

“Living in Our Own World”: Parental Influence on the Identity Development of Second-Generation Ethiopian and Eritrean Youth During Their Formative Years

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Abstract This study explored the process of identity formation of second-generation Ethiopian and Eritrean youth in Toronto, Canada. Analysis of 20 in-depth interviews presented pathways of acculturation whereby first-generation parents parlay their adaptive process onto their children, influencing the self-identity trajectories and repertoires of the children in their formative years. Findings suggest that parental, social, and cultural forces are an inseparable and critical component of the development of identity. Participants’ identity formation in their formative years was one of high-level cultural identity with their parents’ culture of origin.

Keywords Ethiopian/Eritrean · Identity · Immigrants · Parenting · Second-generation youth

This paper argues that first-generation Ethiopian and Eritreans are active, if not deliberate, actors in their children’s identity formation and development. From early childhood, participants’ self-image was shaped by feedback received from their environment. Shaped and situated within a complex context of systems and environments (cultural, social, economic, and political), the feedback is informed by cultural resilience, “the ability to maintain livelihoods that satisfy both material and moral (normative) needs in the face of major stresses and shocks; environmental, political, economic, or otherwise” (Crane 2010, p. 2). Using narratives from 20 second-generation Ethiopian and Eritrean Canadian youth, this study investigated how these youth construct their identity in reaction to their parents’ definition of

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how they should self-identify. In particular, this paper explores one aspect of a larger study on second-generation Ethiopian and Eritrean youths' process of identity development—namely in their formative years the role that parents assume in transmitting cultural norms and values and how their need to retain cultural structures and identity has informed the development of their children's identity trajectory and repertoire.

Brief Historical Overview

In the last 25 years, as in the case of other displaced populations, Ethiopian and Eritrean migration to Canada is a result of protracted conflicts and widespread human rights abuses. Prior to the 1974 revolution, migration of Ethiopians and Eritreans was rare, with census data showing only 65 Ethiopians as having arrived in Canada (Ornstein 2000). However, this was transformed in the wake of the 1974 revolution in Ethiopia, which saw much political turmoil, including border conflicts with Somalia, famine, and the Red Terror (the torture and murder of civilians). Another momentous political turmoil impacting the Horn of Africa was the lengthy and brutal Eritrean war for independence from Ethiopia on the assertions of weak historical ties between the two. The discernment of the Eritrean identity dates back to 1869 when Italy set up a colony in the area in support of its ambitions in the Red Sea region (Hoyle 1999). Italian colonialism did not considerably depart “from the broader colonial paradigm of domination through segregation, be this institutional or territorial” (Dirar 2007, p.270). Analytical assessment of how Italian colonial policy on religion, ethnicity, and language interacted with Eritrean society reveals the main outcome of this process to be that of a separate national Eritrean identity from Ethiopia (see Sorenson 1991; Hoyle 1999; Dirar 2007). After 51 years of official Italian colonial rule, in 1950, Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia denied of its claim for independence. With tensions and the escalation of discontent, the Eritrean war for independence ensued and lasted for 30 years ending in 1991 with Eritrea becoming an independent nation state. Since independence, relations oscillate from cautious mutual tolerance to stalemate punctuated by periods of elevated tension and renewed threats of war.

Harmony and cohesion between the two countries and Ethiopian and Eritrean communities abroad is for the most part non-existent. To a great degree when it comes to literature on identity, scholarship concentrates on the experiences of first-generation Ethiopians and Eritreans and their settlement experiences in host countries. Few studies examine second-generation Ethiopian and Eritrean youth in any capacity—especially their experiences of identity. This is significant given how, for example, national identity is of central importance to both groups. This and also the existence of youth-led social service enterprises focused on supporting second-generation Ethiopian and Eritrean youth in Toronto, Canada; it was important to develop an understanding of what it means to be Ethiopian and Eritrean and how identity is constructed among the second generation. Specifically, in light of this history of conflict between these two groups, how are the second generation socialized and how are they able to come together and function communally.

Literature Review: Ethiopian and Eritrean Cultural Identity

As the literature suggests, immigrants typically bring with them a strong sense of their native culture and customs (Levitt et al. 2005; Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Yakushko 2010). Synchronously, research has noted that first-generation immigrants' identity development tends to adhere to the alternation model of acculturation (LaFromboise et al. 1993). This is in accordance with first-generation Ethiopian and Eritrean immigrants' identity development. The first-generation identity construction strategy is comprised of moderate selective acculturation that seeks to balance traditions of their ancestral origins pragmatically with that of their current geographical location. In practice, first-generation Ethiopian and Eritrean immigrants steadfastly hold on to core values such as religion, esteem for family connectedness and pride, and food preferences at home while thoughtfully attuning to dress and interaction etiquette within the larger Canadian social/institutional settings in order to achieve career success in the host society.

