The Lived Experiences and Sense of Belonging among Somali Adults and Youth in Edmonton

by

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Abstract

Edmonton has the largest Somali-Canadian population outside Southern Ontario, and Somalis are the largest African community in Edmonton. Although, many immigrants in Canada face challenges in settlement and integration, Somalis face additional challenges (Mensah, 2010). This study emerged from a desire to explore the lived experiences and feelings of belonging among Somalis in Edmonton, given the challenges faced in settlement and integration. Through a grounded qualitative approach, I employed one-on-one interviews with adult and youth participants to explore their experiences, perceptions and views of Edmonton and Canada. The findings show that 1) family disintegration – as family members are settled in various parts of the world, 2) cultural and psychological displacement, and 3) the problems related to home ownership due to the issue of "riba" (the paying of interest) on mortgages affects Somali immigrants' sense of belonging to Canada. Furthermore, while legal citizenship status is important to many Somalis, this is attributed to the practical need for a passport that can serve as a legal identity document and travel permit, as opposed to being a symbol of belonging. The research participants' self-reported feelings of belonging are low as is their corresponding intention and hope for owning a home. However, despite all these challenges, Somali immigrants are also striving to create their own place within the larger Canadian society and Canadian life.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Yesuf Hagos Abdela. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “The lived experience and sense of place among Somali-Canadians in Edmonton,” No. Pro00028776, January 23, 2012.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background and Context

Somalis constitute one of the major groups of recent African refugees and immigrants to Canada (Kusow, 2006; Mensah, 2010). The 2011 National Household Survey identified 44,995 people with Somali ancestry and 37,115 of them speak the Somali language (Statistics Canada, 2011). However unofficial community organizations reports estimated highest number. Hirran (2006) reported that in 2006 there were 120,000 -150,000 Somalis in Canada. Ontario and Alberta have the largest Somali population in Canada (Ahmed, Jimaale, Roble, & Yusuf, 2007; Hanon, 2011). According to a report by the Somali-Canadian Education and Rural Development Organization (SCERDO), in 2007 the population of the Somali-Canadian community in Edmonton was 10,000-12,000 people (SCERDO, 2007, p. 11). The Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton (SCCSE) estimated the 2014 Somali population in Edmonton to be 20, 000 (SCCSE, 2014).

Despite their recent arrival and relatively small numbers, the Somali community has attracted attention everywhere (Langellier, 2010). Although many African immigrants in Canada face challenges in settlement and integration, Somalis face many additional challenges (Mensah, 2010; Spitzer, 2006). The forced nature of migration has resulted in the disintegration of families; after moving, the diverse and often challenging social and cultural contexts of Canadian society has led to challenging integration into the larger society and, therefore, increased frustration.

Somalis primarily practice the religion of Islam, which also determines their way of life and worldviews (Abdullahi, 2001; Kusow, 2006; Hopkins, 2010). Langellier (2010) pointed out that "Somali culture and Islamic religion are co-articulated as well as inescapably fleshed out"

(p.68). Therefore, Somali migration to Canada involves not only physical but also social and cultural migration, given that they are now living in a country where the dominant religion, culture and ways of life are extremely different from that which they have been exposed to previously. This means that in countries like Canada, Somali-Canadians "must engage in identity work to ensure legitimate recognition" (Ajrouch & Kusow, 2007, p. 75) and, thereby, must continuously strive to maintain their identity by ensuring that they continue to practice their culture, religion and ways of life. This thesis thus, explores the lived experiences and integration among Somali-Canadians in Edmonton by using citizenship, home ownership, and self-reported feelings of belonging as major indicators of belonging and integration.

Citizenship is an important component of integration, and immigrants may have different motivations for becoming citizens, including full participation in the economic, social and political aspects of the new country. Citizenship is believed to increase sense of belonging (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009; Howard, 2009). However, for refugees, citizenship is also essential as it is a means to be secure and provides the ability to move easily. Does possessing legal citizenship alter immigrants sense of belonging is a question that requires understanding of the personal and group experiences of immigrants and refugees.

The relationship between home ownership and sense of belonging is well established in research (Gilderbloom & Markham, 1995; Haan 2005, 2007; Mendez, Hiebert & Wyly, 2006; Myers & Lee 1999; Rossi & Weber, 1996; Verberg, 2000). For immigrants, owning homes is not only an indicator of success but also an indicator of their commitment to their new country and is one important component in the integration of immigrants (Haan, 2012). Results from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) show refugees and Muslims have the lowest rate of home ownership (Haan 2012; Hiebert, 2009). There are many unexplained reasons

but religious belief on paying and receiving interest (riba) is an issue among many Muslims. In Canada, the primary means through which houses are purchased is through mortgage (Haan, 2012). "Riba"- paying and receiving interest for any loaned money or any transaction in which the debtor returns a sum of goods in excess or above the original is not permissible to many Muslims (Farooq, 2012; Vahed & Vawda, 2008). Thus, entering into the housing market can be difficult or unappealing for many Muslim Canadians. Differential access to housing finance (as a result of faith) may result in unprivileged and marginalized classes of people and, thus, problems in integration and belonging. Islam will be the fastest-growing religion in Canada in the next two decades. A projection by Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (Pew, 2011) shows the population will rise from the current one million (2.28% of the total population) to 2.7 million (6.6% of the total population) by 2030. As a result of this challenge, specific financing options targeted to those opposed to "riba" are operating in some parts of the world, including in Canada (Haan, 2012). This research also explores the accessibility of these alternate options, whether they are serving those in need and how that affects integration and sense of belonging by exploring the experiences of Somali-Canadians in Edmonton.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the process of integration and belonging among adult and youth Somali-Canadians living in Edmonton. While many studies employ different measures to assess immigrant integration, this study focuses on citizenship, home ownership and self-reported feelings of belonging as major indicators.

Therefore, the main research questions that guided this study are:

1. How do Somali Canadians living in Edmonton perceive and describe their sense of belonging to Edmonton and Canada?

2. How do the following factors explain, determine and/or affect the process of developing Somali-Canadians' sense of belonging and integration: citizenship, housing finance systems, discrimination, and history of immigration and resettlement?

Thesis organization

This thesis is organized into six chapters. The first chapter provides the background and introduces the research problem and issues addressed. The second chapter discusses existing literature related to the study through a conceptual framework of integration, citizenship, home ownership and feelings of belonging. It also provides background on Canadian immigration policies and Somali migration to Canada. Chapter three discusses the methodology employed in this study. It describes the study's philosophical assumptions, strategies of inquiry, research methods, process of data collection and methods of analysis. It also describes rigour and ethical considerations throughout the process of the research project. The fourth chapter presents the major findings of the study. Chapter five discusses home ownership and the factors that explain sense of belonging among research participants. Chapter six presents conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the existing literature and research related to Canadian immigration and refugee policies, the concept of integration, citizenship, home ownership and sense of belonging. In the first section, I will present an overview of the history of immigrants and refugees in Canada. Second, I will discuss the unique nature and process of immigration of Somalis to Canada in the context of push-pull factors and Canadian immigrant and refugee policies. Third, I will provide a conceptual framework through which to understand immigrant and refugee integration in Canada through an exploration: a) of the connection between belonging and citizenship; b) the role of home ownership on immigrant integration; and c) the connections between sense of belonging and immigrant integration. Fourth, I will discuss multiculturalism and discrimination within the context of Canadian immigration policies and practices.

An overview of the history of immigrants and refugees in Canada

Although Canada has always been a country of immigrants, until the 1960s immigration to Canada was guided by explicitly discriminatory policies that restricted the immigration of certain groups. The population was predominantly of European origin (Abu-Laban, 1998; 2002). The primary religions practiced were Catholicism and Protestantism. Immigration policies until the 1960s explicitly and implicitly regulated that immigration to Canada be limited to Western Europeans and later Eastern Europeans (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2001; Frazier, Dardon & Henry, 2009; Kelly & Trebilock, 1998; Mensah, 2010; Tettey & Puplampu, 2005; Thobani, 2007). In this regard, some historical immigration policies introduced since the time of

Confederation (1867) include: the "Immigration Act" of 1869, the subsequent Immigration Acts of 1906 and 1910 which were constructed to ensure the whiteness of the nation, the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885 and 1923, the 1947 Canadian Citizenship Act and the 1952 "Preferred Classes" Immigration Act (Abu-Laban, 1998; Kelly & Trebilock, 1998; Knowles, 2007; Mensah, 2010). These various policies, that greatly shaped the present day society of Canada, are marked by racism and discrimination.

However, the introduction of the points system in the 1960s and the recognition and incorporation of the humanitarian class within Canadian immigration policy changed not only the ethno-cultural composition but also the religious diversity of Canadian society. In the late 1950s, growing social movements challenged the discriminatory requirements of race or country of origin in Canadian immigration policy. The country also experienced a decreasing birth rate and the large-scale flow of professionals to the United States in the 1950s and 1960s (Tettey & Puplampu, 2005). Moreover, the major source of immigration to Canada, Western Europe, had started to dry up in the 1960s as a result of political stability and promising job opportunities in post-war Europe. These developments forced Canadian officials to look for other sources (Mensah, 2010; Tettey & Puplampu, 2005). This was accompanied by the keen interest of Canada to keep pace with global changes to eliminate discriminatory laws. So there followed a change to these restrictive immigration laws. Thus, in 1962, reform was passed that officially eliminated racial discrimination in Canada's immigration policy (Kelly & Trebilcock, 1998; Tettey & Puplampu, 2005). Any unsponsored person with the necessary qualifications was considered for immigration to Canada, regardless of skin colour, race, or ethnic origin. Consequently, the "points system" was created in 1967 (Kelly & Trebilcock, 1998; Tettey & Puplampu, 2005).

Changes to the immigration policy since the 1960s have had profound consequences on the demographics as well as the cultural and religious aspects of Canadian society. It resulted in an increase in the size and diversity of the racialized minority population, including the African population (Mensah, 2010; Tettey & Puplampu, 2005). Currently, Asia and Africa are the major sources of immigration to Canada, and by 2017, racialized minorities will constitute 20 percent of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2009).

In the past half a century, the number of Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Baha'i and other religious communities continue to grow, though in fewer numbers (Scott, 2012). Currently, Islam is believed to be the fastest growing religion in Canada (PFRPL, 2011; Scott, 2012).

The 1976 Immigration Act recognizes and incorporates the humanitarian class into the immigration policy (Kelly & Trebilock, 1998). Although Canada had opened its door to persecuted people from different parts of the world after World War II, it had no clear policy and procedures for admitting refugees, and there remained a preference for refugees from certain European countries. The 1976 Immigration and Refugee Act gave explicit recognition to refugees as a distinct entry class under two procedures: the first involves selection by officials in countries of asylum and the second involves people who come directly to Canada and claim refugee status (Knowles, 2007).

The introduction of the humanitarian class to Canadian immigration policy has enabled and continues to enable the migration of tens of thousands of refugees from all over the world. Since the1970s, significant populations of refugee were resettled in Canada from Vietnam, Cambodia, Iraq, Iran, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, Lebanon, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and recently Somalia (Scott, 2012).

Somali migration to Canada

Historical background - Somalia and the Somalis

The Somali ethnic group is a large population, geographically occupying large territories in the Horn of Africa. They are predominantly a pastoral nomadic people who herd animals as their basic economic and social activity. Ethnically, the Somalis belong to the Cushitic-speaking family; they speak the Somali language (Menkhaus, 2004). Almost one hundred percent of the population practices the religion of Islam, and Islam is one of the major identifiers of the Somali population (Spitzer, 2006). Although there are Somali ethnic groups in Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya as well, this study is concerned with Somalis from the state of Somalia.

http://thumbs.dreamstime.com/z/political-map-africa-7242700.jpg

Figure 1.1*: Map of Africa. Somalia is located in the East Africa and shares a border with Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya.*

During the European colonization of Africa, Somalia was under British and Italian rule and like many other African countries, achieved independence in the 1960s and formed the Democratic Republic of Somalia by uniting the former British-Somaliland in the north and the Italian Trust Territory in the South (Salada, 1977). As nomadic pastoralism and trade were important sources of livelihood for the people, Somalis were widely known for their nomadic migration (Lewis, 1994). However, this movement was limited to the local areas. The country's

colonial relation with Britain and Italy opened up an opportunity for some Somalis to move to these countries and settle permanently. Somalis from the north were welcomed by the British and many from the South moved to Italy. The country's alliance with the USSR in the 1970s also allowed a few Somalis to travel to eastern European countries for education and training (Kleist, 2004).

A relatively large-scale international migration of Somalis was recorded in the 1970s when many Somali men began moving to the Middle East. While the main cause of the migration was the search for greater employment opportunities in the oil resources boom of the Middle East, it was also facilitated by the political turmoil of the time in Somalia, such as the war with Ethiopia in the late 1970s (Kleist, 2004; Lewis, 1994). Given the geographical proximity, and religious and cultural similarity between Somalis and many Islamic Middle Eastern peoples, as well as the long-time trade relations between Somalia and the Middle East, it was a great opportunity for many Somalis to improve their economic well-being (Kleist, 2004; Lewis, 1994).

Somali immigration to other countries in the west, including the United States and Canada is a very recent phenomenon. During the cold war, a small number of Somalis immigrated to the West in order to get a better education and greater employment opportunities. However, since the late 1980s and particularly since the country's collapse into endless clan warfare in 1990, Somalis have become one of the largest refugee groups targeted for resettlement by western countries (Menkhaus, 2004). Although there is little available accurate data, Britain is believed to have the largest Somali community outside of the continent of Africa (Aspinall & Mitton, 2008). A large number of Somalis also reside in many western countries, including Canada, the United States, Australia, the Netherlands, Norway, Germany, and other countries in

Europe.

Somalis in Canada

Somali immigration to Canada began in the late 1970s after the removal of discriminatory requirements in Canadian immigration policies (Opoku-Dapaah, 1995). However, until the late 1980s, only a handful of Somalis had arrived in Canada each year and immigrated as economic immigrants. The majority of Somalis arrived after 1990 when civil war erupted throughout the country. Throughout the 1990s, therefore, Somalis continued to be one of the top ten groups in absolute numbers of refugees coming to Canada, and the Somali community has grown to be one of the largest African communities in the country (Mensah, 2010; Spitzer, 2006).

The changes in immigrant and refugee policies contributed greatly to the admission of tens of thousands of Somali refugees in the 1990s. Canada has received Somali refugees as its humanitarian obligation since the outbreak of the civil war in Somalia by easing entrance requirements for refugees, including the creation of "displaced and persecuted" people who would not be required to meet normal entrance requirements for refugees. Once in Canada and granted permanent resident status, many Somalis were also able to sponsor their families from Somalia or from refugee camps in the neighbouring countries.

The trend of Somali immigrants in *table 2.1* below shows the small number of immigrants until late 1980s and the trend of increased immigration flow since 1987 that continued throughout the 1990s until 2004. *Table 2.2* shows the numbers of Somali immigrants to Canada from 2005 to 2012.

Table 2.1: Somali immigrant arrivals (1980-2004, divided by male and female)

Arrivals				*Arrivals*			
Year	***Female***	***Male***	***Total***	***Year***	***Female***	***Male***	***Total***
1980	0	7	7	1993	1558	1521	3079
1981	0	4	4	1994	447	505	952
1982	2	4	6	1995	766	592	1458
1983	8	10	18	1996	613	585	1198
1984	12	11	23	1997	493	453	946
1985	11	19	30	1998	752	552	1304
1986	14	38	52	1999	854	645	1499
1987	25	164	189	2000	799	562	1361
1988	63	160	223	2001	592	396	988
1989	133	309	442	2001	349	249	598
1990	389	775	1164	2002	439	360	799
1991	1233	2055	3288	2003	609	563	1172
1992	2426	3077	5503	2004	544	436	980

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, cited in Mensah (2010, p.132)

Table 2.2: Somali immigrant arrivals (2005-2015: only total numbers provided. Not available by gender)

Year	**Arrivals**	**Year**	**Arrivals**
2005	980	2009	988
2006	896	2010	1194
2007	982	2011	1256
2008	750	2012	1129

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2013)

Currently large numbers of Somalis are entering Canada through the humanitarian and family reunification classes. *Table 2.3* below shows Somali immigrants between 2001 and 2010 under three categories. The second column (humanitarian refugees) illustrates Somali immigrants inside Canada who were recognized and reported as humanitarian refugees each year. The third column (asylum seekers) involves Somalis who claim refugee status after arriving in Canada. The last column (new permanent residents) includes Somalis who were granted permanent resident status each year. This involves people from the other two categories who were granted permanent resident status and new arrivals who came through the family reunification program and who were granted permanent residence status at arrival.

Table 2.3: Somalis immigrants in Canada: Humanitarian, refugee claimants, and permanent resident (2001-2010).

Year	**Humanitarian refugees**	**Asylum seekers**	**New permanent residents**
2001	3350	988	3320
2002	2876	598	2910
2003	2296	799	2419
2004	1768	1712	1991
2005	1402	980	1617
2006	1126	896	1259
2007	916	982	1044
2008	1078	750	1265
2009	1286	988	1503
2010	1371	1194	1571
Total	**17469**	**9887**	**18899**

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2010)

Ontario is home to the largest number of Canadians of Somali origin. Greater economic opportunities and the multicultural nature of Toronto attracted a large Somali community to the city (Opoku-Dapaah, 1995). However, recently there is a growing population of Somalis in Alberta, and particularly in Edmonton (Ahmed, Jimaale, Roble & Yusuf, 2007). This is attributed to jobs created in the oil industry, which has attracted many Somalis to the province.

Push-pull factors and Somali migration

Immigration – a "movement in which a person arrives in one country, having left another" is a complex phenomenon and continuing social process (Knox, Marston & Nash, 2009, p. 108). Moving from a familiar locality to an unknown environment, society, culture or economy is an integral part of life for many people but may not be a decision that individuals or families wish for or choose to make (Hoering & Zhuang, 2010). There are many factors that explain decisions and actions on migration. Social scientists have been attempting to develop theories and models that explain causes and consequences of internal and international migration.

