedele beer, experience a coffee ceremony, listen to popular Ethiopian music, or watch videos of popular Ethiopian and Eritrean singers from home or in the diaspora. As several of my informants commented, stepping into a Habasha space is like stepping back home, feeling as if they had never left. In addition to Habasha spaces, we find what Appadurai terms *media scapes:* thus, television, newspapers, and radio programs, alongside websites, and the use of Skype to call home; thus, creating virtual ethnic spaces in which their Habasha identity is negotiated and preserved.

Within these spaces, as informants noted, they find solace and feel safe and insulated. Although the maintenance of such close connections with Ethiopian, and the preservation of a strong Ethiopian, or Habasha identity could appear to be a resistance

toward integration, in truth it is the opposite. Habasha places are cultural spaces that provide a sense of belonging, where Ethiopians refugees/migrants rebuild continuities to face the discontinuities experienced outside. The insularity of these spaces, rather than being a resistance to integration, gives them a sense of who they are, and where they come from. They are spaces, as Abebech observed, where like-minded people meet and interact. Hence, they are like the spaces Americans carve for themselves to be with like-minded individuals, such as university clubs, hunting clubs, private clubs, meeting clubs, and/or diverse coffee shops where different people meet and establish those spaces as their insular spaces.

The majority of informants commented that the hardest thing of their refugee experience was to leave behind family members and friends. Leaving Ethiopia meant leaving a community that gave them support, and leaving the traditions that gave them stability. The majority of first generation participants noted as well that they left a country and a culture that they loved, but had to leave, in search of safety. Thus to rebuild those communities and to find solace in their traditions, is a form of integration. It is where Ethiopians refugees/migrants rebuild continuities, lessen their search of belonging, and rebuild their identity. In fact, notwithstanding Ethiopians' insularity and strong Ethiopian/Habasha identity, this identity had to be renegotiated in their process of grieving for the losses they experienced, in the context of being refugee women, and in the context of being black women vis a vis the American culture. The renegotiation of their identity is an ongoing process, and is a negotiation between their Ethiopianness in the context of the United States. Medhanit, as I have already mentioned, during our interview, commented that even the best cultures are not perfect and have their ugly

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moments. This comment illustrates how women negotiate, chose, and discard aspects of the two cultures, because they belong to both countries. Thus, their identity is formed and transformed through the interaction of their social world (Moussa 1993).

The creation of Habasha spaces, and the maintenance of strong Ethiopian/Habasha selves can sometime create conflictual relationships between first generation, 1.5, and second generations, since the two latter feel that their parents' Ethiopiannes prevents them from fully entering into the American culture. This tension was best captured while I was interviewing Enku, who blurted out, Why do they have to be so Ethiopian? However, this feeling has its paradox: first generation Ethiopians have instilled in their children the love for Ethiopia, and a pride for their history; thus, all informants from the three groups noted their feelings of pride toward the Ethiopian culture, and for belonging to such a culture. Nevertheless, as Enku's statement indicates there are a definite tension, and a friction that surfaced during interviews. This friction is best illustrated through Enku's analogy:

> Imagine a person who is trying to walk, but than there is someone who is holding their shirt. They are walking and they want to walk, but they walk slowly, because there is still someone pulling them back that is how it is culturally. It is like, if someone pulls you back and reminds you that you are Ethiopian (Interview 2012).

Amina observed:

> When they come here [newly arrived Ethiopians] they always know people and even if you know only one person, that person will connect you with everybody and one thing that is really good is that Ethiopians are really good at helping, if they know you are new they help you out, they give you rent, they give you food, mothers will give you their children to show you around, they are very good on helping you out here. The older community women help each other a lot! If they know there is a woman who is new they open their doors, like my mom would just invite her in. With the younger generation I see the same thing, but the more traditional you are the more you will do that the more open to new Ethiopians you will be, but the one born and raised here, the one more Americanized, than they

are not so inclined to do so, because they just, well they are just not accustomed to do that. The value systems are different. Imagine if you did that to an American, open the doors to an American, as we do with Ethiopians, they will think that you are weird, they would question your intents, but in Ethiopia it is a common thing to do. Invite someone to your house let them drink with you eat with you stuff like that, it is the normal thing to do. But here is different you cannot do that they [Americans] will think you are after something, you are odd! So you are divided on how you have to be (Interview 2012 emphasis in original).

Through Amina's observations, one can detect the tension that surfaces between generations regarding proper behaviors. Amina comments illustrate two related issues: first, it clearly illustrates how the Ethiopian value system places collectivity, and the wellbeing of the group over individualism; and second, how this Ethiopian value system can create tension in what first generations consider a proper behavior, whereby, for 1.5 and second generation Ethiopian/Americans, this behavior brings conflict in their interaction with the host society, and the more individualist "I am" value of the western world. The tension that arises between the two cultural forms is felt among 1.5 and second generation Ethiopians in ways that Ethiopians from first generation do not experience. For first-generation Ethiopian refugees/migrant, the monolithic reality of "I am" does not exist and their behavior undoubtedly favor, and is based on the priority of the group (Oyĕwùmi 1998; Goduka 2009). This tension surrounding favored behavioral patterns, which differs between the two cultures, translates in the preference of pursuing endogamous marriages.