A variety of explanations have been proposed to explain how migration is initiated and the social, cultural, economic or political consequences it may have on the receiving countries. Some of the models include classical & neo-classical economics (Harris & Todaro, 1970; Lewis, 1954), dual labour market theory (Piore, 1979), and world systems theory (Sassen, 1988; Wallerstein, 1974). The explanations of these models base their calculations of economic migration on income and wage differences between sending and receiving countries and disparity in the growth of regions; others include sociological explanations such as migrant networks (Tylor, 1986), and transnational social spaces (Faist, 2004; Pries, 2001) that emphasize the presence of intervening opportunities such as families who initially migrated and are now a

motivating force for subsequent families. Although these theories and models contribute to the understanding of migration and migrants' behaviour, they cannot fully explain the dynamic nature of international migration, and according to de Haas (2011), they tend to exclude crucial sending country migration determinants as well as theoretically relevant non-economic and policy variables.

The most common and traditional model of migration - the "push-pull" factors approach – explains that migration is determined by the presence of repelling factors at the place of origin and attracting factors at the place of destination (Lee, 1966). In the context of international migration, the push factors are dramatic circumstances such as humanitarian crisis, armed conflicts, environmental catastrophes, poverty, social exclusion and unemployment (Oberg, 1996). The pull factors – favourable conditions and opportunities in receiving countries – tend to attract potential migrants based on their capabilities, such as educational qualifications. Massey (1999) pointed out that in addition to the traditional push-pull factors, international migration is determined by the social and psychological characteristics of migrants themselves and the social, political, and economic relationships between the source and destination countries. Massey (1999) also expanded the pull factors to include formal policies, programs and recruitment campaigns of the receiving region. Therefore, Somali immigration to Canada is explained by push factors – mainly economic and political – and pull factors such as the humanitarian policies and programs of Canada that attract Somali immigrants seeking to escape war, destitution and instability in their region.

The push factors

The migration of Somalis to Canada was mainly initiated by push factors – civil war, instability and statelessness. The civil war and instability in Somalia resulted in the widespread

dislocation of the population, particularly in the past 25 years. Although Somalia achieved its independence in 1960, it has never experienced political and economic stability. The years following independence were dominated by economic problems, widespread corruption, unemployment and drought (Kleist, 2004; Lewis, 1994). Political repression against targeted clans and violent acts by military units and individuals in the national armed forces resulted in the flight of Somalis to destinations within and beyond Africa. Many Somali intellectuals also left the country as a result of oppression in the 1980s (Lewis, 2008; Opoku-Dapaah, 1995).

In the late 1980s, Somalia erupted into civil war between the north and the south. In 1988, there was an uprising in North Somalia that resulted in a serious crisis. The clan-based uprising was exacerbated by political and economic questions raised against the leadership of dominant Southern groups (Sahanoun, 1994). Fighting intensified all over the country between the government of Siyad Barre and northern-based clans until the state collapsed in 1991 (Sahanoun, 1994). Since 1991, as a consequence of the conflict and disintegration, Somalia has become a source for out-migration. Many Somalis have fled to neighbouring countries and the western world as refugees through humanitarian interventions. Thus, the substantial increase in Somali immigrants to Canada since the early 1990s is mainly the result of this civil war.

The pull factors

Pull factors that attracted Somali immigrants to Canada were mainly the humanitarian policies and programs that helped refugees and asylum seekers who escaped war, destitution and instability in their region. Canada's immigration policy reforms since the 1960s, particularly the recognition of a refugee class since 1976 contributed to the increasing numbers of Somalis.

Canada responded to the crisis in Somalia in three ways. First, Canada provided logistical assistance such as food, water, sanitation, health and shelter to meet the immediate needs of the

displaced people in the refugee camps inside Somalia and in neighbouring countries such as Ethiopia and Kenya (Jefferess, 2009; Webster, 2007). Second, Canada sent a peacekeeping army to the country (Jefferess, 2009; Webster, 2007). Third, Canada provided refugee status to displaced people through a continuous resettlement program (Jefferess, 2009; Webster, 2007). The substantial increase in Somali immigration to Canada in the 1990s is, thus, the result of the resettlement program.

However, the creation of a Somali diaspora is mainly the result of push factors – a civil war and the resulting political, social and economic instability. Therefore, while the creation of the humanitarian class in the 1976 Immigration Policy enabled the migration of Somalis to Canada as refugees, the migration of Somalis can best be described as the forced movement of a population out of one state.

Immigrant and refugee integration: A conceptual framework

Integration is a major component of immigration and a highly contested discourse. Robinson (1998) argued that integration is a very "chaotic" concept and suggested that it is "individualized, contested and contextual" (p. 118). Although the term is used widely in immigration and refugee literature, "there is no single, generally accepted definition, theory or model of immigrant and refugee integration. The concept continues to be controversial and hotly debated" (Castles, Korac, Vasta, & Vertovec, 2001, p.12).

The most common definition of integration in immigration literature describes integration as a long-term process through which immigrants come to participate fully in their new society and develop feelings of belonging; it involves interactions between the immigrant and the host society's institutions (Hoernig & Zhuang, 2010; Kumsa, 2005; Quirke, 2011; Vertovec 2000).

Understanding integration could vary depending on the goal and policy of integration of

specific countries. For example in the United States, immigrants and their children are expected to assimilate by accepting American values and beliefs and, thereby, becoming American under the 'Melting Pot' strategy (Gaynor, 2011; Smith, 2012) while Canadian immigration expects immigrants to integrate into the mainstream society without compromising their ethnic and cultural identity (CIC, 2002). Accordingly, Canadian Immigration and Citizenship (CIC, 2002) defines integration as "a two-way process that encourages adjustments on the part of both newcomers and the receiving society" (p. 28).

In problematizing the concept of integration and its use, Castles et al. (2001) asked "what are criteria for judging whether integration – as process or condition – is present, absent, high, low, declining or underway?" These are fundamental questions with conceptual and methodological implications. Traditionally, the success and degree of immigrants' integration has been measured in terms of participation in the labour market, language skills, and other economic indicators of individual migrants (Papillon, 2002; Tettey & Puplampu, 2005). However, there is new research and literature illustrating that integration is a result of more than mere economic or social indicators. Reitz (2012) argued that in Canada, economic integration does not guarantee social integration. Li (2003) pointed out that:

> A more enlightened view of integration would take into account how Canadian society and its institutions perform towards newcomers. Assessing successful integration would also mean determining the degree to which institutions are open or closed to immigrants, communities are welcoming or shunning newcomers, and individual Canadians are treating newcomers as equal partners or intruders. (p. 12)

The issues highlighted by Li (2013) are central to understanding immigrants' integration, especially for those who are ethnic and religious minorities and whose attachment to Canada

may be affected by acceptance by the host society, such as experiences of discrimination and racism as well as institutional barriers that affect their smooth integration, for example citizenship, housing and other services. On the other hand, Sigona (2005) suggested that it is important to distinguish between immigrant and refugees when addressing integration as immigrant and refugee settlement is the result of different causes, processes and the settlement services they receive in the host country.

Hence, this study considers integration as a long-term process through which immigrants and refugees participate in the economic, social and political aspects of Canadian life and identify themselves as members of the larger Canadian society while enjoying and practicing their ethnic and religious identities.

Once in Canada, the main goals and aspirations of immigrants and refugees is that they will settle into life in their new country, become citizens, own homes, feel accepted and a sense of belonging. Therefore, in accordance with the definition of integration employed in this study, citizenship, home ownership, and self-reported feelings of belonging are used as indicators of integration. Although, each of the three indicators is broad enough to be understood and studied by itself, within the context of this research they are interconnected and play a dialectical role in understanding integration. A family with citizenship who owns their home may have increased feelings of belonging as a result and feelings of belonging may also encourage others to pursue home ownership and citizenship.

Conceptualizing "citizenship"

Citizenship has historically been legally tied to the nation state (Castles & Davidson,

2000). However, international migration and globalization has necessitated reconceptualizing the concept of citizenship (Castles & Davidson, 2000). International migration and globalization have resulted in the need to redefine the concept of citizenship from a "consensual agreement between people who are already members of a political community" (Canefe, 2007, p. 73), as this definition excludes those who become citizens through naturalization (Canefe, 2007). The associated rights and responsibilities with regards to public institutions, private enterprises, and other individuals or groups for those who are natural born citizens illustrates the marginalization for those naturalized citizens who are excluded from full participation as they do not benefit from equal access to health care, employment, education, housing and other social services (Abdi & Shultz, 2012).

Furthermore, traditional understandings of citizenship often adopt an assimilationist view in which newcomers are expected to "undergo a profound change in cultural values and social behaviour" (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, p. 439). Citizenship is, therefore, viewed as an "open-ended and flexible cultural practice" (Leuchter, 2014, p. 779) in which

> people … are placed on different platforms of citizenship contexts that are either enfranchising, disenfranchising or are locating people in a middle borderland that promises something viable but does constitute enough agency for the full claim of the cherished prize. (Abdi & Shultz, 2012, p. 158)

Naturalized citizens are not only required to alter their cultural values and social behaviour but the adaptation of new values and behaviours is a one-sided process, deemed necessary only for naturalized citizens.

Citizenship and belonging among immigrants

While increased feelings of belonging are attributed to having gained official citizenship status, Canadian citizenship remains a complex concept, and a "relatively young official category of belonging" (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009, p. 427). The connections between citizenship and belonging within the Canadian context remain tenuous. Bloemraad (2006) argued that for many immigrants, citizenship and belonging are linked to "social movement mobilization, involving friends, family, co-ethnic organizations and local community leaders" (p. 666) and the strength of their ties to native-born citizens. Therefore, greater feelings of belonging are not strongly linked to legal citizenship status but to greater participation in Canadian social, political and economic life (Canefe, 2007). According to Zuberi and Ptashnick (2012), employment opportunities and experiences are a central factor affecting sense of belonging among immigrants and naturalized Canadians, impacting relations with other immigrants, naturalized citizens and native-born citizens. In actuality, such social, political and economic marginalization results in feelings of de-citizenization (Abdi & Shultz, 2012).

For many, citizenship is no longer connected to increased feelings of belonging but has become linked to having a passport. Writing about Israeli citizens, Leuchter (2014) illustrated the reasons why Israeli men and women obtain European passports. The desired object is not citizenship but a foreign passport that functions as an "instrument of bureaucratic control over their movement" (Leuchter, 2014, p. 782). Adam, a 27-year-old computer analyst, describes his lack of connection between the passport and the concept of citizenship.

> I don't consider myself to be a French citizen; I just have a French passport. For me, citizenship means belonging, but a passport . . . well, it's just a possibility to belong.

(cited in Leuchter, 2014, p. 781)

Leuchter (2014) asserted that the examples of Israeli men and women illustrate that

> Citizenship can and is disentangled to a certain extent from a concrete sense of belonging and exemplifies an understanding that citizenship is mainly a carrier of rights and obligations, the main one being the freedom of movement. (p. 782)

This depicts the active negotiation of belonging and citizenship.

The acquirement of citizenship in order to gain a passport and the freedom of movement is best described as "pragmatic citizenship" (Brettell, 2006; Fein & Straughn, 2014; Leuchter, 2014). Through a case study examining the citizenship decisions of ethnic minorities living in Estonia, Fein & Straughn (2014) stated that pragmatic citizenship can be attributed to: 1) a desire to not continue applying for a residency visa and 2) the need for a passport with which to travel freely. It is important to note that pragmatic citizenship does not undermine acquiring citizenship for reasons of national identity or political involvement, but illustrates the continual negotiation and development of belonging and citizenship among peoples (Brettell, 2006; Leuchter, 2014).

The Canadian immigration system also encourages newcomers to ultimately become full citizens. Canadian citizenship policy promotes the naturalization of immigrants. Accordingly, Canada has one of the easiest requirements for legal citizenship when compared to other developed countries. Immigrants and refugees are required to live in Canada for three years, have either English or French language ability, and some knowledge of the country's history and government in order to be eligible for Canadian citizenship (Bloemraad, 2006). The acquisition of citizenship is intended to develop a stronger sense of belonging to Canada and enable a shared common bond as part of the Canadian family (CIC, 2010). Howard (1998) argued that "when

immigrants are treated as citizens, their voices heard and respected in the public realm, then they act as citizens and consider themselves part of the larger society, regardless of their ancestors' origins" (p.133). However, Reitz (2012) contested Howard's argument, stating that how the acquisition of citizenship "may affect the broader social integration is not known" (p. 534). Therefore, there is debate among scholars on the link between the acquisition of Canadian citizenship and increased sense of belonging.

Home ownership and immigrant integration

A great deal of literature examines the economic, social and cultural significance of home ownership for individuals, families and the community at large (Haan 2005, 2007; Mendez, Hiebert & Wyly, 2006; Myers & Lee 1999). As a relatively secure financial investment, homeownership offers social stability to individuals and families, and access to desirable neighbourhoods. It has also been linked to political incorporation (Gilderbloom & Markham, 1995; Verberg, 2000), better educational outcomes (Conley, 2001) and other social benefits (Rossi & Weber, 1996). In North America, the ability to own a home is an influential statement of success, security and stability (Adams, 1984). Furthermore, Kurz and Blossfeld (2004) pointed out that housing ownership is a reflection of a country's unique history, culture, institutions, and most important, its government housing policy.

For immigrants, home ownership is also indicator of their commitment to their new country - it "represents a mechanism for generating (or preventing) socioeconomic stratification, capturing an element of the immigrant experience that other outcomes cannot" (Haan, 2012, p. 3). Owning a home is one important component in the integration of immigrants and in evaluating the success of immigrant integration. One of the expectations for those who successfully integrate is that with time most immigrants will participate in the mainstream

housing market by also buying a home of their own (Haan, 2012). It is, therefore, important to examine the connections between integration and belonging of immigrants and the ability/inability to own a home due to economic, religious, cultural, and institutional factors.

Canada has one of the highest levels of home ownership in the developed world, and historically, immigrants in Canada have high rates of home ownership (Balakrishman & Wu, 1992; Owusu, 1998; Ray & Moore, 1991). However, recently the rate has been declining (Haan, 2005; Jakubec, 2004). There is considerable literature that addresses the question of which groups of immigrants have higher rates of ownership when compared to other immigrant groups; however, the question "why" needs systematic investigation. There are significant unexplained differences of home ownership rates among different racial and ethnic groups (Haan, 2010). For example, a study by Skaburskis (1996) on race and tenure in Toronto showed that Blacks have the lowest level of home ownership, and income has little impact in explaining the difference. Therefore, while income level is one determining factor in home ownership among immigrants (Lefebvre, 2003), home ownership appears to also be linked to many other factors.

Access to home ownership could be influenced by a number of factors such as income, cultural and religious considerations, or the intention to live permanently in a place, and there is significant literature that examines the economic and educational factors that influence home ownership (Lefebvre, 2003). However, the impact of religious beliefs on home ownership (and by extension security, a sense of belonging and integration to the society) is not adequately addressed by researchers. Although religious or cultural values may not have a direct impact on whether or not families could own a house, the economic principles of Islam and the housing market system seem to be in contradiction. Islam does not allow its' adherents to take or receive interest and the conventional method of buying a house in Canada involves a mortgage and,

therefore, the paying of interest.

Home ownership and "Riba"

The religion of Islam forbids the paying or receiving of interest or *riba* (Gowling, Lafleur, Henderson LLP, 2010; Sanford, 2004; Sungur, 2013; Thomas 2009). This affects the ability of Muslims to buy homes using a traditional mortgage payment system in which interest must be paid on any money borrowed. Islam views money as having no intrinsic value and, instead considers money to merely be a means of exchange. The payment or receipt of interest is, therefore, viewed as profiting without effort or labour (Gowling, Lafleur, Henderson LLP, 2010). Furthermore, a report by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CHMC) contends that the Muslim community in Canada generally accepts that interest is prohibited (Gowling, Lafleur, Henderson LLP, 2010).

The existing literature does not indicate whether the issue of riba affects the capacity of Muslims living in Canada to buy houses, and a report by CHMC notes that there is a significant lack of input from the Muslim-Canadian community regarding their needs and preferences with regards to housing finance (Gowling, Lafleur, Henderson LLP, 2010). In Canada, Muslim Canadians have one of the lowest levels of home ownership in comparison to other recent religious immigrant groups; almost 59% of Hindus and 80% of Sikhs owned their homes compared to 43% Muslim households (Haider, 2010). Therefore, there is a high probability that religious factors are connected with lower levels of home ownership among Muslim Canadians (Gowling, Lafleur, Henderson LLP, 2010; Haan, 2012).

Sungur (2014) noted that home ownership is an important goal among Muslim Canadians and is as indicator of economic and social wellbeing. According to Sanford (2004), the global

demand by 1.2 billion Muslims living worldwide for a finance system that is not based on interest has given rise to Islamic finance that has become big business in various other nations, including the United Kingdom and the United States. Freddie Mac, the U.S. government sponsored mortgage broker has an Islamic mortgage program, and in 2004, the Islamic Bank of Britain came into existence (Sanford, 2004; Sungur, 2014). Furthermore, there are over 20 different banks in Great Britain, including HSBS and Lloyds TSB, that provide Islamic financing (Sungur, 2014). These examples illustrate the demand for Islamic financing systems in western countries.

Within Canada, Islamic finance has not become a service offered by mainstream financial institutions but has developed as a grassroots initiative. The Islamic Housing Co-operative in Toronto emerged out of the desire of the Muslim community in Toronto to find a way to buy houses without the payment of riba (Sanford, 2004). In the United States, a similar grassroots initiative, LARIBA financing has developed in order to provide financing to those excluded from traditional credit and financing options (Abdul-Rahman & Tug, 1999). The development of alternative Islamic financing systems through grassroots initiatives in Canada and the United States as well as more established official government programs in Great Britain and the United States indicates that there is a demand for Islamic financing systems through which Muslim Canadians can purchase houses. This is an important factor with regards to immigrant integration, as home ownership is related to greater economic and social wellbeing and increased feelings of belonging.

Sense of belonging and immigrant integration

Sense of belonging in its broader sense means a "sense of personal involvement in a

social system so that persons feel themselves to be an indispensable and integral part of the system" (Anant, 1966, p. 21). It is a feeling of being connected to the environment, people or places. It includes feeling secure, recognized, suitable, and able to participate in the society (Caxai & Berman, 2010; Hagerty, Williams, Coyne & Early, 1996).

In the context of immigrants and refugees, a sense of belonging is the feeling of attachment to their new place or country and is part of the long-term process of integration (Caballero, 2011). A sense of belonging to a country, region, city or locality can indicate the extent to which immigrants participate in society. Generally, a strong sense of belonging is positive and associated with better self-reported physical and mental health (Caxai & Berman, 2010; Hagerty et al., 1996). According to Wu, Hou and Schimmele (2011):

> … examining sense of belonging addresses a fundamental question about people's relationship with society. A weak sense of belonging could be an indication of insular or polarized social relations, and thus, it can inhibit the bridging ties that promote cooperation between groups. In contrast, a strong sense of belonging could reflect a superordinate identity that gives different groups a common purpose and reduces the social distance between them (p. 372).

Sense of belonging, therefore, can be an indicator that can be used to determine whether immigrants and children of immigrants are integrating into a different society and/or culture. The question is how do we measure sense of belonging? What does it mean to have a sense of belonging? There are two common ways to measure sense of belonging: 1) membership in groups, systems, institutions and social networks; and 2) a person's feelings, perceptions or experiences of being valued and accepted (Hagerty et al., 1996). The first category may involve a person's possession of citizenship and exercising their civic and political rights, or it may

involve a person's participation in economic activities. The second category is simply the measure of self-reported belonging – it is the total outcome of lived and perceived experiences. Therefore, this study employs self-reported feeling of belonging as a measure of a sense of belonging. In turn, a sense of belonging is associated with integration. To feel like you are accepted, rooted, attached is to be integrated emotionally.

Although measured differently using different indicators, studies on immigrant communities in Canada suggest that while immigrants do develop a sense of belonging, it is generally lower than that of the Canadian born population (Burton & Phipps, 2010; Jedwab, 2008). The degree of a sense of belonging is determined by multiple factors such as age, family status and class of immigration (Caballero, 2011; Stewart, Makwarimba, Reutter, Veenstra, Raphael, & Love, 2009). For example, older people and those who own a home demonstrate a higher sense of belonging (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Woolever, 1992). However, this might be associated with longer residence in Canada, which ensures family and friendship ties as well as familiarity to the area. Burton and Phipps (2010) reported lower levels of sense of belonging among immigrants in Canada due to low income levels and associated lower life satisfaction.

Perceived and lived experiences also determine sense of belonging. These perceived experiences include expectations for a successful life and opportunities in the new country, feelings of trustworthiness towards the host community as well as the political, social and economic institutions, and the intention to live in the new country permanently (Caballero, 2011; Stewart et al., 2009). Thus, explanations of sense of belonging need to be discussed within the context of the personal characteristics, perceptions and the lived experiences of immigrants and refugees.

Multiculturalism and discrimination: The experiences of immigrants and refugees

While Canada proudly boasts of having established a national multicultural policy that is the envy of other countries, the results of the Canadian Heritage Ethnic Diversity Survey (Statistics Canada, 2003a) indicates that Canada is yet to find a way for immigrants who identify as ethnic minorities and racialized to feel included in everyday community life. There are many groups in Canada that have experienced acts of discrimination, thus belying the ideals of a multiculturalism policy that celebrates diversity and difference in Canada.

The Canadian Heritage Ethnic Diversity Survey (Statistics Canada, 2003a) was conducted using a sample drawn from those who completed the long questionnaire of the 2001 Census and who identified themselves as a member of a minority group. It included questions about the frequency and conditions under which people felt they had experienced discrimination or had been treated unfairly because of their ethnicity, culture, race, skin colour, language, accent or religion in the five years prior to the survey. It found that nearly one-third (32%) of Black Canadians reported having experienced discrimination, compared with 21% of South-Asian Canadians, 18% of Chinese Canadians, and 5% of non-visible minority Canadians (Statistics Canada, 2003b).

A study on African-Canadian youth and the politics of negotiating racial and racialised identities by Dei and James (1998) concluded that despite good intentions and the hard work of many teachers, educators still exist who regularly enact racist thinking and practices. Students reported feeling the pressures of negative images, ranging from subtle messages of inferiority and low expectations, to violent pedagogy and physical expulsion, and the subsequent costs of educational disadvantage. In their study of immigrant youth of African descent in Windsor, Ontario, Dlamini, Wolfe, Anucha and Yang (2009) indicated that “despite multicultural and

other diversity-based policies, minority youth in general, and those of African descent in particular, still face barriers such as racial discrimination that limit their access to social and economic opportunities" (p.406). Generally, second-generation, visible-minority Canadians who were born to immigrant parents reported a far higher incidence of occurrence of discrimination than second-generation immigrants who were not visible minorities, possibly as a result of their more frequent attempts at social integration in comparison with their parents' generation. This is significantly higher for Blacks (Dlamini et al., 2009). Blacks in Canada are more often victims of racial profiling than Whites or other non-Black groups. "They are more likely to be stopped, questioned, searched and generally harassed by the police – the situation here is that some Canadian police departments are wilfully criminalizing a person's skin colour by violating the legal rights of Black Canadians" (Abdi, 2005, p. 57). Therefore, Dei and James (1998) pointed out that Black students adopt a collective understanding of Black identity or Blackness to make sense of school activity, and to resist oppression and domination.

In their study of the intergenerational experiences of youth and African women in Alberta, Okeke-Ihejirika and Spitzer (2005) found that African women experienced a subtle racism and felt that their own generation was more likely to thrive when taking up an African and Black identity as opposed to identifying as Canadian or according to their parents' or ancestor's country of origin. For those young women, community life revolved around their families, the local church, Black student groups, Black youth associations and country of origin organizations (Okeke-Ihejirika & Spitzer, 2005); community life played an important role in determining identity.

As discussed by Dei (1996), identity refers to definitions of individual self and personhood, and how the inner sense of self is connected to the outer perception of self. Identity

cannot be defined in isolation. Identities are relational. Individual and group cultural identities intersect. To claim an identity, rather than passively accept one, is a political act which involves one's self and others. Therefore, the identification of a Black or African identity as opposed to a Canadian or country of origin identity can be viewed as a political act, as a statement of how individuals see their place in a society.

Kumsa (2005) examined the experience of identity and belongingness among young Ethiopians of Oromo origin in Toronto and argued that Canadian belonging is a contested territory, which Ethiopians of Oromo descent have to negotiate artfully in ways unique to them. There is a feeling of temporal and spatial dislocation among these young participants. When asked "Who is Canadian," they responded that "You have to have European ancestry"..."You have to be white." Furthermore, the stereotypical question: "Where are you from" also aids in the creation of a Black identity for many of African descent who upon arrival in Canada and upon interaction with White Canadians become, "the other" or "Black" (Kumsa, 2005). As identified from the literature above, multiculturalism policy as a symbol for Canada is not sufficient and needs to be re-examined so as to assess its worth in the everyday life of people of all cultures and in order to ensure the integration of ethnic minority immigrants.

Simmons (1998) defines racism in terms of "othering" – a process involving mental images in which people who have distinctive physical attributes (such as skin colour or gender) and who may also have associated ethnic characteristics (accent or style of dress) are viewed as different, less deserving, suitable only for low-wage jobs and as outsiders with respect to the normal benefits of membership in a given society. The creation of the "other" within Canadian society ensures that Somali-Canadians, like those of Oromo descent, discussed by Kumsa (2005), are identified as "Black" as opposed to "Canadian" based on a perceived shared African

homogenous identity and regardless of differing religious and cultural practices (Kumsa, 2006). Racism and "othering" prevents many visible minorities in Canada from fully participating in the political process in mainstream society because of marginalization and discrimination (Bloemraad, 2002; Henry & Tator 1994). In general, the greater the difference (skin colour, nationality, language, religion and culture) between the White Canadian majority and non-White, non-European groups, the greater the barrier to integration into the mainstream society (Frazier et. al., 2009). Thus, discrimination faced by some immigrants and refugees may be a factor in explaining why some immigrants may feel as if they do not belong to Canada.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This study is founded upon qualitative research epistemologies, methodologies and methods. In this chapter, I describe the study's philosophical assumptions, strategies of inquiry, the methods, process of data collection and analysis. I also describe my methods for ensuring rigour and the ethical considerations put in place throughout the process of the research project.

Philosophical approach: Ontology and epistemology

This research project has been shaped through a social constructivist perspective – ontologically and epistemologically. Social constructivism is an ongoing process through which humans in society create their worlds and, thereby, themselves. Ontologically, there is neither objective reality nor objective truth; rather reality is constructed knowledge, created by virtue of our social interactions, as opposed to objective reality. The assumption in social constructivism is that individuals seek to understand the world in which they live through their experiences and subsequent development of subjective meanings within a social context (Burr, 1995; Creswell, 2009; Gergen, 1999; Sarantakos, 2005). The social construction of reality is a dynamic and continuous process that is reproduced by people acting on their interpretations and their knowledge of it. This means that "the world consists of multiple individual realities influenced by context" (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006, p. 2). This perspective is appropriate in the context of the grounded qualitative approach (Charmaz, 2006).

Epistemologically, I utilized the constructivist approach, endeavouring to interpret the research process through interacting with my research participants and involving myself as a researcher in the interpretation of the research process. This helped me to consider issues of

importance to my research participants in analyzing their lived experiences, with emphasis on sense of belonging and integration.

Social constructivism acknowledges the continuous and subjective interrelationship between participants and the researcher in constructing meaning, and the researcher's value is acknowledged in the outcome of the research process (Hayes & Oppenheim, 1997; Guba & Lincolin, 1989). In this regard, it is evident that cultural instruments assist in the assigning of meanings, meanings that are "culturally defined and historically situated interpretations and personal experiences" (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 37).

Strategy of inquiry: Qualitative approach

Given that the aim of the study is to gain an understanding of sense of belonging and the process of integration of the research participants through exploring their lived experiences, I, therefore, selected a qualitative research methodology. A qualitative approach helps me understand, describe and explain the experiences, feelings, opinions and perceptions of youth and adult Somali immigrants in Edmonton. The use of a qualitative research approach allows researchers "to get at the inner experiences of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 12).

While quantitative methodology may be useful in measuring attitudes across a large sample, qualitative methodology is a powerful tool to uncover perceptions using small, purposively selected participants. It helps explore the complex details of phenomenon and provides explanations that are difficult to address using quantitative methods. A qualitative approach provides a more comprehensive analysis of the social realities and lived experiences of individuals (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Mann & Stewart, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The flexibility of a qualitative method in the collection of data and selection of participants allowed me to explore the experiences of different age groups with varied experiences. The nature of this analysis also helped me to document participants' subjective experiences and their perceptions by understanding the process and context in which they lived. According to Gall, Borg and Gall (1996), qualitative research is the "inquiry that is grounded in the assumption that individuals construct social reality in the form of meanings and interpretations, and that these constructions tend to be transitory and situational" (p.767). In general, the use of qualitative methodology as a strategy of inquiry helped me to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' subjective experiences (Limb & Dwyer, 2001; Richards & Morse, 2007).

Grounded theory

My research is informed by grounded theory as a methodology. Grounded theory is "a method of explication and emergence. The method takes a systematic inductive, comparative, and interactive approach to inquiry and offers several open-ended strategies for conducting emergent inquiry" (Charmaz, K. 2008, p. 156). I selected this approach for three primary reasons. First, a qualitative grounded approach is crucial in dealing with issues of importance in peoples' lives (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It helped me better understand the everyday behaviours and the actions of my research participants (Sarantakos, 2005). It helped me to explore, describe, and explain the lived experiences and sense of belonging among Somali immigrants in Edmonton through a systematic analysis of empirical data. As Goulding (2002) pointed out, a grounded approach is effective when the area has been ignored or discussed superficially. Since there is no evidence of research literature on

Somali immigrants in the context of sense of belonging that involves both youth and adults, I attempted to investigate, describe and explore this issue using a grounded approach.

Second, a grounded approach helps with understanding human interaction, in particular "practical activity and routine situations from the participants' points of view" (Denscombe, 2007, p. 92). It is important in discovering the participants' main issues, concerns and their continual strategies for addressing these (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Moreover, as discussed by Creswell (2009), in a constructivist approach, the goal of the study is "to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied …… and the role of the researcher is to look at the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas" (Creswell, 2009, p. 8).

Third, grounded theory also deals mainly with processes, actions and interactions involving many individuals (Creswell, 1998). It also "emphasizes the importance of field work and the need to link any explanation very closely to what happens in practical situations in the real world" (Denscombe, 2007, p. 107). Grounded theory shares the following characteristics with other qualitative approaches: 1) a focus on people's lived experiences, 2) an interactive process between the researcher and participants, 3) the valuing of participants perspectives, 4) primarily descriptive, and 5) a reliance on participants' words (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Therefore, a grounded qualitative approach was the best strategy to inquire into the issue of lived experiences of my research participants.

The original procedures and assumptions of grounded theory developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) have been revised and developed to include a number of additional components that range from flexible procedures of conducting the research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to adding the perspective of constructivism in its epistemological orientation (Charmaz, 2002;

2005; 2006). This study, thus, follows Charmaz's explanation of grounded theory that is informed by a constructionist view of the world.

Participant selection

I selected research participants consciously, based on their relevant first-hand experience with the issues in my research (Birks & Mills, 2011; Sarantakos, 2005). Creswell (2007) pointed out that grounded theory requires data collected from "multiple individuals who have responded to an action or participated in a process about a central phenomenon" (p.120).

Since the goal of this research was to assess the lived experiences and sense of belonging among Somalis in Edmonton, I sought out the experiences of individuals who were members of a Somali ethnic group. In this regard, and in order to analyze differing experiences, I designed my research project to involve male and female adults and youth with varied backgrounds and experiences. In selecting participants, I employed some pre-determined criteria (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Bradshaw & Stratford, 2005). The criteria used for choosing participants were:

- They were of Somali-origin who came to Canada as immigrants and/or refugees or those who were born in Canada from a Somali refugee/immigrant family.
- Those participants not born in Canada must have lived in Edmonton for at least three years after they were granted refugee status or permanent resident status by the Canadian government (this is based on Citizenship and Immigration Canada's requirement of a minimum three years' residency to apply for Canadian citizenship).
- They were 18 years of age and older.
- They were able and willing to participate in the study.
- Equal representation from both male and female participants.

- Participants were able and free to discuss and articulate their ideas and thoughts about their experiences and beliefs.

Recruitment and sampling

After receiving ethical approval for my research from the Research Ethics Board of the University of Alberta (*see appendix 6, Ethics approval*), I started the recruitment of research participants who satisfy the criteria I set. I recruited potential research participants using three strategies: personal contacts, snowball sampling, and an intermediary. A fourth strategy employed was using posters for recruitment but it did not attract any participants.

I started recruiting potential participants by personally approaching individuals in my personal contacts who fit the criteria. This strategy is known as convenience sampling, a process whereby the researcher selects easily accessible individuals for data collection (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2005; Creswell, 2007; Suri, 2011). After explaining the objectives and process of the research project and handing over a copy of the Information Letter (Appendix 2), some participants were willing to participate in the research. At this stage, there were also individuals who turned down the request for various reasons. Those who agreed to do the interviews provided not only excellent and detailed interviews, but were also important sources of contact for further snowball sampling.

The second strategy employed to recruit potential participants was snowball sampling, a strategy in which individuals already aware of the research project refer those they know. Snowball sampling is a useful method to approach hard-to-reach populations or those individuals that are difficult to identify (Goodman, 1961). After conducting the first few interviews, I asked participants to suggest other potential participants who can fit the criteria and who might be interested in sharing their experiences. In order to avoid suspicion and engender trust, potential

participants were first contacted and asked by the initial participants, and only when they were willing to meet me and discuss the research project did I contact them personally and discuss details of the research project. I also handed them a copy of the Information Letter. In recruiting research participants, this method was the most useful approach, attracting the largest number of participants for this study, and was particularly helpful in reaching out to older adults who stayed at home.

The third strategy employed to recruit potential participants was through an intermediary. I used an intermediary in order to increase the number of potential participants in the research project. Potential participants were recruited and approached with the help of an intermediary. After I had received ethics approval, I recruited an intermediary, who was also used as a language translator for those people who preferred speaking in Somali. The intermediary was identified with support from the Somali-Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton. The intermediary was briefed about the whole purpose and process of the research. Potential participants were first approached and asked by the intermediary about possible participation. After they showed interest in the research, I contacted them in person and briefed them about the research in detail. Siedman (1991) suggested that it is crucial for the researcher to directly contact the interviewees instead of relying on third parties to introduce the research topic and process. I also provided them with the information letter as this provided detailed written information on the project and the contact information for both myself and my supervisor should any concerns or questions arise.

Information was gathered until saturation had been achieved. This was when repetition of themes was achieved, and new participants did not add new information (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Burns & Grove, 2003; Patton, 2002). This required identification of emerging themes after a few

interviews and being sufficiently focused on these themes so that the subsequent participants could share experiences about the topic (Dey, 1999; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Sarantakos, 2005). As Glaser & Strauss (1967) pointed out, "beyond the decisions concerning initial collection of data, further collection cannot be planned in advance of the emerging theory" (p.47). Unlike other qualitative approaches where data collection precedes analysis, grounded theory requires simultaneous data collection and analysis (Sarantakos, 2005).