**6.10.5 Endogamous Marriages**

Another finding is in regard to the endogamy of marriage practices. This finding seemingly relates to two separate reasons, which however, are related. Endogamous marriages serve to maintain Ethiopian cultural norms intact and to keep the interactive

familiar ways, with one another, void of tensions. On the other hand, endogamy serves to maintain a true Ethiopian identity by keeping non-Ethiopians out of their social circles, as an informant commented, "In the Ethiopian community, it is preferable having a child out-of-wedlock than marrying a non-Habasha!" Or Enku, as we have seen before, who notes, Habasha are the preferred choice! You may secretly date an American guy, but you would never bring him home, never! For the most part, Ethiopians who marry outside of their group are frowned upon, and are covertly ostracized by the community. In case of exogamy,[35] the norm is to leave the community, however, leaving the community is not a preferred choice by either 1.5, or second generation Ethiopian/Americans. Notwithstanding the different levels of hybridization, the family remains among the three groups as a source of support, unity, and a fundamental dogma of their value system; therefore, leaving is almost never desirable.

Additionally, as aforementioned, endogamy assures familiarity and close-family connections. 1.5 and second generation informants, as Enku so emphatically commented, observed that to bring a non Habasha in their homes can be somewhat distressing; How could you bring an American or even an African American into a home that always smell of exotic spices, with food constantly cooking on the stove, and full of people chattering in a foreign language? Thus, women actively choose who to bring, or who not to bring home. The boys or men who will be brought home are a hybrid of Ethiopian/Americans, and mothers are the ones who will approve or disapprove because of socialization practices. A woman being responsible for the family unit is the one who accepts a new member, and she has the power to acceptance or to reject.

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[35] Marriage outside the group

For example, an informant told me that her son had a child out-of-wedlock. The boy brought home the child soon after she was born, his mother (my informants) introduced the child to the rest of the family, and she raised the child as her own. When I asked how her husband reacted to an illegitimate child, my informant giggled and replayed; He screamed and yelled; but, at the end, it was my decision to keep the child or give the child to her maternal grandparents. I decided to keep the child, the mother is not Ethiopian she is welcome, but the child is raised in the Ethiopian traditions. My husband cannot disagree with that, can he? It is the agency of women that decide the fate of the child, establishing again their localized power that a Western feminist perspective fails to see and acknowledge. A newborn child born out-of-wedlock "imposed" onto the grandmother, according to a western feminist perspective, is simply more of a burden than a form of power.

Marrying between Habasha insures as well a certain look, an Ethiopian look, which is an indicator of one's identity. During the Axum festival while chatting with Shuaga, a young Ethiopian girl, she commented:

> How could you bring home someone that is not from the community? When they [non Ethiopians] come to your house and it smells like ... it smells funny because of the food, and spices, or when they meet your parents and your parents have this thick accent, or even how you look like. Look at [she gives me a list of Ethiopian girls' names] they all kind of look the same, like they look really Ethiopians, I mean you can tell when you meet an Ethiopian girl, so imagine if you have a kid that looks different, it' s kind they are not really Ethiopians (Interview 2012).

Her friend Sophie continued:

> There was a time where I thought that it would be so great if I married an Ethiopian man I wanted my kids to be Ethiopians, I don't know why but I felt like that was the way to go, but not because I was discriminating against any other community, but just because I think I wanted my kids to be Ethiopians, not

because as I said I discriminate, but I want them to have no struggle growing up like I'm part this and part that you know? Now I'm not so sure anymore (Interview 2012).

Medhanit added:

> We are (...) we are Ethiopians, we have a culture we have a way of... You know the way we are, you see us all the time - the way we greet each other, the way we eat together - we fellow-ship a lot we are (...) well we have soft spots for each other you know, haha. When we see someone across the aisle that we don't even know and we go to say hi, because anyhow we always can tell who is Ethiopians, that's how we are and there are people who become distant from that because they just ... they are in America and they marry Americans, and then they have to change, they cannot be like we are (Interview 2012).

Having said that, 1.5 and second generation Ethiopians do not think that changes or changing is negative. However, my informants emphasize that changes that are disruptive to their value system, and particularly concerning the family, are disapproved. Changes are everywhere, as Medhanit noted, not only here in the United States, affecting Ethiopians refugees/migrants, but they are in Ethiopia as well due to changes in lifestyles. What my informants demonstrated is what Medhanit shared:

> Changes are everywhere here and in Ethiopia, but I think that what we don't want to see is our culture to change. We want our economy and our government to change, but we have a very distinctive culture, a culture based on strong values for one another. Ethiopians are very helpful, hospitable people and we don't want that to change. However, there are certain changes that need to take place, yes, those changes (Interview 2012).

The changes she mentions that need to take place are related to patriarchy, male domination, and the pervasive acrimony that has begun to pervade the lives of so many couples, since resettlement. Although, as she notes, and, as all the women noted, gender roles are normal, as women and men are different; nevertheless, the latter need to start helping in domestic affairs, because women, for the most part, are overburdened, and cannot carry on with housework, raising the children, and working outside the home

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without the help of their husbands. Hence, even if women noted that they understood their fathers, brothers, and spouses' frustration at the loss of everything they had, they also noted that it does not change the fact that men need to change, and need to learn to help. No longer in Ethiopia with strong communal living, women are left with the majority of work, and without help. In Ethiopia, in the past, and still today, depending on where women lived they enjoyed women-centered community networks, where they received help and support from other women, family members, and neighbors. A young woman, who has recently immigrated to Denver, was shocked at the lack of those social networks in the host society. Despite the fact that women do organize networks among each other, they are difficult to recreate at the same level of assistance that was common in Ethiopia.

Life in the U.S., particularly in an urban area such as Denver, is not conducive to communal living: places of residence are farther away from one another, only one family is allowed per apartment, rules and regulation on living arrangements have to be followed, or else one risks eviction. Ergo, women cannot help each other as they did in their past lives in Ethiopia. Consequently, men need to take on additional roles; domestic roles strictly deemed as feminine. In many cases, this situation, rather than bringing cooperation, sparks conflicts and violent behaviors. Tadele Demeke (1990), writing about women refugees in Sudan, observed that conflicts between spouses and in the family are a common phenomenon in refugee life, and are further exacerbated by the economic strains refugees find themselves in once they are resettled. As a case in point, my informants commented that for men it is harder to change, because of their prior socialization; but more importantly, because of the frustration they experience because of

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the drop in their status; and, in many cases, their dire economic hardships. While women are positive about their ability to gain economic independence, and their ability to offer better opportunities to their children, they are, nevertheless, nostalgic for the lives they had in Ethiopia, and they worry about their fellow men. Thus, they are nostalgic for a life that the majority of first generation informants said was easier, and richer in human relations. Life in Denver, for first generation participants, has hybridized in ways that at times can be challenging, particularly with respect of human relations

# Chapter 7 Conclusion

## 7.1 Introduction

The relocation from Ethiopia to the United States brings numerous changes due to economic transformations and differing value systems. The coming together of the two cultures brings an element of cultural negotiation ensuing transformation in both the host and receiving society, thus, bringing a component of hybridization. Throughout my research, study participants, particularly 1.5 and second generation informants, commented that there is a natural transformation occurring among Ethiopians, who have been living in the United States for a few years. As Ethiopian refugees/migrants spend time in the United States, they initiate a process of intercultural negotiations, and psychic identifications that surface "[by] the contiguity of different within the same metropolitan space" (Gilbert 2000: 460) that brings hybridization. However, it is noteworthy to mention that the hybridization process differs among first, 1.5, and second-generation informants.

First generation participants have less contact with the dominant culture, and tend to maintain their socio-cultural values vibrant in their daily lives, thus incurring less of hybridization than 1.5, and second-generation Ethiopians refugees/migrants. The reason for a lesser hybridization corresponds to what Loomba, Moore-Gilbert, and other scholars

consider that is, each individual and group hybridize depending on the different experiences the individual and/or group have had. Cultural interaction between the first generation women refugees/migrants and the host society is limited due to complex and diverse reasons, such as language barriers, and differing value systems, but more importantly, I believe, it is caused by the racism Ethiopians encounter in the U.S.

Notwithstanding the barriers first generation women have encountered in the host society, through their agency, whether by mimicking western behavioral forms, or by exhibiting hybridity, they elude racism, and they repossess a sense of belonging by negotiating their own localized authority. Such agency is seen in the repossession of their Habasha identities, and in their determination to reestablish a good life for themselves and their families. Through their negotiation of differing cultural values, Ethiopian women refugees/migrants assert their agency within and outside of the family. Their actions are grounded on the notion of social collectivity and serve to reestablish a sense of community, and a feeling of belonging in Denver. Women shared that the feeling of belonging comes from reestablishing continuities, strong family unity, and a serene family life, and yet, serenity is difficult to achieve. One of the major stressors causing serenity to elude Ethiopian-women-refugees/migrants rests in the difficulties they, and their families, encounter finding employment. As I observe throughout my thesis, once Ethiopians resettle in the United States, and enter the job market, the positions obtained, regardless of their English proficiency, are positions beneath their skills positions shunned by the American population.