A total of 21 participants – 11 adults and 10 youth – were interviewed for this study. Although it was initially difficult to find potential participants who could share their experiences, it was relatively easier at the later stage, giving me the opportunity to involve only those who were most appropriate and who could provide data for comparison in terms of the concepts and themes identified (Dey, 1999).

Data collection

Interviews

I used interviews to collect qualitative data. I preferred to use interviews because they allow for the exploration of information regarding perceptions, opinions, events and experiences of participants. It is the most suitable approach for achieving a deep understanding of the day-to-day lives of people of different ages, ethnic groups and genders and in building knowledge of the issue at hand (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Sarantakos, 2005). Other methods of data collection that could be used in grounded theory include observation and document analysis (Dey, 1999). However, interviews help develop interactions and cooperation between the researcher and the participants and provide deep accounts of individuals' perceptions and worldviews that could not be accessed through techniques such as observations (Dey, 1999; Dunn, 2000; Kvale, 1996;

Lindsay, 1997). Specifically, semi-structured interviews provide greater depth of information from respondents than can be obtained from a structured interview (Gall, Borg, & Gall 1996). As Bertaux (1981) pointed out "if given a chance to talk freely, people appear to know a lot about what is going on" (p. 39).

For the initial interviews, I prepared a semi-structured interview format (Appendix 6) that offered limited guidance for me as the researcher in order to allow the interviewees to talk about their experiences, perceptions, and what is of importance to them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The questions helped as starters and allowed participants to talk about their experiences. At times, there were also participants who spoke less, and I had to ask a series of questions and give prompts and probes to engage them and encourage them to talk about these issues.

Since some of my participants did not speak English, I used a Somali language translator and the flexible nature of semi-structured interviews helped the translator and me to explain things to participants and the participants to ask questions and clarifications, thus making the process clear and interactive (Dunn, 2000). Using semi-structured interviews also helped participants identify issues of importance in their life that were not raised by the researcher (Dunn, 2000; Kvale, 1996). Generally, semi-structured interviews allowed me to gather participants lived experiences, their perceptions and perspectives about issues that are important to their lives and to the study.

As I proceeded with the interviews and identified important themes, I continuously focused my interviews on some central issues. The questions asked of participants became focused and fewer in number. Therefore, the initial interview format and the questions asked throughout the interviews differed.

The interview process

The interviews were conducted between February 16 and June 19, 2012. Most of the interviews took place at participants' or their friends' places of residence and two of the interviews were conducted in a café. Sites for the interviews were based on participants' preferences and convenience.

Before starting each interview, I discussed my research project and addressed any questions the participant had. I used the Information Letter (Appendix 2) to explain the research project. Participants were advised about the details of the study as well as the researcher's (my) requirements of them prior to conducting the interviews. I handed them the hard copy of the Consent Form (Appendix 3). I discussed the ethical considerations of the research, including their rights as participants of the research. I asked permission to use a digital recorder and asked the participants to sign the consent forms prior to beginning the interview.

Of the 21 participants, four requested that I not use the digital recorder; for those interviews, I took handwritten notes. The remaining participants agreed to the use of the recorder. The interviews ranged in length from 32 minutes to 1:45 hours.

The interviews began by participants explaining how they came to live in Edmonton. My role in the interview process was to raise issues for discussion and encourage interviewees to express their feelings and ideas with possible interventions to probe and ensure that they were discussing the issue at hand. The questions were planned, but flexible, thus allowing the conversation to flow in a natural manner.

I found that with the later interviews, my own confidence grew, and the interviews had a smoother flow. While the questions asked were similar in all interviews (as much as possible

with semi-structured interviews), in the later interviews I was better able to ask these questions as the conversation dictated as opposed to following a strict script.

At the end of every interview, I asked participants if there was anything else they would like to add to the discussion or if they had any questions for me. Once I thanked the participants for their time, I also informed participants that they could request a copy of the transcribed interview or the final copy of the thesis should they desire. Some of the participants asked for the final copy of the report and submitted their mailing address.

I transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim and each transcript was assigned with a code for the respondent(s), date of interview, name of interviewer(s), duration of the interview and other important descriptions such as gender and age.

Data analysis

The process for analysis involved creating codes and categories, assembling themes and developing hypotheses about the participants' experiences and perspectives. I started coding after the first two interviews (one adult and one youth). As Charmaz (2006) pointed out, coding is the first and most important part of analysis that helps arrange the data into conceptual codes and categories, thereby creating an analytic frame to shape the analysis. Before coding the texts, I read and reread the interview data line by line several times to make myself familiar with the data and to catch the stories, actions and contexts in the stories. I labelled events, scenarios, ideas and perspectives narrated by participants. Then, I identified major themes and concepts from each interview document. Based on the emerging issues and categories that were of importance to the participants, I modified my interview questions subsequently. One of the emerging issues was regarding housing ownership and paying interest ("riba"). Although, I had included questions regarding housing situation and neighbourhood in my original interview

script, the issue of paying interest (riba) emerged from the early interviews. I then asked participants in my subsequent interviews about the issue of riba if they had not brought it up themselves.

After conducting 21 interviews, I revisited each interview document and once again engaged in coding in order to find more themes and concepts. Some interviews produced more categories and issues than others, and two of the interviews were too short and incomplete. Therefore, I excluded these two interviews from the analysis.

I identified major themes and concepts from each interview document, based on emerging issues and categories that were of importance to the participants. In addition to identifying emerging themes from the interview documents, I also coded the interviews on a separate document, based on the questions asked and responses obtained from each participant. This helped me identify consistencies and differences among participants.

I combined the interview texts into two separate documents (one for adults and one for youth) and assigned pseudonyms for each participant. I invited two of my fellow students to help with coding to ensure consistency. We identified several concepts and themes by labeling codes with texts. I then organized the data by the identified topics (codes) to look across all respondents in order to identify consistencies and differences (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In doing so, I copied and pasted participants' responses directly from the transcripts.

In the next step, I organized the themes and codes into major categories. I selected major categories that represented the themes and accounts of participants' voices. Using the identified categories, I proceeded with reassembling similar data into one category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

During coding and the process of identifying emergent themes, I used memoing

continuously. I recorded my thoughts, ideas and reflections about the data when reading and coding the transcribed interviews. Baxter (2000) argued that the use of memos during coding provides the researcher with a sense of clear direction during analysis. I used direct quotes from the interviews to present findings and support discussions. When quoting participants, I used pseudonyms to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

Ensuring rigour

One aspect of quality research is ensuring rigour. Many qualitative researchers use different criteria to evaluate the quality and trustworthiness of any qualitative research. Charmaz (2006) recommended four criteria to evaluate grounded theory research: credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness.

Credibility refers to accurately representing participants' accounts and experiences (Streubert & Carpenter, 1999) and supporting your claims with strong empirical evidence (Charmaz, 2006). The strategies used to ensure credibility include employing purposive sampling, prolonged engagement with the participants, and peer debriefing (Baxter & Eyles, 1997).

In this study, purposive sampling was used to select participants. I also involved two of my peers in coding the transcribed data and identifying themes that complemented my coding. In addition, during the analysis I had numerous discussions with my colleagues – who helped in coding – regarding my perceptions of the data and emergent categories. These discussions allowed me to revisit my categories and validate them based on the data. After thorough discussions, I removed some of the categories that were not sufficiently supported by the data.

Verbatim quotations were used in the findings to assist with establishing the trustworthiness of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Ensuring continuous systematic

comparisons between the data, concepts and categories was another helpful technique used to ensure credibility. I collected a tremendous amount of data from the 21 participants, and only that which was well addressed by most participants was included. A large amount of data has been removed from the analysis. Through this process, I was able to ensure credibility of the research. Since it is not possible to ensure neutrality in qualitative research, I have openly stated and declared my biases that are also the result of my own experiences as an immigrant (see my position as a researcher at the end of this chapter).

Although the issues addressed in this research are not entirely new, it presents the unique experiences of the participants, thus furthering our understanding of the process of immigrants' integration in Canada. Specific issues emerged, such as the housing situation of participants and the experience of youth and adults, providing relatively new insights for further studies and theory development. The study uses primary field data to ensure originality. The study ensures resonance by presenting the full experiences and views of participants using empirical data. The semi-structured interview technique employed in this research provided participants the opportunity to reflect on the experiences and issues of importance to them. These experiences and views of participants as a group and as individual participants illustrate that they have many interesting stories to tell. The analysis of the data attempts to organize the experiences in a way that would help explain participants' personal and group experiences in the process of integration and developing a sense of belonging.

Finally, the research is useful in that it presents the lived experiences of participants by providing them the opportunity to reflect on and organized their experiences. The analysis of the experiences poses some important issues that are of significance for further studies in the field of immigrants' integration, housing situations, and creating culturally diverse cities. The findings

from this study will also add new knowledge to the ever-increasing Muslim immigrant population in Canada and the associated challenges related to culture, integration and full participation in all aspects of life in Canada.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are of utmost importance in qualitative research as we involve people in our study, gather personal and emotional data, and request participants' willingness and time to take part in the study and share their experiences and perspectives (Creswell, 2007). According to Josselson (2007), "ethical practice and ethical codes rest on the principles of assuring the free consent of participants to participate, guarding the confidentiality of the material, and protecting participants from any harm that may ensue from their participation" (p. 537).

I provided potential participants an Information Letter (Appendix 2). When they agreed, I gave them the Consent Letter (Appendix 3) and went over it with them in great detail before starting the interview. I asked participants to sign the consent form before I conducted the interview. In the Information Letter and Consent Letter, I briefly introduced the objective and process of the research. I also introduced myself and provided my contact information. Participants were informed through the Letter of Consent and the Information Letter that participation is voluntary and that they may withdraw from the research at any time by contacting me verbally, in writing, via telephone, or email. Participants were also given the option of contacting my supervisor through her email and phone number. At the beginning of each interview, I informed the participants verbally that they may refrain from answering any or all of the questions, and may withdraw or not participate in the research at any time. I also informed participants of their right to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. I also informed

participants that to safeguard the security of data, it will be kept in a secure place for a minimum of 5 years following completion of the research project, and at that time would be appropriately destroyed in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality.

My position as a researcher

An important component of qualitative research is the positionality of the researcher which Sarantakos (2005) defined as the "self-awareness of the researcher" (p. 45) and constitutes the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 183; cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 219). The entire process of this research project has been influenced by my own personal experience – from identifying the research problem to selection of research participants and interpretations of findings. As a recent immigrant to Canada and as a researcher, my own lived experiences shaped the interpretations and presentation of the research.

I came to Canada in 2010 as a landed immigrant, and like any newcomer, I had some questions regarding "how do immigrants manage to "integrate" and stay in this place?;" "Is it really possible to make Edmonton/Canada home?;" "Do immigrants really make Edmonton/Canada home?;" "Through what process, do immigrants begin to feel a sense of belonging and of being at home?" and several similar questions. Prior to beginning this research project, I spoke to many East African immigrants and refugees (Ethiopians, Eritreans and Somalis) who had lived in Canada from just a few months to more than twenty years. These people provided me with widely divergent views and perceptions; some of them felt that Edmonton/Canada is like a "second home" and for others, even those who have been here for a very long time, it has never felt like home.

In particular, I sensed that even after living for quite a long time in Edmonton, my Somali acquaintances were relatively unsettled and had a deep longing to return home, more so than

those from other East African backgrounds. The feelings I saw within many in the Somali community during my early observations reflected the feelings I had at the time. This led to my decision to investigate further about this issue and the development of my interest in doing research that examines the lived experiences and sense of belonging among the Somali diaspora.

In my first semester, I took a graduate course on "Colonialism, post-colonial theories and globalization" in the Department of Sociology. The topics and discussions covered in the course provided me with the history of the state of Canada and its history of immigration. It helped me to critically contextualize the colour-based form of racialization and self-representation, the history of racialization of immigration, as well as provide me with a more nuanced understanding of citizenship and multiculturalism in Canada. It also provided me with the history of Canadian immigration policies, all of which helped me to frame my research project.

The collection of data for this study was an extremely complicated and complex process. Initially, I believed that as a Muslim man from East Africa, myself, I would have no problems recruiting participants from the Somali community for this research project. However, from the start of the recruitment process, I encountered several difficulties. My connection to the Somali community was through the Africa Centre and the leadership of the Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, which is housed in the Africa Centre as well as through personal friendships with a few individuals. However, my lack of an extensive connection with the larger community and inability to speak Somali made it extremely difficult to recruit participants, as there was a lack of trust from participants. However, through my connections with the leaders of the Somali-Canadian Cultural Society, I was able to connect with an intermediary who helped me recruit participants and who also served as a translator.

Having the support of the society was extremely important in finding the right person to help with participant recruitment and gave me access to a limited number of participants. My volunteer work at the Africa Centre was helpful with getting support from the Somali-Canadian Cultural Society, which led to the recruitment of a limited number of participants; due to this referral, these few participants were willing to be interviewed.

Upon first meeting potential participants, I shared my background with them. Relationality is an important aspect of conducting researcher with many communities, and I was aware that knowing who I was would be an important factor in the participants' decision to take part in the study. I am cognizant of the fact that my ethnic background and religion were instrumental in the trust and access given to me by the participants. A researcher from a non-African, non-Muslim background would not have been as readily accepted, nor do I believe that the participants would have been as willing to share their experiences of discrimination, "othering" and marginalization with a researcher whom they felt did not "get it." My religion and ethnicity were also helpful with getting initial participants to suggest additional participants to take part in the research (snowballing). I was able to develop a sense of trust with the participants over a shared religious background and as a result of also being African. I also believe that the limited time that I had been in Canada (less than three years at the time of data collection) also impacted my relationship with the participants as they felt that I would share similar experiences with them. Participants were extremely willing to share their stories. One participant, in particular, shared her experience of coming to Canada as an illegal migrant. This was directly the result of having a shared identity as a Muslim, as an immigrant and as an East African.

I am aware that I am extremely sympathetic to the participants' experiences with regards to developing a sense of belonging to Edmonton and Canada as a result of my own experiences

in that regard. Like many of the participants, my own integration has been difficult. I have faced many of the issues described in the interviews: discrimination when searching for employment, racism, and an initial inability to align my religious beliefs of paying interest with the banking system in Canada. I often, therefore, felt that the participants' sentiments were a mirror of my own, as though their words were mine. At those times, it was difficult to critically analyse the data, to look deeper at the responses and try to understand the data from the participants' points of view as opposed to my own.

There were also times when I was judgemental of the participants' feelings. For example, many of the participants' discussed experiences of job-related discrimination through the experiences of others. I found this extremely problematic and questioned whether these sentiments were more likely examples of perceived discrimination as opposed to actual experiences of discrimination. The lack of first-hand accounts was the primary reason for my scepticism. I am still struggling with how to understand this issue and whether I was able to portray it in a way that honours the words of the participants while also illustrating my apprehension with the ways in which participants described these experiences.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the major findings of the study in three sections. The first section describes research participants' demographics and family situations as well as the causes and processes of their migration to Canada and Edmonton. The second section presents the major finding of the study; home ownership and riba, citizenship and a sense of belonging, participants' self-reported feelings of belonging and their efforts, intentions and commitments to make Edmonton and Canada home, as well as the challenges they face. The last section of this chapter discusses participants' perceptions and experiences of life in Edmonton.

Research participants' background and their migration to Edmonton

Demographic and family situations

I interviewed 21 individuals – eleven adults and ten youth (see Table 4.1). Out of the 21, nine adults and nine youth interview documents were completed and used for analysis. Thus, this study is composed of interviews from eighteen individuals: nine adults who range between the ages of 28-65 and nine youth aged 18-25. At the time of the interviews, all research participants had lived in Edmonton from 3 to 8 years. All the adult participants were not only born in but also grew up in Somalia. Six of the youth participants were born in Somalia and grew up in Kenyan refugee camps; one youth was born in Kenya and two in Ontario, Canada.

Table 4.1 Participants demographic data

P #	*Participant (pseudonym)*	*Sex*	*Age*	*No. of years in Edmonton*	*P #*	*Participant (pseudonym)*	*Sex*	*Age*	*No. of years in Edmonton*
01	Sharifa	F	56	6 years	11	Abukar	M	18	6 years
02	Saado	F	63	5	12	Farah	M	24	4
03	Maano	F	65	4.5	13	Ghedi	M	24	3
04	Qamar	F	28	7	14	Bilal	M	25	3
05	Hafsa	F	35-40	7.5	15	Jabir	M	22	3
06	Zainab	F	35-40	5	16	Layla	F	18	7.5
07	Umar	M	28	7	17	Amal	F	18	4.5
08	Mukhtar	M	28	7	18	Hanan	F	24	3.5
09	Aisha	F	35-40	6	19	Idil	F	25	3.5

Five of the adult participants worked either full or part time jobs. Three adults were not working due to age and language problems and were economically dependent on government assistance. One adult participant was a stay-at-home mother. Of the nine youth participants, six were students who also worked part time. Two youth were engaged in full-time employment. The final youth was the only married youth interviewed and was a homemaker.

With regards to family situations for adult participants, three adults were widows who lived either with their children or by themselves. Four participants were married with children, and the remaining two were single.

Among the youth, four of the participants had one of their parents here in Edmonton; the remaining five had left their parents back in Kenya in refugee camps. Participants indicated that they had regular and continuous communication with their families back in refugee camps and in other countries.

Migratory background

All the adult participants migrated to Canada as government sponsored refugees or sponsored students from two refugee camps in Kenya: Dadaab and Kakuma. Among the adults, the three older adults over the age of fifty-five (known henceforth as older adults) – all female – came as government sponsored refugees. The six adults aged between 28 – 40 years (known henceforth as younger adults) came through a scholarship program – World University Service of Canada (WUSC). They attended Canadian universities after finishing high school in refugee camps in Kenya.