The lack of job opportunities, and the pervasive loss of male identity Ethiopian men refugees/migrants experience; make matters difficult in the households, resulting in

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a growing rate of violent behavior, and in women being battered. Although, women do not condone this attitude, they, nevertheless, commented that they understand their husbands, fathers, brothers' frustration, and they stressed the importance of finding culturally appropriate solutions. They also commented on the need to understand the stress of becoming a refugee. The family, as emphasized throughout, needs to remain a central point for stability and support. Women noted that their responsibilities to rebuild a stable, loving family gave them strength because such care gave meaning to their lives. I can say, without risking to stereotype, that all my informants considered the family a central aspect of their lives, and more important than anything else; and thus, without harmony in the family they feel that too much is lost. The family is perhaps the most important component of the core value by which they live; and several informants observed that the opportunities education and a more egalitarian society bring to women, are dwarfed whenever the family experiences turmoil. Women's care for the family is a source of power more vital and more important than just being providers. This is because Ethiopian women play a key role in the education and in the teaching of social, ethical, and moral values to their children; and these values are for Ethiopians essential for a sustainable society. Thus, the survival of the family and the community is fundamentally dependent on Women.

## 7.2 Final Thoughts

The data collected for this thesis illustrate that Ethiopian women refugees/migrants draw strength and determination from the Ethiopian values they learned prior to the 1974 revolution. These are values of family cohesion, of the family as a source of stability, security, and protection. The values they attribute to help and

cherish one another and to the love of their children. These values gave women strength, and sustained them during their life journeys. These are the same values women instill in their children, while imparting the importance of education to reach upward mobility and self-sufficiency. Many first generation women informants commented that their children needed to know where they come from, and who their ancestors are, because only by having a shared history and roots, can their children find their true identity. The majority of 1.5 informants are proud of their history and of their being Ethiopians, and many observed that their parents inculcated in them the values of their Ethiopian identities that are drawn from their traditional values and beliefs. They continued by noting that because their parents sacrificed their lives to give them better opportunities, in turn, they strive to fulfill their hopes, and desires by excelling in academia, and careers.

Unfortunately, there are difficulties, particularly in the situation of young Ethiopian/American boys, who are struggling to find their selves. The freedom enjoyed by boys, rather than helping them seems to stifle their growth and creates an imbalance between young men and women, which, as aforementioned, drastically diminishes marriages. The reduced number of marriage is also attributed to the preference attributed to endogamous marriages, and thus restrains one from marrying outside the community. This preference is a way to maintain their Ethiopian identity, but also is used as coping strategies to refute American racism.

Moreover, the racism encountered in the U.S., means that first generation participants avoid regular interaction with members of the host society, and strive to maintain their children closer to the Ethiopian community, which often creates tension between generations. Second generation participants, for example, are distancing

themselves from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, because they deem it too insular; and, further, several informants commented that their parents were more interested in their learning the Ethiopian history, than in their having a relationship with God. Several young women commented that they used to go to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, but they are now attending the Evangelical Church because it provides strong biblical teachings, and it also provides guidance about social issues that 1.5 and second-generation Ethiopians experience. One of the informants, talking about the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, lamented that she spent more time downstairs learning the alphabet than learning about God. That, in her view, was a paradox. Her parents' faith was contagious, but the orthodox church did not encourage the younger generation to have a relationship with God, they get the children in the basements, they teach them Geez and Tigrigna, but that doesn't help you with the relationship with God to know four languages, it doesn't help (BGV-FN 2012).

Women's source of power within the Ethiopian patriarchal society rests with their roles in the family, and in the women neighborhood networks, and thus, in their power to organize the family and communities. Once they resettle in a host society, they strive to reproduce strong, family ties, rebuild network support systems, and perpetuate valued traditions within the American context. The women of my study were strong-willed, and determined to rebuild their lives, and the lives of their loved ones. Although, almost all of the first generation participants commented about their wish to one day return to Ethiopia, they also commented that, nowadays, thanks to the ease of communication and travel, they do not feel as separated from the people they left behind, as they once did. More importantly, the majority commented that today they feel that they belong in both

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countries because they have shaped hybrid-and-transcultural identities that make them part of two countries and two cultures. Although, I cannot deny the barriers women in my study encountered, they, nevertheless, resisted socially constructed subordinate roles by asserting their agency in reconstructing their families and communities, and also by claiming their position in education, and this has become an empowering source for the new generation.

In conclusion, this thesis examined Ethiopian women refugees/migrants' coping strategies to reach belonging in the host society, and how they redefine their selves, once resettled, in a new cultural space. However, my study focused primarily on one group of Ethiopian refugees/migrants in the Denver Metro Area; and the Ethiopian population in the Denver metropolis is highly discrete; therefore, to conduct further research among Ethiopians from different ethnicities would broaden the spectrum of the study. Furthermore, additional research and analysis about family problems and generational conflicts should be done, taking into consideration an anthropological framework, since the majority of the work I consulted took a clinical/psychological outlook. It is also important to undertake an ethnography about the services the Evangelical Church in Denver provides to younger Ethiopians. The church is attracting a substantial number of 1.5, and second generation Ethiopians, who, not only, find spiritual guidance, but also find guidance for social issues, as well. Finally, it should be of great importance to continue the study of examining marriage and marriage patterns, as the decline of marriages can change the Ethiopian demography of the Denver Metro Area. Further research can thus contribute to the understanding of how younger generation Ethiopians will manage issues pertaining to their communities, as well as, will contribute to the

dearth of research about the growing numbers of Ethiopians resettling in the United

States, and in the diaspora.