Two youth participants migrated as government sponsored refugees with one of their parents; a further three youth came through the WUSC program and two through family sponsorship. One youth declared refugee status upon entry into Canada, and the final two youth interviewed were born in Ontario, Canada. All participants who came as refugees lived in refugee camps in Kenya for approximately 12-16 years. Those who came from refugee camps in Kenya had no power in deciding which country to migrate to; the decision to migrate to Canada was made by administrators working for the United Nation High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and Canadian Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program. As one participant described:

> *I was in a refugee camp for many years waiting to get accepted as a refugee to Australia, or Canada… then the UN and the Government of Canada picked us to come to Canada*

as refugees. So, it was not specific choice to come here, we just got a refugee right by the government. (Saado)

With regards to moving to Edmonton, of the nine adults, the three older adults came directly from Kenya. The remaining six individuals – younger adults – initially lived in Ontario, Nova Scotia, Manitoba and New Brunswick and later moved to Edmonton. For those who moved from other parts of Canada to Edmonton, the major reasons for moving to Edmonton were better job opportunities and the presence of friends, families and a relatively larger population of Somalis in the city. As one participant said:

You know, Nova Scotia does not have good job opportunities like Alberta. So that was one reason I decided to move here. Also Nova Scotia does not have many immigrants; you don't see community life. So all those things made me move. (Zainab)

Four of the youth moved to Edmonton from Ontario with their parents when they were young children; like the aforementioned adults interviewed, these four youth indicated that their parents chose to move to Edmonton for greater job opportunities and to be with family who had already moved to Edmonton. Layla, who was born in Toronto, described how her family moved to Edmonton:

My aunt was already here. My aunt, grandmothers, cousins had come before we did. So we started living with them for a week or two and by then my mom was able to find a place really close to where my family lived. (Layla)

After spending a year studying through the WUSC program in New Brunswick, one youth moved due to expectations of better work and educational opportunities in Edmonton as well as the desire to live in a community with a larger Somali population and be closer to friends

from Kenya.

> *There were some factors I considered, and I moved here. One of them was in terms of job opportunity. Edmonton is a better place than New Brunswick, and I also had some of my friends here so I thought it was good to study with them in the same school and maybe live with them. So those were some of the reasons why I moved here. (Farah)*

The remaining four youth moved directly to Edmonton from a Kenyan refugee camp and came without family.

Belonging and the process of integration

This section maps out the feelings of belonging and the process of integration among participants. It focuses on understanding participants' current feelings of belonging to Edmonton and their intentions and commitments to making Edmonton and Canada home. The intentions and commitments are explained by participants' intentions or future plans of living permanently in Edmonton and possession of citizenship. Home ownership and finance as well as the challenges they face are addressed in the next section.

Owning homes

One of the major themes that emerged during analysis is the role of home ownership on belonging and integration of immigrants. Although participants in this study faced several challenges related to accessing housing, such as overcrowding, affordability in renting a decent house and discrimination from landlords, this research emphasizes the importance of owning homes.

During the interviews, participants were asked if they owned a home or if they planned to own a home in Edmonton in the future. The general inclination among most participants was to

state that they had no intention of owning a home in Edmonton. The underlining factors stated extended beyond the problems of income and ability to afford a mortgage, a problem many immigrants face in Canada. For those who could afford to own a home, two reasons were identified for not owning home in Edmonton: 1) the intention to move back to Somalia and 2) religious beliefs.

Some participants were not certain about their future in Edmonton or anywhere in Canada. They spoke of their dream that one day Somalia would be a better place, thus enabling their return. Others indicated their issues with paying interest on mortgages, an act forbidden for some Muslims. The religious factors are mainly related to the way the housing market works in Canada and the religious beliefs these participants have about paying interest on loans. An older adult participant stated that:

> *I am not expecting to buy a house. Even for the future even if I got the money I will not buy a house because it is based on "riba" (interest) and it is Haram in our religion… No, it is 'haram' [forbidden by God/Allah], it is like fighting with Allah. (Maano)*

Participants discussed the importance of owning a home from the perspective of belonging and integration. In Somali culture, home is the centre of all family activities and cultural rituals. Although my research participants could not maintain the extended family system that is a common culture among Somalis back home, they had strong interactions with each other and used home as a common place to gather. Since most of the interviews with my research participants were conducted in their homes, I observed that almost every participant was hosting friends and/or family and had homes with family-friendly atmospheres.

Participants recognized that owning a house was important for stability and attachment to the place they lived. A young adult participant stated:

It is very difficult; you live a temporary life for those who don't like paying interest. If you own your own home you feel more attached right? (Umar)

Well, this is a big challenge like you are living in a community and you are living here may be for like twenty years, forty years and you don't have a place where you can call home….you cannot call the whole country as your "home"… maybe you may have a Canadian citizenship, you may have a passport of the country but still you may not call it home because you don't have a house, still paying a rent, you are living in a house built by somebody but that person is still receiving a rent. So this is posing a big challenge. (Bilal)

Participants thought that there were a lot of people who could afford to buy a house through the mortgage system but who were not willing to do so because of religious beliefs. They saw the mortgage system as hindering people from permanently living in Edmonton. As one participant indicated:

If you have no home you call it home then you might move somewhere else where you can do it. So I think that is one thing people consider when leaving …. Because they can't rent the whole of their life, it is so expensive. But if they can get an alternative, where they can buy a house without all those things attached to it then I think a lot of people will do that and decide to permanently live here. (Farah)

Some of the participants indicated that since they had learned of the possibility of owning houses without paying interest, an arrangement common in some states in the United States, they hoped to be able to own a home in Edmonton.

Paying the interest is a problem. We also are not ready to enter a mortgage with interest. We are going to save some money and we will see if we could buy. I also heard that you

can buy a house without paying interest… I think it is called Habitat housing. (Hafsa)

Citizenship and sense of belonging

The issue of citizenship was an important point of discussion with participants. The discussion focused on what Canadian citizenship means to participants, what and who is considered Canadian and if becoming a citizen makes one feel a greater sense of belonging to Canada. At the time of the interviews, most participants possessed Canadian citizenship and the remaining were either waiting to write their citizenship test or were preparing to submit an application.

All participants indicated that it was important to possess Canadian citizenship. For most participants, the most significant benefit of Canadian citizenship was the ability to travel easily and freely without complicated security checks and visa requirements. They believed that a Canadian passport made travelling easier and safer. One participant explained this:

I travelled back home last year with my Canadian passport and it was really good now because before they would have given me a hard time because I was travelling with a Kenyan passport or a Somali passport. … I was just clearing customs very easily. (Zainab)

For some participants, having citizenship is about having a legal document to not only travel but as proof of identity; some participants did not have a passport or legal documents due to their complicated process of immigration to Canada. Canadian citizenship also creates a sense of stability and security as it provides a legal guarantee that they can continue living in Canada, thereby also enabling access to public services.

It feels weird to me to be Canadian citizen. … but you know it is a security to me. Since I

want to live here permanently and bring family over, it is important to me to have that. In addition to that I can't go anywhere even to Somalia because I don't have documents. So it is very crucial to have Canadian citizenship. (Idil)

Another female youth participant stated that having citizenship status is important to defend religious and cultural rights. Other women participants expressed similar sentiments. All but two participants who possessed Canadian citizenship indicated that they did not believe they were truly Canadian. For these participants, citizenship did not alter their sense of belonging.

Well as I told you I have this citizenship. But then up till now I haven't seen or I haven't realistically you know ... I haven't realistically thought of anything that makes me you know belong to this place. (Jabir)

The two most important factors considered in the context of the participants were how they viewed themselves as Canadian citizens (or would be citizens) and how they thought others viewed them, including their experiences of discrimination. One young adult participant explained how he separated formal citizenship from being an actual Canadian based on his feelings and encounters with other people.

Canadian citizen means that you have the right to live in this country, you will have the opportunity to vote or run for office equally like other persons who live in this country. But I know that as an immigrant that is not 100 percent the case. (Bilal)

Another participant suggested that attaining Canadian citizenship resulted in divergent senses of belonging between visible minority and White immigrants. She indicated that even recent immigrants from Eastern European countries perceived her as someone "alien" because her skin colour identified her as an immigrant:

"When somebody who came from Ukraine, like may be two years after I came, ask[s] me where are you from and they think they are Canadian. ... I feel bad. Their [skin] colour does not show that they are from outside [Canada] and I know they are .... They ask me where are you from. I feel that I am an outsider all the time". (Qamar)

As suggested by Qamar, a sense of belonging is constructed by perceptions of belonging held by the wider society; when White immigrants also question the "Canadianness" of visible minority immigrants, the result is feelings of alienation and a decreased sense of belonging.

Participants' understanding of citizenship excluded civic and political rights and responsibilities. Participants reported very limited participation in any social or political activities, even at a community level. Many felt they did not have the responsibility and full rights to voice their concerns as Canadians. Rather, they saw themselves mainly as Somalis or as immigrants, neither of whom have the legal rights to make claims on civic and political rights. One youth participant asked why the City of Edmonton did not have a single Black/African representative on City Council and blamed officials, arguing that they were not including blacks in the political arena, both at the city and provincial level. His statement suggested that although being a Canadian citizen grants "full" political and civic rights, including the right to vote and to run for political office or city council, there are structural and institutional barriers to Black engagement in the political arena and, thus, to fully realizing Canadian citizenship.

Situational stability and feelings of belonging

The findings from the analysis of the interviews revealed that participants have situational and unsettled feelings of belonging. During the interviews, participants were asked if they feel as though they belong to Edmonton and why. The responses obtained have three forms:

No, yes, and both. Those responses are mainly based on their perceptions about themselves, the place and the community they are living in, past experiences in their country of origin, and their lived experiences in Edmonton since their arrival.

The first category of participants, those who did not feel a sense of belonging to Edmonton or Canada at all, argued that there is nothing that made them feel a sense of home. Most of the participants in this category are older adults and youth. The main reasons included absence of family, feelings of loneliness and limited opportunities for interaction in their own community, discrimination and feeling "different" or othered.

Some participants explained that absence of family and feelings of loneliness made them feel as though they do not belong to this place. In addition, the fact that many Somali migrants have moved away from Somalia not by choice but in order to escape conflict and are always hoping to go back home has resulted in a belief that their time in Canada is temporary.

> *Back home I have family and so many relatives and friends to visit and talk to, but here there is no one. I am staying home, I don't work but I have no one to talk to and visit. I feel lonely, but back home even if I stay home there are a lot of people around me. So I am still hoping I will get back to my country. (Hanan)*

For these participants, belonging is connected to their association with their past life and the concurrent emotional attachment to the place they were born in, raised, lived and established families. As an older adult participant described it:

> *The most important thing I can share with you is that Somalia is the place I was born, grew up, got married, had children and become a mother. … So when you have your]own country, you have a government, you are somebody, but now here no one knows me. (Saado)*

Some participants also explained that their lack of a sense of belonging was based on their lived experiences in Edmonton and elsewhere in Canada. As a youth participant explained:

> *I haven't realistically thought of anything that makes me, you know, belong to this place.... Sometimes it's very hard to describe because I don't actually describe what I can say but then the thing is like, I feel different than the people you know what I mean. Like my accent is different. Probably you know one of the contributing factors. I'm different; I look different. So that's why I do not belong to them. That's why I am different. That's why I can never associate even though I am a citizen. (Jabir)*

The second category involved those participants who had mixed feelings. They did not feel that they fully belonged to Edmonton or Canada; however, depending on their success or failure in their career, education or perhaps social life, they could imagine Edmonton or Canada as their future home. These participants were mainly younger adults and youth who aspired to a better future, although they were not certain. As one youth participant stated:

> *I kind of imagine Edmonton as my future home, because if I live here maybe for the next 10 years studying and living here, then it seems this is going to be my future home. (Bilal)*

Available opportunities and the success one may achieve appeared to be important determinants for developing a sense of belonging. Another young adult participant explained that:

> *I would say if you have the same opportunity as any other one. If you are given the same opportunity as the other one, then you will feel like you can stay and live there forever….. But if you see that there is still somehow unbalanced opportunities, you will feel like okay then home has to be somewhere else that becomes the perfect place for you. (Umar)*

The third category was comprised of a few participants who felt as though Edmonton was home. These participants could be taken as exceptions in that they considered themselves to be

Edmontonians. These participants believed Edmonton to be their second home. The most important factors for explaining this exception were: 1) these participants did not envisage any hope of peace and stability in their country of origin, Somalia, in the near future; and 2) they have also witnessed from their experiences and that of other immigrants in Canada that you can make a place home through time. As one participant maintained:

> *.... this is our place now and our future home. We do not know about the future; what we know is Edmonton is our place now. We consider it as home. (Sharifa)*

The participant believed that Canada is an adopted home for Somalis, and they could be culturally transformed; in particular, this participant believed that after living in a place for a long time, individuals such as she could start to live like *Canadians*.

Participants who felt as though they belonged to Edmonton have lived in Edmonton relatively longer and have a life that is more family-oriented than those who have no feelings of belonging. They are predominantly women, and all live with their families, spouses and children. However, it is important to note that their feelings of belonging seemed to increase or decrease depending on how they were treated by others – those whom participants referred to as "Canadians." Although, participants claimed to have a growing sense of belonging, they also indicated that sometimes some people made them feel as though they did not belong while others made them feel a greater sense of belonging to the place and the community. This was related to both the presence of and their experiences with discrimination and racism and, hence, explains the host society's role in impacting immigrants' integration and sense of place positively or negatively.

Intentions of permanent settlement and making Edmonton future home

When participants were asked if they had plans to live in Edmonton permanently, they

had mixed reactions. Their responses were similar to their feelings of belonging to Edmonton. For most of the participants, their interest in living in the city was conditional and dependent on three factors: 1) the situation in Somalia; 2) future employment opportunities; and 3) the presence of family. Accordingly, participants seemed to fall into one of three categories: 1) those who planned to live in Edmonton permanently; 2) those who wanted to go back to Somalia; and 3) those who could not decide.

Only three participants expressed a desire and plan to stay in Edmonton permanently. They stated the presence of settled family and future opportunities in the city as main factors in their decision. As one youth participant stated:

I would like to live in Edmonton. I can see myself growing here. (Amal)

Those participants who discussed their plan to stay in Edmonton were those who had families, mainly spouses and children, and those who considered Edmonton as home. There was a clear association between their feelings of belonging in Edmonton and their plans to make Edmonton their permanent home. The presence of their family here increased their sense of belonging to Edmonton. This can be attributed to the importance placed on family for many of the participants; thus, many who expressed a desire to return "home" had family living in Somalia.

The second category – those who would like to return to Somalia – included mainly older adults who could not see themselves living permanently in Edmonton and Canada. For these participants, who stayed home with no work and family, their first choice was to return to Somalia. The situation is clearly expressed by an older woman participant who stated:

If I had a choice, I would prefer to go to Somalia because I feel lonely here. The money I get for living is also not enough. That is also a problem but the loneliness is very hard. If

there are other places or cities in Canada where I can get Somali seniors with me who I can spend time with them I may go. (Saado)

Feelings of loneliness and absence of family life were the main factors for participants who would like to return to Somalia. A few youth participants shared similar sentiments as well, and they stated that in the future, they would consider returning to Somalia to raise their children there.

The third category, the undecided, included most participants. They had no clearly defined plans to either return to Somalia or stay in Edmonton or anywhere within Canada at the time of being interviewed. Their moves were mostly dependent on available opportunities in the future. They were flexible in their capacity to move to any place in Canada if opportunities were available. This category involved mainly the young adults and youth participants who were attending college. As two participants indicated:

I have a plan to stay here but if opportunity comes like a better opportunity and I need to move somewhere else, I will move. (Farah)

I do plan on staying here for a bit, yah. But down the future, I don't know. I want to go and explore my surroundings before I commit to staying in one place. (Layla)

Some of the participants in this category also indicated that if the situation in Somalia improved, they wanted to return and live there. However, as long as they stayed in Canada, many of them planned to stay in Edmonton. Only two participants responded that they would likely move to other cities in Canada. Interestingly, one participant stated a preference to move to a smaller city as he believed that would be a better place for raising children, and in contrast, a second participant indicated that he wanted to move to a bigger city, specifically Toronto, for reasons of better opportunities.

Living in Edmonton: Experiences and perceptions of participants

Participants' perception of Edmonton

Participants' perceptions, experiences and insights differed based on their socio-demographic backgrounds and the time they had spent in Edmonton. In the interviews, I asked participants to describe Edmonton. Participants described the city positively with some terms attached to specific qualities such as: a "cold place" but "nice." They used terms like "good city," "nice city," "not overwhelming." They emphasized job opportunities, social services, cultural diversity and that they liked the size of the city compared to other places in Canada. Most participants noted that available job opportunities and access to education made Edmonton a good place to live. Generally most participants had a positive view of the city of Edmonton; however, older adults were the least positive in terms of their view of the city.

Neighbourhood interaction and social ties

According to the participants, being fully engaged with community and family, such as by establishing and maintaining social networks with neighbours, friends and co-workers illustrated one aspect of living a good life. In particular, interaction with neighbours is highly valued in Somali culture. Almost all participants felt that connections with neighbours are important; however, they reported very limited interactions with neighbours in Edmonton. Most recalled their life back in Africa and explained how neighbours had been part of their day-to-day life and were important sources of social support. In Canada, however, participants said that while they may see their neighbours, interaction was limited to exchanging greetings. Very few participants reported a strong connection with their neighbours. Those participants who identified strong connections had developed them through living in a neighbourhood for a longer

period of time. These participants also lived in neighbourhoods populated by other immigrant families who shared similar desires for strong neighbourhood ties.

> *Our neighbours are from different cultural groups. … Like Bangladesh, Eritrea, Somalia and others. I like to interact with all my neighbours. We all know each other and interact very well. The neighbourhood is good for interaction. (Hafsa)*

Furthermore, participants with children found that they were more connected to neighbours due to the friendships between children.