Photo Epilogue by Barbara Guglielminotti



**Traditional Clothing Figures 18, 19**

**Traditional Clothing Figure 20**

**Coffee Ceremony Figures 21, 22, 23**

**Coffe Ceremony Figures 24, 25, 26**

**Coffee Ceremony Figure 27**

**Coffe Ceremony Figures 28, 29**

**Making Injera Figures 30, 31**





**Figure 32 Traditional Foods**

**Traditional Baby Carriage Figure 33**

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Appendix A
**Coding System**
For my research I recorded information about First, 1.5, and Second Generation
Ethiopian refugee/migrant women's marital status. The importance they bestow in both
childbearing and motherhood, and the attitude they have toward education. The coding
system used was as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| **First Generation** | 1 |
| **1.5 Generation** | 1.5 |
| **Second Generation** | 2 |
| **Marital Status** | |
| **Married** | 1 |
| **Separated** | 2 |
| **Divorced** | 3 |
| **Single** | 4 |

To discern the importance bestowed upon childbearing and motherhood I used the Likert
5 point scale using the following gradience: Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree,
Strongly Disagree.
The coding system used was as follows:

| Child bearing | Child bearing | Motherhood | Motherhood |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Strongly Agree** | 1 | **Strongly Agree** | 1 |
| **Agree** | 2 | **Agree** | 2 |
| **Undecided** | 3 | **Undecided** | 3 |
| **Disagree** | 4 | **Disagree** | 4 |
| **Strongly Disagree** | 5 | **Strongly Disagree** | 5 |

To grade the attitude they have toward education I used a likert 5 point
important/nonimportant scale using the following gradience: Very Important, Important,
Undecided, Somewhat important, Non-important.
The coding system used was as follows:

| Education | Education |
|---|---|
| Very Important | 1 |
| Important | 2 |
| Undecided | 3 |
| Somewhat Important | 4 |
| Non-Important | 5 |

The first test I run was a Chi Square (X²) Test to verify if there is a statistical difference between the different generations and their marital status

($H_0$ )  There is no significant difference between First Generation, 1.5 Generation, and
2nd     Generation Ethiopian females concerning marital status.

(H1)   There is a significant difference between First Generation, 1.5 Generation, and
2nd     Generation Ethiopian females concerning marital status.

Appendix B

**Research Design**

| Phase | Primary Method Used | Subjects | Key Indicators | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Participant observation | Ethiopian Community; Orthodox Church; Coffee Shop; Restaurants | Women relationships; Daily Activities; Sunday's Activities | Gain entree; Identify Key informants; Developed initial relationships |
| | | | | |
| 2 | Key informant Interviews | Woman Community Leader; Church Organizer; Elderly Female; Young Female | Women Relationships; Women's felt Needs; Activities Outside Community; Friendships | Obtained Informed Consent; Identify Research Assistant; Obtain initial data from Key informants |
| | | | | |
| 3 | Survey | Women/Immigrants/ Refugees | Length of residence in U.S.A; Marital Status; Family Status Citizenship status; Plans for the Future; | Obtained Informed Consent; Identify Needs; Finalized N.A.; Obtain quantitative data |
| 4 | Socio Metric Network Analysis | Women | Relationship among Women; | Obtained Informed Consent; |

Appendix C

**Pilot Testing Questionnaire**

1.      Please mark your age group:

18-25   25-35   35-45   45-55   55-65   65-75   75-85

2.      What is the highest degree or level of education (school) you have completed?

3.      Ethnic identity/province of birth in Ethiopia

4.      Did you live in a city or in the countryside?

5.      How long have you lived in the United States?

6.      Why did you immigrate? Reason and date for leaving Ethiopia.

7.      What was your first destination?

8.      How did you reach your destination?

9.      Did you face problems during your Journey?

10.     Did you stay in a refugee camp?

11.     How was your reception in the host country?

12.     How did you make it to the United States?

a.) as a refugee through neighboring country

b.) As a political asylum seeker

c.) As a visitor

 d.) Through DV lottery

e.) As a student (I-20)