> *The people around here are from different countries and I think that is why they are very interactive. I know everyone around this neighbourhood and sometimes my two little kids may go outside home and I know where they are. I don't have to worry so yea we have a wonderful interaction. Usually we also get together once or twice a week and bring our families and kids together and discuss about different issues. We have good community organizers. (Zainab)*

In explaining why they were not interacting with their neighbours, most participants blamed Canadian culture. Participants believed that privacy is a major component of people's life in Canada, and that resulted in people not having strong relationships with their neighbours. Under these circumstances, most participants explained that although they did not appreciate the type of life that does not encourage connections and interactions among neighbours, they struggled to adapt to a more private life. Two participants explained that back home one can easily knock on someone's house without even calling them.

> *You don't want to do something like knock at someone's door and say hi, which is okay in our community but you can't do it here, people will see it as like you are invading their*

privacy or maybe they think of something else about you. So I think we just wanted to interact and socialize but we don't get the opportunity to do that. (Farah).

Actually I don't want to blame this place but the problem is that the environment here doesn't allow interaction, it does not allow community, it does not allow… but individualistic, it encourages individuality, be in your own, walk in your own, do not care about anybody else ... just be yourself that is what the environment dictated. So when I came here in 2008, I used to go to the neighbourhood to my friend's house and knock knock and how are you doing good ..... and I realized actually they do not like that they just want their privacy they just want to stay there so I had to be like them later even if I go to other place where Somalis live this is Canada man. (Ghedi).

There were other reasons given for a lack of interaction among neighbours. The type of housing lived in was one such explanation; many participants felt that living in apartments limited interaction among neighbours. This could be related to the newness of apartment living for many who are members of a communal culture in which gathering was often outside while engaging in outdoor work. Other factors included lack of time to establish relationships as many worked long hours. Moreover, frequent moving was considered as a factor for not establishing relationships or getting to know and interacting with neighbours. A 56 year old mother asserted:

People move so often. Sometimes you meet good people who live next to your house and then they move. Sometimes we also move in to another neighbourhood. So it is difficult to establish a rooted and firm relationship with neighbours. (Sharifa)

The older adult participants also mentioned language barriers as a reason for their limited interactions with other people. They usually spent time with people from the same background if they were around.

Socialization with friends, coworkers or schoolmates

Apart from the neighbourhood contact, participants discussed their broader experiences and feelings regarding their social life in Edmonton and the ways in which they interacted and the people they interacted with. In addition to neighbours and friends, people at work and schools were main sources of interaction. Most participants recognized the importance of establishing friendships and contact with other people in order to make their life in Edmonton better. Three trends were identified: 1) interaction with friends who were usually from similar backgrounds; 2) interactions at the work place; and 3) interactions at schools.

For adults, friends from Somali cultural groups were the most important source of socialization, and they had a strong connection with people from Somalia. Their socialization and interactions were strictly limited to those of Somali background and other African immigrants. However, most older adults mentioned that language barriers made interactions and establishing connections difficult with those who may have similar experiences, such as immigrants from East African countries whom they met while attending English language learning classes. All of the older adults said that they looked forward to the language classes as this was one of their only opportunities for socialization; however, their English capacity was simply not sufficient to engage in extensive dialogue and create the needed social relationships with others. Furthermore, they did not feel that they were able to improve their language capability to the level needed for communication.

Though young adults usually have conversations and interactions at work places, they found it much more difficult to establish strong relationships with non-immigrants. They were usually closer to people of similar backgrounds, particularly other Somalis.

I feel with Somali people honestly, you don't have to know them for a long time. You'll just be like walking down the hallway and they'll just smile and you and you smile back and you're friends now. But with like other people, I feel like I have to put in more of an effort. So I don't really like talking to people who aren't Somali. (Amal)

Some participants identified workplaces as the best places to get to know and get along with people of different backgrounds. Most participants agreed that there were good opportunities for socialization in the workplace. However, even in the workplace, they tended to interact with people of similar backgrounds, Somalis, or other immigrants as opposed to non-immigrants. As two youth participants pointed out:

I think I feel like I have more connection with immigrants than with the Canadians. You might have the same experience about adjusting to life in Canada so they may understand better about what you are talking about than the Canadians. (Farah)

I interact with people in the school. There are Somalis and other different cultures. … I see that interaction as a way of getting to know people from different colours, and I see meeting other people from Somalia as a way of continuing to practice my language anywhere I can. (Abukar)

I asked the youth participants about their experiences in school regarding different interactions. Although, they exhibited a greater tendency to socialize with people of various backgrounds, if the opportunity allowed, they were more comfortable establishing close friendships and spending time with Somalis and other visible minorities, in particular, those of African background. The reasons given were similar cultures, languages and identities. Moreover, there was a sense of being "different" from the others.

A few Somali students in the study also reported difficulty in establishing connections

and interacting with Somali students who were born and raised in Canada, suggesting that for some participants the migrant experience was more important than a shared ethnic or cultural background. One youth participant explained why he had no connections and did not interact with the non-immigrant youth in school:

> *Sometimes they don't even have interests, to be honest. There are times you feel like they're not interested in what you're saying; they don't have interest in you. Because basically one of the reasons is we have different mentality you know. I was raised and grew up in a certain environment. And they were raised here. So they're more attracted to people who are raised here who they have commonalities with you know, common things that they can share. ……. We don't go out and socialize. Off course I don't have any commonality with them so it's going to be hard for me. So that's why. (Jabir)*

Furthermore, those students who were born and grew up in Canada reported having no specific preferences when establishing friendships and interactions.

> *I talk a lot so I just talk to random people. So I find I don't have a problem with interacting with people. There are some students who will just give you a weird look and you can tell that they don't want to talk to you. (Layla)*

Religious places (mosques) were another source of interaction for most participants. In terms of religion and spaces of worships, participants felt that within the city of Edmonton, there were numerous spaces where they could practice their religion; this helped those participants who attended mosque to establish social networks in the city. Other social activities such as volunteering and gatherings in cultural communities were not common among participants. Many participants were busy working two jobs or working and attending school.

What do participants value about living in Edmonton

Participants spoke about living in Edmonton and the issues that were of most importance to them, such as job opportunities, feelings of safety and security, freedom of cultural and religious practices, geography, educational opportunities and cultural diversity. Adults and youth had different perceptions and priorities though; adults prioritized safety, security, and availability of services while youth emphasized job opportunities.

Job opportunities

Job opportunities were seen as the most important feature of the city among all youth and young adult participants. Some participants compared the available job opportunities in Edmonton with other cities in Canada and described Edmonton positively:

> *For me, one of the good things in Edmonton is it has more job opportunity, at least everybody can get a job, you can make your life better, there is education opportunities, it is also a better place for interacting with Somali immigrants. (Farah)*

> *Compared to other cities like Ottawa, Edmonton offers an environment that is better than Ottawa. That's where I'm from. I've seen a lot of friends from Ottawa, from other parts of Ontario just moving to this city for job opportunities. So that's one of the major reasons why people come here. They leave their family back in Ottawa and just work and send money to their families to support them. So I think that's one of the most attractive things about being an Edmontonian or in Edmonton. (Jabir)*

Safety and security

Older adults said that living in Edmonton made them feel safe and secure, especially after

the difficult lives they had during their extensive time in refugee camps. They also considered Edmonton as a place that offered diverse opportunities to practice their cultural and religious beliefs and said that it was up to them as individuals to exploit these opportunities.

> *I feel much secured here than the place I came from. There are many people or a community like me, I can practice my religion like how I used to practice back home, I mean I am free to practice my belief without limitation. I can say whatever I wanted to say with no fear but in back home I have to be careful with everything I say. The other thing is Edmonton has a good job opportunity and access to education. In addition I don't know if it is just here in Edmonton or everywhere else in Canada the health service is also good. There are good doctors. I like those all things about being Edmonton. (Hanan)*

Culture and religion

The multicultural nature of Canada is one aspect that most participants saw as a positive. Participants saw cultural diversity in Edmonton and welcomed the availability of services from cultural and ethnic organizations. Most participants indicated cultural and religious freedom as an important characteristic of the city. Generally, participants viewed Edmonton as a good place to practice their culture and religion.

> *There are no barriers that hinder us from practicing our culture. This country is called a multicultural country. People support you to practice whatever culture you have. There are services available and centres for kids to learn their family language and other cultural practices. (Zainab)*

When I first came to Edmonton seven years ago I think there were not many women with hijab so many people were giving me a funny look like they stare at me and I was feeling very different. But now you see a lot of women wearing hijab everywhere. So it is more common now. It is not strange anymore to other people. Now people understand who you are. I mean they know you are different from them. So yea it is okay. (Hafsa).

I feel like Edmonton is really nice place. In terms of culture there is a Heritage Day that you can actually go there and see how many different people. Like you look at white people and you think they just white people and then you go to the Heritage and you see how many different cultures they came from. (Abukar)

Participants believed that Edmonton offered ample opportunities for individuals and communities to practice their culture and religion, with many participants indicating the number of mosques available in the city. There was the desire to participate in more formal community and cultural activities among many participants, but they did not have the time to do so due to work and/or study commitments. As mentioned by numerous participants, they worked either two jobs or both worked and attended school. They were, therefore, busy with survival and finding ways to be successful within a new society. This left little time to engage in community and cultural activities that would allow them to feel a greater sense of belonging to Edmonton and aid in the creation of community connections.

Challenges faced by Somali-Canadians in Edmonton

Language

Language and communication problems were discussed by research participants in all age groups. Even those participants born in Canada discussed language capacity as it related with those of Somali origin not born in Canada, noting that in some cases even if they spoke English fluently, their accent marked them as different. An adult female participant indicated that problems with communication affected other people's ability to understand her:

> *Even though I speak English well without any problems, people still have difficulties understanding or recognizing my accent. So having this accent sometimes challenge me as people do not understand me easily. Other immigrants have the same problems. (Zainab)*

Older women participants also spoke about communication problems experienced during appointments with their doctors as hospitals and doctor's offices have no language interpreters. These participants stated that they had to find their own translator when they went to see their doctors.

> *In other countries like the USA or Europe, most of the time hospitals have interpreters. Here it is a big problem. If you go to the hospital and if you don't have an interpreter, they send you back home. They don't do anything for you. So we have to struggle with those things. (Maano)*

Issues related to communication affected these women's right to access healthcare. In addition, they were required to ensure that a friend, family member or interpreter from a community or immigrant service agency accompanied them. The participants found this requirement

problematic, especially in situations where participants needed to access health services quickly and did not have the time or the ability to locate an interpreter.

Issues facing Somali youth

Youth participants identified several problems related to Somali youth, such as dropping out of school, being involved in drug related activities, unemployment and the absence of guidance from families. Participants indicated that many Somali youth came to Edmonton without their families and, thus, had no family support in their endeavours to succeed in school or other activities. In addition, many youth carried the burden of financially supporting their families back home, forcing them to quit school and seek jobs or feeling forced to engage in illegal activities that allowed them to generate an adequate income.

> *A lot of the Somali immigrants that come to Canada, they're like single parents you know. Or someone coming by themselves. They probably have family but their family is scattered all around the world. So a person comes by himself, so if he has a problem, if he can't get a job, if he's sick, he doesn't have somebody to turn to. He's all by himself. And for the kids who come here, they probably come with a single parent, they come with either their Dad or their mom. Or they come with a relative. So they don't have like a supportive family within so they end up falling through the cracks and not doing something good with their lives. That's a big problem. I think it's something to do with family. (Mukhtar)*

While none of the youth in the study could be described as "falling through the cracks," youth and adults participants explained that for those Somali youth who were facing poverty or in the news for crime related activities, the absence of family support and guidance was the primary reason for the challenges facing Somali youth.

Employment related issues

A number of participants, in particular young adults, stated that they had to work more than the general population (White Canadians) to earn a living. Their personal experiences and observations of the experiences of other visible minorities led them to conclude that most visible minorities in Canada worked twice as hard as White Canadians; in addition, they also worked two or three different jobs compared to White Canadians who worked only one job.

> *One at night, one in the day and one in the evening. You can really tell if the typical Canadians will do the same thing when living in the same city. So I would think immigrants would work harder. (Mukhtar)*

Participants perceived their experiences as very different from the experiences of White Canadians. Consequently, they shared that they had no time to socialize with other people or time to give to their children and families.

One of the issues discussed widely and thoroughly by the participants was that of equal opportunities and discrimination. All participants felt that while there may be challenges to accessing available health, education or government services to the fullest, they did not perceive these challenges to be the result of discrimination or racism. However, participants who were active in the labour market revealed their personal experiences of discrimination in the labour market.

> *There are my friends who finished may be University or may be other technical schools but they could not get a job. You know they could not secure a job compared to their [White] friends who were sitting in the same class. (Bilal)*

Many participants shared stories of discrimination in the job market. Participants also indicated that it was normal to first give preference to White Canadians on the pretext of Canadian

experience and second, when deciding between visible minority applicants, preference was given to non-Somalis. A male youth participant explained how discrimination in the job market was carried out.

> *There is this a friend of mine who went to school here finished, he has a white friend they were friends they were in the same class doing Bio-engineering and this guy, the white guy, got the job before graduation. … they applied to the same place you know. … there are always such things. … Still there are these kinds of things. We have to be critical about it. (Ghedi)*

These discriminatory experiences were elaborated further by other participants. For example, applicants were weeded out prior to interviews as a result of having an "ethnic" name.

> *If you don't have a Canadian name like Mike or something like that and when you have other names like Asian or Somali name or an African name, a Chinese name it is really harder for you to get a job than others even though the two groups have equal education status and you have been to the same school. (Ghedi)*

Another participant described how employers used Canadian experience as a tool to discriminate against non-Canadian born applicants.

> *My friends who have degrees, some of them have Master's. An example I can give you is a friend of mine who graduated from NAIT, with another friend of his, called George who is real Canadian (you understand when I say real Canadian?)*[1] *So they graduated the same time and then it took my friend one year to get a job and the other guy the day he graduated the second day he had a recommendation …. He had experience that is it. You look for job and they tell you we are not gonna hire you because you have no Canadian*

[1] He meant a White Canadian

experience. … I always ask them if you don't hire me now, when am I going to have the Canadian experience? (Ghedi)

Not only did participants discuss discrimination in finding employment, they also spoke about unfair and racist policies after being hired.

At some point I was working at the University of Alberta, cleaning at night-time. There was another white woman working with me. She is my age she was paid more than me. I do a good job, even better than her, but they do not pay us the same, they do not treat us the same. … It is not fair. This is because I am a black and a Muslim with a big hijab. That is the way they see me. ... They do not value my work. They judge me based on how I look, my colour. I don't like those things. (Maano)

As noted by the participant, her skin colour and visible religious affiliation led to her being discriminated against, feeling "othered," and devalued.

Summary

Compared to other immigrants, Somali immigrants in Canada and, in particular, in Edmonton, are recent immigrants, arriving mainly after 1990. All immigrants to Canada face challenges to settling and integrating into Canadian life, due to language barriers, cultural dissonance, and real and perceived discrimination. Somali immigrants must also face the additional challenge of being refugees whose migration is largely the result of push factors as opposed to pull factors, which attracted them to living in Canada. However, while they may never have intended to live in Canada, Somali immigrants value their new lives of safety, security and hope. Their migratory story is also characterized by family disintegration as family members are settled in various parts of the world and by cultural and psychological

displacement, which affects their sense of belonging to Canada. Furthermore, while legal citizenship status is important to many Somalis, this is attributed to the practical need for a passport, which can serve as a legal identity document and travel permit, as opposed to being a symbol of belonging. Their self-reported feelings of belonging are low as is their corresponding intention and hope for owning a home.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the study. Although the study presents a number of findings in chapter four, only the key findings from the study will be discussed in this chapter: home ownership and housing finance, the factors that affect a sense of belonging among research participants. These key findings are believed to be important and may contribute to existing knowledge and practice in Somali immigrants' belonging and integration.

Home ownership and housing finance

Research suggests that as immigrants settle and integrate into the economic, social and cultural aspects of the host country, they are expected to participate in the mainstream housing market and own homes (Haan, 2012; Kim & Boyd, 2009). Thus, one of the factors that may help with understanding peoples' sense of belonging and sense of place could be their commitment and aspirations to investing and settling in certain areas. Among these factors, owning a house (home) is significant.

Home ownership is considered an indicator of socioeconomic status and quality of life (Myers & Lee, 1998), and the ability to own one's home is taken to be an influential statement of social and economic mobility, security and stability (Ray & Moore, 1991). Home ownership for individuals, families and the community at large depicts financial security, social stability, access to desirable neighbourhoods and incorporation into political life (Gilderbloom & Markham, 1995; Verberg, 2000). For immigrants, home ownership is also an indicator of their commitment to their new country. Usually people invest in housing and other properties in places they consider home or in a place where they could envision as a future home (Alba and Logan 1992;

Haan, 2012; Ray & Moore, 1991). Thus, discussions about home ownership among immigrants are in actuality directly related to long-term outcomes of the process of integration.

Canada has one of the world's highest rates of home ownership; two-thirds of households own their residence. Although immigrants have lower rates of home ownership than the Canadian-born population, over time many immigrants succeed in their desire to own homes (Haan, 2010). The possible reasons can range from economic to institutional and social factors. There are substantial differences regarding perceived possibilities and hindrances in the housing market.

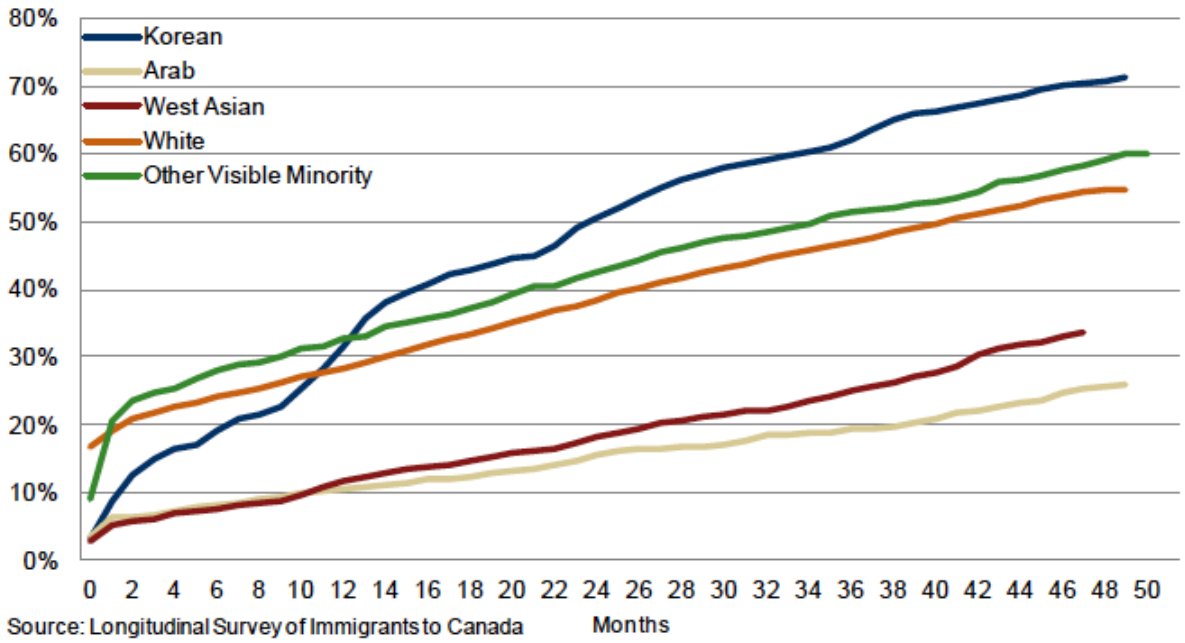
Although my research participants highly value the importance of owning homes, they perceive no possibility of owning a home any time in the future because of the interest that is involved in financing the purchasing of a house through a mortgage. The problem is related to their religious beliefs, which prohibits the paying or receiving of interest (*riba*). *Riba* – paying and receiving interest for any loaned money or any transaction in which the debtor returns a sum of goods in excess or above the original – is not permissible to many Muslims (Farooq, 2012; Vahed & Vawda, 2008). This affects their determination and commitment to making Edmonton/Canada "home" in the future. However, the nature and extent of the problem is determined by how people negotiate between their beliefs and the housing finance system.

The implications of discussing this point are not related to the current status and situation of housing ownership among participants, rather it poses a question of "how do Somalis negotiate their religious values and the housing market system in Canada?" There are some Somali families who can afford to buy a house through the mortgage system, but they are not willing to do so because of the religious factor that prohibits any transaction that involves interest. This can result in families who do not or cannot envision a permanent life in Canada,

thus weakening their sense of belonging.

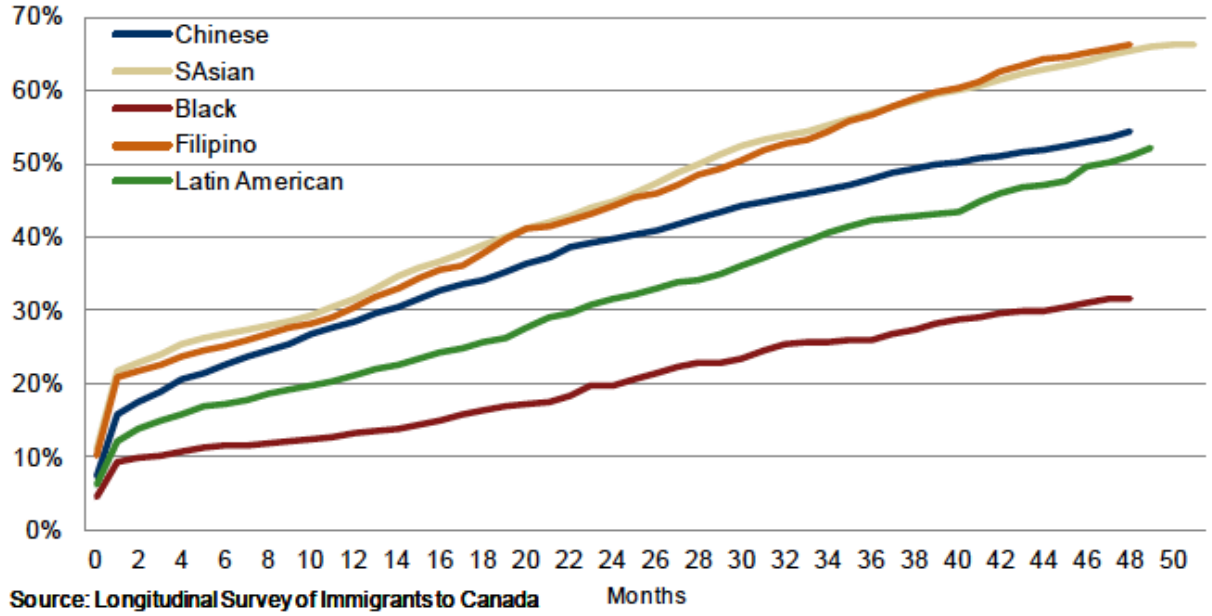
Somalis have been immigrating to Canada since the 1970s; however, it was after 1991 that Canada received a very large number of Somali refugees after the state of Somalia collapsed as a result of civil war. Although it seems problematic to assess percentage of home ownership, given the recentness of the immigrants (Somalis) and the economic hardships immigrants face (most of them are in a low paid jobs), we can compare these statistics with similar immigrants who moved to Canada in the 1990s. Studies on recent immigrants in Canada show variations in the rate of home ownership among different groups of immigrants and Blacks, Arabs and West Asians have by far the lowest (Balakrishman & Wu, 1992; Haan, 2010, 2012: Owusu, 1998; Ray & Moore, 1991). Specifically, Haan (2012) pointed out that there is low home ownership rates among Blacks in general and Muslims in particular. A study by Murtaza Haider (2010) assessed home ownership among immigrants of different faith groups in Toronto. The results concur with Haan's findings, showing that Muslims have the lowest rates of home ownership. One reason, as illustrated by my research participants, could be that Muslims are reluctant to enter into the conventional mortgage system. Haider (2010) suggests the need for further research to explore the reasons for the disparity. Moreover, it is also important to see if there is any difference, among different sects or groups of Islam, in interpretation and use of "*riba*" in the housing financing system in Canada. The following two graphs from Haan (2012) show home ownership trajectories for different groups in Canada. The graphs show that compared to other groups, Blacks and Arabs have the lowest attainment of home ownership in their early years in Canada.

Figure 5.1: Home ownership attainment trajectories of Korean, Arab, West Asian, White and Other Visible Minority in the four years after arrival



Source: Haan (2012)

Figure 5.2: Home ownership attainment trajectories of Chinese, South Asian, Black, Filipino and Latin American immigrants in the four years after arrival



Source: Haan (2012)

Like many other Western countries, the primary means through which houses are purchased in Canada is through mortgage (Haan, 2012). While the housing finance system is primarily bank-dominated, the government plays a decisive role in regulating and structuring home financing, such as down-payment requirements and mortgage lending rates (Traclet, 2005) or through launching and implementing a series of public housing programs to improve access to affordable homes (Haan, 2012). Although such government incentives help many to own houses, the question that has to be addressed is whether all groups "have similar economic opportunities, or respond in an identical manner to incentives encouraging ownership" (Ray & Moore, 1991, p. 4).

Canada is a secular state and policies related to the housing market do not take religious beliefs into consideration as many Islamic states do. Thus, entering into the housing market becomes difficult or unappealing for these research participants. In addition to a weak sense of

belonging and integration, differential access to housing finance (as a result of faith) may result in privileged and unprivileged classes of people and, thus, social inequality.

The practice of providing interest-free mortgages has been practiced in some countries like the United Kingdom and the United States of America. So, there is a possibility that an alternative system of provision could be adopted. The issue here is if there can exist an alternative mechanism that helps people in Canada own houses without paying *"riba.* Moreover, it is also important to assess if people change their beliefs on "*riba"* and enter into the mainstream housing market as their time in Canada grows, and they integrate further into the system.

Factors explaining belonging and the process of integration among Somali-Canadians

The findings presented in the findings chapter (chapter four) represent participants' low sense of belonging and slow integration. The overwhelming majority of the participants reported low sense of belonging to Edmonton and Canada. The general feeling among most of the participants is that their history of migration and settlement in Edmonton has been a result of forces beyond their control and not a matter of choice but of necessity.

Developing a sense of belonging and integrating into a new society is not a smooth process. It is characterized by complex and continuous interactions between people and places, including individuals, communities and institutions in the host country over a long period of time (Caballero, 2011). However, the question here is whether immigrants of Somali background struggle to integrate into the new place and develop sense of belonging? The answers from the interviews suggest that immigrants of Somali background experience difficulties in integration and developing a sense of belonging to their new "home" (Caballero, 2011; Stewart et al., 2009).

A number of possible factors may explain the process of belonging and integration of these participants.

The cause and nature of immigration

To understand the process of integration and belonging among Somalis in Canada, it is necessary to understand the migration processes that bring Somalis to Canada. As shown in the findings, most of the participants are recent immigrants to Edmonton. With the exception of two youth participants who were born and raised in Ontario, Canada, all remaining participants were from refugee families and all were recent arrivals who came to Canada as refugees; thus the low sense of belonging could be indicative of the relatively unsettled status of refugees. However, we do not yet know whether a greater sense of belonging will develop eventually. Studies show that immigrants have a low sense of belonging during their early years until they integrate well into the new society; the longer they stay, the stronger will be their sense of belonging **(**Caballero, 2011**).**

Although an unsettled status is a common phenomenon among recent immigrants (Wu, Hou, & Schimmele, 2011), the reasons these participants and their parents immigrate to Canada plays an important role. In most cases, people migrate to Canada through a rational decision making process and with sincere intentions of making Canada home and leading a good and decent life. In this context, when immigrants leave their home, it is their choice; they have the psychological readiness and commitment to adapt to the new country as their permanent or at the very least as a long-term place of residence and are aware of the culture and environment of the new country and the possible difficulties they may encounter in settling and integrating into the new society (Rousseau, Morales & Foxen, 2001). Most participants in this study, however, have been displaced from their place of origin because of civil war and instability and spent

several years in refugee camps (Sahanoun, 1994). They have moved to Canada primarily to escape life in refugee camps in another country. Therefore, the involuntary migration of these participants may have resulted in an unsettled mind and reluctance to settle and adapt to life in their new country, Canada.

The findings show that the nature of migration of these participants and their parents to Canada has also affected their attitude and commitment to being in Canada and towards making it home. As discussed in the literature review, the majority of Somalis do not come to Canada by choice or based on a calculated decision-making strategy (Mensah, 2010; Opoku-Dapaah, 1995). Their immigration to Canada is the result of push factors in their home country and the response obtained from the Canadian government. The participants came to Canada mainly through government-sponsored refugee and student programmes (in many cases picked by Canadian immigration officials from among a large number of refugees listed by humanitarian organizations such as the UNHCR). As refugees, their primary concern is to go to any western country where they can have a safe haven and better life. So in reality, it is the receiving country's interest (and policy) that determines whether Somali migrants reach their goal of finding their future home in a foreign country.

Family disintegration

During the course of the war in Somalia and the resulting resettlement, Somali families have been fragmented as members of the same family have been admitted by different countries, resulting in a disrupted sense of continuity within family groups. Therefore, many family members are back in Somalia or in refugee camps and in various other countries. This fragmentation of families leads to an unsettled population, as described by the participants.

Family disintegration affects youth and adult participants differently. As shown in the

findings, for adults (especially older adults), family disintegration results in feelings of loneliness and hopelessness, whereas many youth have been left unattended and without parental care, resulting in involvement in different illegal activities and in low paying jobs, thereby unable to fully support their families back home.

For the older adults, the loneliness they have experienced affects their adaption to their new life. This could be related to their limited mobility and social interactions that are exacerbated by an inability to communicate with others because of language problems. This lack of participation in activities that are important to their lives may lead them to feel isolated and neglected, and that in turn could lead to developing a lesser sense of belonging to the city. Moreover, as noted by Suleiman (1999) and Kusow (2006), migration from one place to another involves not only physical and cultural displacement, but also a psychological displacement as the memories related to place of origin or the original homeland have a stronger pull than the new memories being forged. Most of the older adults seem to live with their memories from back home rather than from their life here.

Limited social interaction

As shown in the findings, most participants, especially the older adults, have extremely low levels of social interaction. According to Ghorashi and Vieten (2012), "a new place can become home as long as social spaces are available that allow individuals to thrive with respect to personal development, e.g. work, political engagement, friendship and intimate relationships" (p. 727). However, it is "through practices and experiences of social inclusion that a sense of a stake and acceptance in a society is created and maintained" (Anthias, 2006, p. 21). But this does not mean belonging by itself brings about inclusion into a society.

In general, there are some consequences that have resulted from the background of the participants and the reason and nature of their migration – it makes them imagine only a temporary life in Canada. There are strong feelings and hope among many participants that their stay in Edmonton is temporary, and if they are staying longer, it is only because they cannot return to Somalia due to the instability there. So, there is a glimmer of hope in their minds that one day Somalia will be peaceful and, hence, they may go back and live there permanently. This situation can create an unsettled mind that is not ready to accept life in a new country (Rousseau, Morales & Foxen, 2001).

The sentiment to return, to go back is common, not only among those who have lived in Somalia for most of their life, but also among those who grew up in Kenya and/or Canada. The youth and some of the young adult participants have heard stories from their parents and have already developed an imagined sense of "home" – Somalia. They have lived within Somali culture through living in Somali families and communities throughout their life. They have developed the spirit and sense of "Somaliness," and adopt the culture and lifestyle – religion, dress, food and other elements. To belong to and identify with a community are key aspects of identity (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Self-inflicted separation

As described by the participants, there is a self-inflicted separation based on early experiences of encountering other groups in their neighbourhood and on the basis of defending identity and culture. Social cohesion and social integration are important indicators of sense of belonging to Canada (Harles, 1997). It requires identifying oneself with and choosing to be a part of the society and feeling accepted, secure, and at home. Wu et al. (2011) assert that "a

weak sense of belonging could be an indication of insular or polarized social relations, and, thus, it can inhibit the bridging ties that promote cooperation between groups" (p. 374).

During their early settlements in Edmonton and elsewhere in Canada, these participants experienced culture shock, mainly in interacting with people in their neighbourhood. In Somali culture, as expressed by participants, it is not uncommon to talk to strangers, and neighbours are like members of the family; not only do neighbours maintain close connections, but they also help each other in their day-to-day activities. For example, as most women in Somalia stay home doing domestic work, they have a culture of helping each other in activities such as babysitting. So when they experience a very individualistic life style – as some participants referred to the Canadian lifestyle – participants demonstrated feelings of lacking one big part of their daily life – neighbourhood ties.

Therefore, the absence of strong interactions in their neighbourhoods made participants look to strengthen relationships with people from the same cultural background or other immigrants who have similar cultural and geographical backgrounds. This action increases their continuous alienation from the wider society and has resulted in strong in-group belonging within the Somali population. Therefore, as Dei and James (1998) pointed out, these marginalized and oppressed groups adopt a collective understanding of identity (Somaliness) to make sense of life and their experiences and to resist oppression and domination.

The perception the participants have about being immigrants also affects their sense of belonging. They think that they are different in colour and culture, thereby leading them to think that they are not part of this place. Participants magnify their Somali identity and their difference with the culture in Canada, and they defend their positions on their understanding of the essence of multiculturalism in Canada. Participants' understanding of multiculturalism

policy are based on a similar definition as that espoused by the Government of Canada in 1971: as an official state policy with the objective of an evolving cultural mosaic premised on mutual respect for Canadians of all backgrounds and ancestries (Reitz, 2012). Participants contend that multiculturalism is, therefore, official policy of the county and, hence, their defence and maintenance of their identity and culture is related to putting multicultural policy into practice. Any attempt to expect them to cease practicing their Somali culture goes not only against their interests but also against the stipulations of Canadian policy, as they understand it.

Racism: Perceived and real discrimination

Perceptions of discrimination, usually based on real life experiences, promote the feeling that this place is not theirs, and, hence, they do not belong to this place. Although, generally, the discrimination experienced as outlined by the participants is in more subtle forms, these instances colour participants' experiences of life in Edmonton and sense of belonging. Most of the instances of discrimination are employment related; this results in a very particular impact on feelings of belonging. Participants indicated that it is normal to give preference to non-immigrants and sometimes non-Somalis through the pretext of Canadian experience.

The responses from the participants mirror the findings by research conducted by Kumsa (2005) and Frazier (2009) who concluded that a sense of belonging to the state of Canada is continuously contested as African immigrants, in particular, have to negotiate artfully in ways unique to them; there is a feeling of temporal and spatial dislocation among participants who see belonging as related to whiteness.

However, the analysis of this research project indicated further that all migrants were not subjected to the same job discriminatory practices. Furthermore, participants strongly believe they are not discriminated against in accessing other public social services, including education

opportunities and access to healthcare. Therefore, feelings of racism and discrimination appeared to be contained within the realm of employment opportunities for participants. This is in direct contrast to the contention by Dlamini et al. (2009) that racism limits access to both social and economic opportunities. It would be important to conduct further research into the reasons behind this discrepancy.

Summary

Somali-Canadian participants in this study indicated that four factors affected their feelings of belonging and integration: 1) the issue of riba affected their capacity, hope and aspiration to own a home; 2) the forced nature of their migration meant that there remained a desire to return "home" to Somalia; 3) separation from family who were scattered through the western world or back in Kenya and Somalia as a result of the ways in which refugee settlement programs operated; and 4) discrimination – told through first- and second- hand accounts resulted in marginalization with regards to employment opportunities and the ways in which the participants interacted with others in Canadian society.

The data from this study shows that these four factors, discussed separately in this chapter, are intricately linked, contributing to the development of low feelings of belonging and integration among Somali-Canadians. Belonging and successful integration are complex concepts as they are not usually based on one indicator, but on multiple (Li, 2003; Reitz, 2012).