 f.) Through family reunion

g.) If others, please specify: _____

13.     Who helped you when you arrived?

     UN

     Other Agency

     Private Sponsor

14.     What kind of help did you receive?

15.     How long have you lived in the Denver Metro Area?

16.     Please rate your English skills at your arrival in the United States:

     I did not speak or understand English

     I spoke and understood a little English

     I understood a lot and I was able to speak some

     I understood fine and I conversed with some difficulty

     I was fluent

17.     What is your marital status?

     Single

     Married

     Separated

     Divorced

     Widowed

17.     If divorced or separated who helped you with your separation/divorce emotionally and financially?

19.     Do you have children?     Yes     No     If yes how many?

20.     Were your children born in Ethiopia or in the United States?

21.	After moving to the United States have your duties as a wife/husband changed?

What	about as a mother/father

22.	 Are you employed?

23.	Do you participate in activities outside the Ethiopian community?

	Never

	Sometime

	Often

	Very often

	Always


24.	Please Circle do you have American Friends?

	Many		Some		Few		None

24.	Please mark where you met your friends:

	Church

	Workplace

	Community Center

	Neighbor

	Other

25.	How long have you known them? Less than 1 year   More than 1 year  5 years and

	more

26.	Do you plan to reside in the Denver Metro Area, or in the United States

indefinitely?

27.	 How satisfied are you with your life in the United States?

Very unsatisfied

Unsatisfied

Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied

Satisfied

Very satisfied

28.    Please rank the feeling of your belonging outside of the community.  That is

when you participate in activities outside the community, with people who are not of

your    community; do you feel that you are being included fully? In the same

way as if you were with people from the community?

Very strong belonging

Strong belonging

Belonging

Not belonging

Neither feeling of belonging nor of no belonging

29.    What role does the Church have in your life?

30.    Who do you turn to ask for help?

31.    What is your Immigration Status?

Citizen          Non-Citizen          Green Card Holder          Others

Appendix D

**Survey**

University of Denver Department of Anthropology

You are invited to participate in this questionnaire to find out your experience and knowledge about what Ethiopian women have done to adapt to life in America and reach a harmonious life style. It is designated purely for academic purposes: it is part of a thesis project conducted by Barbara Guglielminotti Valetta. Your genuine response to each of the items is important to the success of the project and it is greatly appreciated. Results will be used to increase understanding of women's challenges to integrate to advance the formulation of policies and programs that foster the assurance of their safety while promoting integration and equality; and to fulfill the requirements for the degree: Master of Arts.

Barbara Guglielminotti Valetta can be reached at her cell phone; 312/420-3155, or through e.mail; b.guglielminotti@gmail.com
Participation in this study should take about 15 minutes of your time. Participation will involve responding 16 questions about yourself and your opinion regarding motherhood and education. Participation in this project is strictly voluntary.
Thank you.

Please circle your age group:
        18-25    25-35    35-45    45-55    55-65    65-75    75-85

How long have you been living in the United States?

What was the reason for immigrating?

Is your entire family living in the United States?

Do you have any relatives in Ethiopia?

Please rate your English skills at your arrival in the United States:

 I did not speak or understand English
 I spoke and understood a little English
 I understood a lot and I was able to speak some
 I understood fine and I conversed with some difficulty
 I was fluent

Please rate your English today:

Very uncomfortable    Uncomfortable    Comfortable    Very comfortable    Fluent

8. Are you employed?
   Yes   No     Part Time     Full Time


Do you participate in activities outside the Ethiopian community?

Never     Sometime     Often     Very often     Always


 Please Circle do you have American Friends?
         Many              Some              Few              None


 Please mark where you met your friends:

Church     Workplace   Community Center   Neighborhood     Other

How long have you known them?


      Less than 1 year       More than 1 year       5 years and more

 How satisfied are you with your life in the United States?

Very unsatisfied   Unsatisfied   Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied

 Satisfied        Very satisfied


Please rank the feeling of your belonging outside of the community. That is when you participate in activities outside the Ethiopian community, with people who are not of your community, do you feel that you are being included fully? In the same way as if you were with community people?

Very strong belonging     Strong belonging     Belonging     Not belonging

Neither feeling of belonging nor of no belonging

Please circle your marital status
Single      Married      Separated      Divorced      Widowed

Do you have children?      Yes      No      If yes how many?

Please circle is or was it important for you to have children?
Strongly Agree            Agree            Disagree      Strongly Disagree      Neutral

Is or was motherhood a priority in your life?

Was having a child your choice?

Please circle what is your immigrant/refugee status?
Citizen      Non-Citizen      Green Card Holder      Others

Where do you plan to retire?

United States
Ethiopia
Undecided
Decided
Depends on my children

How important is to receive an education?
Very Important,      Important, Undecided,      Somewhat Important,      Non Important.

In your opinion is education equally important for boys and girls?

Would you be willing to participate in a confidential interview on issues in this survey? If so, please write your name, email address, and phone number. Again, it will be confidential!