> Assessing successful integration would also mean determining the degree to which institutions are open or closed to immigrants, communities are welcoming or shunning newcomers, and individual Canadians are treating newcomers as equal partners or intruders (Li, 2003, p. 12).

The issues highlighted by Li (2013) are central to understanding immigrants' integration, especially for those who are ethnic and religious minorities, such as Somali Canadians whose attachment to Canada may be affected by acceptance by the host society, such as experiences of discrimination and racism as well as institutional barriers that affect their smooth integration, for example citizenship, housing and other services. Together, these factors contribute to the development of low feelings of belonging and integration among Somali-Canadians as they affect the ability of the participants to fully participate in Canadian society, to engage with Canadian institutions and, therefore, to develop increased feelings of belonging (Hoernig & Zhuang, 2010; Kumsa, 2005; Quirke, 2011; Vertovec 2000).

Previous research found that increased feelings of belonging may be linked to gaining official citizenship status (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009); however Canadian citizenship remains a complex concept (Bohaker & Iacovetta, 2009). According to Bloemraad (2006) and Canefe (2007), in Canada, greater feelings of belonging are not strongly linked to legal citizenship status but to greater participation in Canadian social, political and economic life. However, the majority of the participants in this study indicated social, political and economic marginalization, which would result in feelings of de-citizenization (Abdi & Shultz, 2012) and, therefore, could explain the feelings among various participants who understood citizenship and passport as synonymous. Therefore, freedom of movement (Leuchter, 2014), not only increased feelings of belonging, but were associated with Canadian citizenship for those Somali-Canadians who participated in this study.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to explore the process of integration and feelings of belonging among Somalis living in Edmonton through exploring their lived experiences. Specifically, the study looked at how Somali adults and youth perceive and describe their feelings of belonging to Edmonton and Canada? This research considers: 1) the possible factors that explain, determine, and/or affect the development process of Somali immigrants' feelings of belonging; and integration and 2) the issues surrounding home ownership, citizenship and feelings of belonging and integration.

The study is based on face-to-face, semi-structured individual interviews with nine adults and nine youth of Somali background residing in Edmonton. Participants were interviewed about their experiences and issues that are of importance to them. I employed a grounded qualitative research approach as a way to explain the process of integration and feelings of belonging among my research participants. The entire process of this research is shaped by a social constructivist paradigm – ontologically and epistemologically. The analysis of the experiences highlighted some important issues that are of significance for further studies with regards to immigrants' integration, housing situations, and the connections between citizenship and belonging. I am aware of the limitations of the research, which comprised only a small group of Somalis in Edmonton; as such, the findings are unlikely to be fully representative of the entire Somali population in Edmonton or Canada.

This finding suggests that sense of belonging to Edmonton and Canada is influenced by a multitude of factors: 1) home ownership, housing finance and the payment of riba; 2) background of immigrants and the nature of their immigration; 3) self-inflicted and forced

separation from family and community; 4) perceived and real discrimination. In addition to decreased feelings of belonging, these factors also affect Somali-Canadians perceptions of Canadian citizenship.

The analysis of this study emphasizes home ownership; owning a home can have significant implications in settling and feeling secure and integrated. Home is also an important place for Somalis as a place of family gathering and for performing cultural and religious practices. The problem is that participants felt that there was no possibility of owning a home any time in the future due to the necessity of obtaining a mortgage to buy a house and the associated need to pay interest on the mortgage. The religion of Islam, which all of the participants practiced, prohibits the paying or receiving of interest (riba). Paying or receiving interest in any transaction is not allowed, and participants seem to strictly adhere to that belief. The mainstream Canadian housing mortgage is based on bank loans with interest, and this kind of housing finance system affected participants' determination and commitment to making Edmonton and Canada "home" in the future. Interest-free housing schemes are common in many areas of the world, including the United States. It is important that people have access to such services. Furthermore, many of the participants had no information about the availability or existence of interest-free housing schemes in Edmonton or Canada. These programs, though in small numbers, do exist and could help engender more home ownership and a greater sense of belonging.

Although mortgages were the biggest concern, the issue of paying and receiving interest (Riba) is not limited to home ownership; it goes beyond that. Interest is the central element of the economic system in the Canadian society. It is involved in most day-to day transactions. When presenting my findings at an international conference held at the University of Alberta, a fellow

conference participant spoke about students who may not be able to afford to attend post-secondary as student loans begin to accrue interest as soon as one finishes their degree. Therefore, if people are reluctant to pay interest due to religious reasons, this may prevent them from obtaining higher education, and the consequence would be lower opportunities. These low opportunities and lack of success in life could lead to a lower sense of belonging. People may also develop the feeling that the economic and social system in the country is not suitable for their personal and group belief or way of life.

Family disintegration is a common experience among many Somali families that affects youth and adult participants differently. For the adults (especially older adults), family disintegration results in feelings of loneliness and hopelessness, whereas many youth have been left unattended and without parental care, resulting in involvement in different illegal activities and in a low paying jobs; these youth are, thereby, unable to fully support their families back home. Involvement of a small number of frustrated Somali youth in gangs and illegal activities reflects negatively on the entire community. The problem is aggravated by a mainstream media that associates Somali youth living primarily in Ontario and Alberta with crime-related activities and drug dealing. Both youth and adults, therefore, are experiencing turbulence and emotional conflict.

The issues facing the Somali diaspora are aggravated by a self-inflicted separation that is based on their early experiences and on the basis of being forced to defend their identity, religion and culture. During their early settlements in Edmonton and elsewhere in Canada, these participants experienced culture shock, mainly in interacting with people in their neighbourhoods and cities. In many ways, being forced to defend their culture, religion and identity allowed participants to maintain and defend their strong connections with their Somali identity and

culture. Participants used their understanding of the essence of multiculturalism in Canada to defend their decision to maintain a culture, identity and religion often viewed as contrary to so-called Canadian values. In effect, this also magnified the differences between Somali and Canadian cultures.

Perceptions of discrimination, usually due to many real life experiences, promote the feeling that this place is not theirs, and, hence, they do not belong to this place. Although, generally, the discrimination experienced as outlined by the participants' descriptions were not numerous, these instances colour participants' experiences of life in Edmonton and sense of belonging. Most of the instances of discrimination were employment related, resulting in a severe impact on feelings of belonging. Discrimination and racism were mainly experienced or perceived by younger adults, who were working and struggling to make a better life. These findings illustrate the need for organizations and hiring companies to have a transparent hiring process, which would at least, avoid perceived discrimination among immigrants. Many of the views regarding discrimination in hiring organizations are perceived ones and not experienced directly, as they are often the experiences of friends of family members and not the participants themselves. Moreover, recognizing immigrants' past skills and experiences could also help integrate newcomers into the job market and hence the society.

Although acquiring citizenship is expected to lead to increased feelings of belonging, being Canadian by both naturalization and birth did not alter participants' sense of belonging. What is interesting is that youth participants who grew up in Canada, including those who were born in Canada, identify and think of themselves more as Somali than as Canadian. For these participants, belonging and citizenship are linked with identity, culture, ethnicity, religion, and the perception people have about non-White Canadians and the discrimination they face in their

daily life.

Recommendations for future research

One of several possible areas for future research is in assessing the situation of housing ownership among Muslim households in Canada. Given the tenets of Islam on paying interest and the housing finance system in Canada, assessing the status and situation of home ownership among Muslim households using a large data is essential. Specifically, such research could: 1) explore the perceptions of households toward the existing housing mortgage market; 2) compare and contrast the perceptions and practices among followers of different sects of Islam and from different geographical origins; 3) explore the effects and long-term consequences of not owning homes.

Much of the existing literature on home ownership is derived from census data or national surveys that provide aggregate figures. Thus, there remains a dearth of empirical research. In particular, the impact of religious beliefs on housing ownership has not yet been studied directly.

This research clearly indicates that the issue of "riba" is a barrier among Somali-Canadians in owning and aspiring to own a home in the future. However, as Islam is diverse with multiple sects, interpretations and the use of "riba" may vary among Canadian Muslims (Farooq, 2012). Thus, further research is recommended to understand the situation and status of home ownership among Muslims in Canada.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter of Initial Contact

Dear [Participant's Name]:

I am a Master's student in the Department of Earth & Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Alberta, conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Theresa Garvin. As part of my study for my Master's Degree in Human Geography, I will be doing a thesis research project on the lived experience and sense of place among immigrants and their families in Edmonton. Due to your experience from living in Edmonton with immigrant background, I believe that your perceptions, experience and opinions will allow me to gain a better understanding of this topic. I will be conducting interviews in February and March 2012 with 15 people and would appreciate holding an interview with you to discuss the above mentioned issues. Attached to this letter is an *Information Letter* which details the study I plan to undertake. I would appreciate it if you could consider the attached letter. Please feel free to contact me using the contact details below with any questions or concerns you may have and/or your decision within the next three days.

Sincerely,

Yesuf Abdela

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Appendix 2: Information Letter

The lived experience and sense of place among immigrants and their families in Edmonton

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You are invited to participate in a study assessing the experiences, perspectives and feelings of immigrants about living in Edmonton. This study is part of my Masters of Arts degree and is the focus of my thesis. You are being asked to participate in this research by people I know at the Somali-Canadians Cultural Society. These people are not involved with the research but are assisting me in finding participants.

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding about what residents with immigration background and their families think and feel about living in Edmonton, Canada. This study will extend previous studies on immigrants' experiences by looking more closely at issues of culture and familial relationships.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked for one 60-120 minute interview. I will ask you a series of questions about how you feel about where you are living, what you think about coming to Canada, and ask you to share what you think about your life in Canada and what it is like to live in Edmonton. Before we do anything, I will explain the research project and you are free to participate or not. If you choose to participate, I will ask for your signed consent to use the information you provide during the interview.

The interview will be conducted in English. However if you prefer the interview can be conducted in a Somali language and a translator can be involved in the discussion.

The interviews will be conducted wherever you prefer. Based on your preference we can meet at your home, at a private room at the community centre, or at another location that is convenient for you. A digital voice recording device will be used to record the interviews and following the interview I will convert the discussion word-for-word into a written document. That document will then be sent back to you so that you can check it over to make sure it is a true representation of our discussion. You are free to make any changes or deletions to that document that you wish. A pseudonym will be assigned to the document so that your identity will not be identified.

There may be no personal benefits to you from participating in this study. However similar work in the past has shown that people who take part in such interviews often learn more about themselves and their own lives in the process of talking about themselves. The knowledge that

comes from this research will benefit government agencies and community organizations that work with immigrants and help them settle into Canadian society. It may also help urban planners and decision-makers who try to create culturally diverse and liveable cities.

There are no any anticipated costs involved in being in the research and no foreseeable risks or discomforts related to participation. You have the right to not participate in this research, to refrain from answering any or all of the questions, to stop the interview at any point, and to withdraw or to leave the project without having to give reason and without any penalty. The final deadline for withdrawing from this research is May 25, 2012 as after that point all identify data will be deleted and we will not be able to identify which interview belongs to which participant. To withdraw, simply contact myself or my research supervisor Dr. Theresa Garvin by phone or other contact addresses listed at the beginning of this information letter.

The research is intended mainly for my Master's thesis in Human Geography. The findings from this research may also be used in research articles, conference presentations, book chapters, web postings or public presentations. You will not be identified individually in any way in any reports of this research and we will not disclose information that might lead to you being identified as a participant.

All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Information you provide will only be shared with my supervisor Dr. Theresa Garvin. If we use a translator he/she will be required to keep our conversation confidential and is legally required to sign a document saying that she or he will not talk about the information from our discussion. No personal information will be given out with the study's final results**.** To ensure privacy and confidentiality of the information collected during the research data will be secured in a locked cabinet to which only I have access to. Electronic copies will be protected using a password. After the research ends, digital and print copies of the interviews (with identifying information removed) will be stored in a locked cabinet in my supervisor's secure research lab. Research information is normally kept for a period of five years following completion of research project after which it will be destroyed.

If you would like to receive a copy of the research report, you may let me know verbally or in writing, and I will keep a record of this and send you a research report via email or postal service address. Your contact information will be stored separately from the information you provide me in the interview.

If after receiving this letter, you have any questions about this study, or would like additional information to help you to decide whether or not to participate, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor Dr. Theresa Garvin through our contact addresses listed at the top of this sheet.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Thank you!

Yesuf Abdela

Appendix 3: Letter of Consent for participant

The lived experience and sense of place among immigrants and their families in Edmonton

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I agree to participate in a research project conducted by ***Yesuf Abdela*** from University of Alberta. I have been informed and understand that that the research is designed to gain a better understanding of the perception and lived experience of immigrants and their families in Edmonton. I am being asked to take part in a 60-120 minutes interview and share my experiences, perceptions and perspectives. I am also asked for a written consent to use the information I provide during the interview. As a participant of this study, I have been briefed about the project and have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study.

I understand that:

- my participation in this interview is voluntary and I have the right to not participate in this research, to refrain from answering any or all of the questions, to stop the interview at any point, and to withdraw or to leave the project without having to give reason and without any penalty at any time until May 25, 2012. I understand that for withdrawal or for any concern I can contact the researcher or his supervisor Dr. Theresa Garvin by phone or other contact addresses listed on the top of this letter.
-
- a digital voice recording device will be used to record the interviews. I will be provided with a written document of the interview to check it over to make sure it is a true representation of our discussion. I have the right to make any changes or deletions to that document that I wish. I also understand that a pseudonym will be assigned to the interview document so that I will not be identified personally.
- all information I provide is considered completely confidential. The researcher may share the information only with his supervisor Dr. Theresa Garvin, (*and the translator, if applicable*). No personal information will be given out with the study's final results that might lead to being identified as a participant**.** I will not be identified individually in any way in any reports of this research.
- to ensure privacy and confidentiality of the information collected during the interview, data will be secured in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher has access. Electronic copies will be protected using a password. I understand that the recorded and

written information will be kept for a period of five years following completion of research project before it is destroyed completely.

- there may not be personal benefits to me from participating in this study. I understand that the research is intended mainly for Master's thesis. The findings from this research may also be used in research articles, conference presentations, book chapters, web postings or public presentations. I may request to be provided with a copy of the research report culminating from this study.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board 1 at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

I consent to participate in a research project entitled: ***The lived experience and sense of place among immigrants and their families in Edmonton.*** I have understood the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have also been given a copy of this consent form.

Participant's Print Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

I would like a copy of the final research report and *Yesuf Abdela* can provide me with this report via the following contact method:

Participant's contact details:

_____
_____
_____

Researcher's Print Name: ***Yesuf Abdela***

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 4: Confidentiality Agreement

Project title: The lived experience and sense of place among immigrants and their families in Edmonton

I, _____, the intermediary and participant recruiter, agree to:

1. not disclose the identity of any research participant to anyone other than the *Researcher(s).*

2. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher(s)*.

3. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.

4. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the *Researcher(s)* when I have completed the research tasks.

5. after consulting with the *Researcher(s),* erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher(s)* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).

_____	_____	_____
(Print Name)	(Signature)	(Date)

Researcher(s)

_____	_____	_____
(Print Name)	(Signature)	(Date)

Appendix 5: Initial Interview Script

The lived experience and sense of place among immigrants and their families in Edmonton

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[Participant's Name]: _____

Thank you for agreeing to do this interview with me. [As we discussed, there is an interpreter present] (for any research participants who require an interpreter)]. I have a few questions which I would like to ask. The interview may take 60-120 minutes. At any time during the interview you may stop the interview.

You also do not need to answer any question which you are uncomfortable with. You are free to refrain from answering any or all of the questions, to stop the interview at any point, and to withdraw or to leave the project without having to give reason and without any penalty at any time until May 25, 2012. If at any time between now and May 25/2012, you decide that you do not want to be a part of this study, you may contact me or my research supervisor using the contact details I have provided to withdraw from the study. During the interview, feel free to ask for any clarification that you require If at any time between now and May 25/2012, you decide that you do not want to be a part of this study, you may contact me or my research supervisor using the contact details I have provided to withdraw from the study. During the interview, feel free to ask for any clarification that you require

Do you have any questions before I begin.

Background/immigration

- How long have you lived in Edmonton?
- Tell me the story of how you came to live in Edmonton (if you came from other place).
- What does being an immigrant mean to you / being born from an immigrant family?
- How would you explain/define "Somaliness"? What about "Canadianess"?

Place related questions

- How do you spend your time?
- What are your feelings about living places in Edmonton (probes: home, neighbourhood, work place, cultural and spiritual sites, recreation areas…etc).
- Which parts of Edmonton are appealing to you? What parts are unappealing?
- What do you think are the good and the bad things about living in Edmonton? (discussions may be about home, neighbourhood, community or the city in general)
- As an individual/family with an immigrant background do you feel as though you belong in Edmonton? (do you consider Edmonton as home?), Why?

Family, culture and intergeneration

- Can you talk about your family? Which family members live with you?, Do you spend time together? What activities do you engage in with your family?
- Is there any clear role among family members? If so what are the roles for elders, adults, youth, men and women?
- How often do you meet with other family members who live in Edmonton (out of the household) or other parts of Canada? Do you meet your families in Somalia ? how often ?
- What language do you use to interact with family members or other members of Somali cultural group?
- What is the difference between being a family in Somalia and a family in Edmonton? How do you negotiate the difference?
- Are there barriers that hinder you or your family from practicing Somali cultural or other practices? What are they (if any)? How do you solve them?
- How and to what extent do you interact with Somali community members in Edmonton?, what about with non-Somali groups or individuals (probe: neighbour, workplaces, and other places).
- Do you feel that immigrants or people from immigrant families have equal opportunities to economic, social, cultural and political activities in Edmonton?, Yes/No, why?

Thank you for your time!

N.B These questions are conversation starters. Depending on how participants answer the above questions, I (the researcher) asked follow up probing questions.