Name: _____Email address: _____ Phone

Number:

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Appendix E 1
**Survey Analysis: Marital Status**

The study sample for my survey includes 49 respondents. They represent First, 1.5, and Second-generation Ethiopian women.  The length of time survey participants have been living in the United States varies from 15 to 33 years between the First and 1.5 generation. Only two survey participants have been living in the US less than ten years (4 and 5 years). Second generation survey participants are 18 to 32 years of age.
The sample groups are divided as follow:

First Generation: 19 Respondents
1.5 Generation: 16 Respondents
Second Generation: 15 Respondents

| First Generation | 1.5 Generation moved to the Us by the age of 12 | Second Generation Age 18/25 |
|---|---|---|
| Divorced (met ref camp) | Single (come w parents) | Single |
| Separated (marriage) | Divorced (come w parents) | Single |
| Married (came w husband) | Single (come w parents) | Single |
| Divorced (met ref camp) | Single (come w parents) | Single |
| Married (came w husband) | Single (come w parents) | Single |
| Divorced (married in US ) | Divorced (come w parents) | Single |
| Married (came w husband) | Single (come w parents) | Single |
| Single (student visa) | Single (come w parents) | Single |
| Married (came w husband) | Single (come w parents) | Single |
| Married (came w husband) | Single (come w parents) | Single |
| Married (husband in Eth) | Single (come w parents) | Single |
| Married (married in US) | Married (come w parents) | Single |
| Married (arranged) | Married (come w parents) | Single |
| Married (arranged) | Single (sponsored) | Married |
| Married (arranged) | Married (come w parents) | Single |
| Married (came w husband) | Separated (with parents) | |

| First Generation | 1.5 Generation moved to the Us by the age of 12 | Second Generation Age 18/25 |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Married (arranged) | | |
| Divorced (met ref camp) | | |
| Divorced (marriage) | | |

Appendix E 2

**Survey Analysis: The importance for Motherhood**

The study sample for my survey includes 49 respondents. They represent First, 1.5, and Second-generation Ethiopian women.  The length of time survey participants have been living in the United States varies from 15 to 33 years between the First and 1.5 generation. Only two survey participants have been living in the US less than ten years (4 and 5 years). Second generation survey participants are 18 to 32 years of age.
The sample groups are divided as follow:

First Generation: 19 Respondents
1.5 Generation: 16 Respondents
Second Generation: 15 Respondents

To obtain the data for this topic I asked the following questions:
Please circle, was or is it important for you to have children? Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided Disagree, Strongly Disagree.
Is or was motherhood a priority in your life? Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.
I then administered the following 5-grade likert scale to obtain the answers, Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

| First Generation | 1.5 Generation | Second Generation |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree - ST | Agree - Undecided | Agree - Undecided |
| Strongly Agree - ST | Strongly Agree - ST | Strongly Agreed - Agree |
| Strongly Agree - ST | Strongly Agree - ST | Strongly Agreed - ST |
| Strongly Agree - ST | Agree - Agree | Undecided - Undecided |
| Strongly Agree - ST | Agree - Strongly Agree | Agree - Undecided |
| Strongly Agree - ST | Agree - Strongly Agree | Undecided - Undecided |
| Strongly Agree - ST | Strongly Agree - ST | Agree - Agree |
| Agree - Agree | Strongly Agree - ST | Undecided - Agree |
| Strongly Agree - ST | Strongly Agree - ST | Strongly Agreed - ST |
| Strongly Agree - ST | Strongly Agree - ST | Strongly Agree - ST |
| Strongly Agree - Agree | Strongly Agree - ST | Agree - Agree |
| Strongly Agree - ST | Strongly Agree - ST | Strongly Agree - ST |
| Strongly Agree - ST | Agree - Undecided | Strongly Agree - ST |
| Strongly Agree - ST | Undecided - Undecided | Strongly Agree - Agree |
| Strongly Agree - ST | Strongly Agree - ST | Agree - Agree |
| Strongly Agree - ST | Agree - Agree | |
| Strongly Agree - ST | | |
| Strongly Agree - ST | | |

| First Generation | 1.5 Generation | Second Generation |
|---|---|---|
| **Strongly Agree - ST** | | |
| | | |

**Survey Analysis: Education**

The study sample for my survey includes 49 respondents. They represent First, 1.5, and Second-generation Ethiopian women. The length of time survey participants have been living in the United States varies from 15 to 33 years between the First and 1.5 generation. Only two survey participants have been living in the US less than ten years (4 and 5 years). Second generation survey participants are 18 to 32 years of age. The sample groups are divided as follow:

First Generation: 19 Respondents
1.5 Generation: 16 Respondents
Second Generation: 15 Respondents

To obtain data about education I asked the following questions:
How important is to receive an education? Very Important, Important, Undecided, Somewhat Important, NonImportant.
In your opinion is education equally important for boys and girls?

I then administered a 5-grade likert scale to obtain the answers.
The likert scale answers are as follow: Very Important, Important, Moderately Important, Of Little Importance, Unimportant

| First Generation | 1.5 Generation | Second Generation |
|---|---|---|
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes |
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes |
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes |
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes |
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes |
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes |
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes |
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes |
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes |
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes |
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes |
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes |
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes |
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes |
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes |
| Very Important - Yes | Very Important - Yes | |
| Very Important - Yes | | |
| Very Important - Yes | | |

| First Generation | 1.5 Generation | Second Generation |
|---|---|---|
| Very Important - Yes | | |

**Survey Analysis: Number of Children**

The study sample for my survey includes 49 respondents. They represent First, 1.5, and Second-generation Ethiopian women.  The length of time survey participants have been living in the United States varies from 15 to 33 years between the First and 1.5 generation. Only two survey participants have been living in the US less than ten years (4 and 5 years). Second generation survey participants are 18 to 32 years of age.
The sample groups are divided as follow:

First Generation: 19 Respondents
1.5 Generation: 16 Respondents
Second Generation: 14 Respondents
However for this particular survey I selected 3 more 1.5 participants and 5 more second-generation participants so to have an equal number of respondents.

The question I asked was: How many children did you have?

| First Generation | 1.5 Generation | Second Generation |
|---|---|---|
| 15 | 1 | 0 |
| 13 | 0 | 0 |
| 13 | 0 | 0 |
| 11 | 0 | 1 |
| 13 | 3 | 0 |
| 15 | 1 | 2 |
| 8 | 2 | 1 |
| 10 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | 3 | 0 |
| 4 | 2 | 0 |
| 6 | 4 | 1 |
| 8 | 0 | 0 |
| 11 | 1 | 2 |
| 6 | 4 | 0 |
| 7 | 5 | 0 |
| 13 | 2 | 0 |
| 4 | 1 | 0 |
| 8 | 0 | 1 |
| 9 | 3 | 2 |

## Appendix F

**Sample Focus Groups Questions**

1      How important is for you to have children?


2      Was it, or is motherhood a priority in your life?


3      Was having a child your choice?


4      How important for Ethiopian women is to have children?


5    Is being a mother a source of empowerment within the family structure? And is it a source of solidarity with other women?


6      What are the obstacles encountered by Ethiopian women living in Denver?


7      What do you think Ethiopian women should do to reach a harmonious life style in the United States, particularly in Denver?

# Appendix G

**Examples of Variables**

| Domain | Variables | Methods used to Measure | Population Measured |
|---|---|---|---|
| How long have you resided in the United States? | The length of residence in the U.S. | Key informant interviews; Survey; | Ethiopian female population |
| | Experience of famine | Key informant; Survey | |
| | Experience of "Red Terror" | Survey Key informant | |
| | Established relationships | Key informant; Sociometric; Survey | |
| Have you submitted paperwork for citizenship? | Yes | Survey; Focus groups | Ethiopian Female Population |
| | No | | |
| | Degree of interest in gaining citizenship | Survey; Focus groups | Ethiopian female population |
| | Difficulties encountered | | |
| Are you employed? | Socioeconomic | Key informants interviews; Survey; | Ethiopian female population |
| | Job satisfaction | Key informant interviews; Survey; | |
| | Pay | Key informant interviews; Survey; | Ethiopian female population |
| Extent of network | Number of contact | Sociometric; Survey | |

| Domain | Variables | Methods used to Measure | Population Measured |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Number of contact outside ethnic group** | **Sociometric; Survey** | |
| | **Number of close contact (Family members, friends)** | **Sociometric; Survey** | |

# Appendix H

## Ethiopian Calendar

The Ethiopian year consists of thirteen months; twelve of 30 days each and an additional month of five or six days, depending on whether it is a leap year. The first month of the Ethiopian year is September (or Meskerem) and New Year's Day takes place on what is the 11th September in the Western calendar.

| Ethiopian Month | Equivalent Start Date in a non Leap Year | Equivalent Start Date in a Leap Year |
|---|---|---|
| Meskerem | 11th September | 12th September |
| Tikemet | 11th October | 12th October |
| Hidar | 10th November | 11th november |
| Tahisas | 10th December | 11th December |
| Tir | 9th January | 10th January |
| Yekatit | 8th February | 9th February |
| Megabit | 10th March | |
| Miyaza | 9th April | |
| Ginbot | 9th May | |
| Sene | 8th June | |
| Hamle | 8th July | |
| Nehase | 7th August | |
| Pagume | 6th September | |

The difference with the West dates back to 1582 when the Christian world adopted the revised Gregorian calendar and Ethiopia stayed with the Julian calendar.
As a result, Ethiopia is either seven or eight years behind the Gregorian calendar, depending on whether the date is before or after 1st January. So, the 1st January 2006 in the UK will be 23rd Tahisas 1998 in Ethiopia. Furthermore, Ethiopia is approaching its year 2000 with various exciting millennium celebrations planned to mark this significant date. Ethiopian Heritage Society in North America (EHSNA)