Correspondingly, the literature notes the significance of ethnic group approval in families for preserving their cultural identity. Portes and Rumbaut (1996) identified that communities noted to have adopted selective acculturation patterns with in-group support tended to have a higher ethnic identity retention. In light of this, this study explored how the immigrational experiences of first-generation Ethiopian and Eritreans influenced their own identification and the retention of their cultural identities. Furthermore, this study evaluated how Ethiopian and Eritrean parents' acculturative process and ability to retain their own identity influenced their parenting practices and the causatum identity in the formative years of their second-generation children. Understanding the factors that influenced the first generation's cultural retention provides greater insight into their parenting practices and the resultant identity of the second generation.

Immigration and Settlement

Adjusting to life in a new country and adapting to a new society often present significant challenges. The stress incurred in this process is further compounded by the psychological and emotional traumas experienced during flight (Cole et al. 1992). The migration experiences of Ethiopians and Eritreans are characterized by great stress before, during, and after relocation (Fenta et al. 2006). “Cultural shock” or “acculturative stress” (Berry 2006), as these stressors experienced by immigrants are typically termed, generally refer “to the patterns of reactions by a minority group to a new dominant cultural environment” (Yakushko 2010, p. 257). Particular sources of stress have been connected with the challenges of linguistic limitations, economic difficulties, oppression within the new environment, loss of social status and contact, difficulties in adapting to a new culture, and relational conflicts due to cultural changes (Fenta et al. 2006).

Consequently, one of the coping strategies employed by newcomers is attempts to recreate their cultures, that are ethnic communities, in the country of settlement. This community-based strategy of recreating tight-knit communities with strong social support systems that emulate the extended family systems left behind in their countries

of origins in essence acts as a protective mechanism against social isolation and offers community life and safety (Woolcock 1998). This reconstruction of community and culture serves as a protective factor contributing to the first generation's personal and cultural resilience. Correspondingly, both Ethiopian and Eritrean groups have developed separate communities in their new place of settlement in order to preserve their traditions and values (i.e., cultural resilience) while simultaneously selecting and adopting elements of the host country's culture. For the most part, ethnic communities have been noted as being an important source of support and strength (Levitt et al. 2005).

Developing social connections in the host country is not the only means by which first-generation Ethiopian and Eritrean immigrants are able to maintain their identities and subsequently make sense of their new environments. Contrary to what traditional assimilationist theories profess, Ethiopian and Eritrean immigrants do not necessarily sever ties with their countries of origin; rather, increasing numbers of immigrants engage in transnational consciousness or multilocality in hopes of maintaining their identity through transnational acts, for example, by maintaining political, economic, religious, and social ties with their country of origin (Matsuoka and Sorenson 2001; Levitt and Waters 2002; Ghosh and Wang 2003). Recreating the community in their new place of settlement, along with engaging in transnational acts, solidifies social networks among immigrants that "may produce tangible resources, social capital, and emotional support that may offset some of the alienating and stressful effects of immigration" (Murphy and Mahalingam 2004, p. 170). Recreating community and maintaining transnational connections create space for belonging and for consolidating an identity from their experiences of fragmentation and dispersal when negotiating different identities as a feature of the settlement experience.

Parenting and Cultural Maintenance

Identity constructs have important implications for the way in which persons view themselves and their perceptions of how society relates to them. Invariably, all of these factors impact the well-being of first-generation immigrants and, in turn, also inform their acculturative process and attitudes toward parenting (Murphy and Mahalingam 2004). As a means of further consolidating their identity while living in a culturally incongruent community, first-generation parents conceive themselves as the sole embodiments of cultural values for their second-generation children (Sodowsky and Carey 1988). At the core of this perception is the belief that actively establishing a cultural identity in their children by reproducing the traditional culture is an important parenting goal.

Traditionally, within the Ethiopian and Eritrean context, a patriarchal ideology, traditional gender role preferences, and lineal value orientations provide the normative framework for behavior (Wubie 2001). Families are inclined toward a patriarchal, joint family system, with grandparents, extended families, community members, and elders taking on a considerable role in socializing young children into culturally expected behaviors (Wubie 2001). Within this framework, parenting approaches typically are authoritative in style, with a strong emphasis placed on academic achievement and familial bonds and solidarity (i.e., respect for elders and the importance of family). Consequently, because religion (either Christianity or Islam) is regarded as a mechanism for instilling cultural values, religious beliefs

and activities not only play an important role in parenting practices but also further legitimize cultural norms by providing a particular ethos and world view. However, the level of adherence to these norms varies according to socioeconomic status and position on the rural–urban continuum in the country of origin, as well as the degree of religiosity. Regardless of these variances, these values and beliefs are most often amassed implicitly rather than only explicitly through culturally determined learning processes (Arendell 1997).

In the host country, Ethiopian and Eritrean immigrants generally maintain good contact and communication with their respective groups. Solidarity is maintained through the existence of numerous organizations (i.e., professional and cultural associations), events, and institutions (i.e., religious). Furthermore, some of these associations also have developed institutions, such as community centers that provide Sunday language and religious schools or social affairs ranging from formal religious services and cultural shows to informal dinner parties. Additionally, because the family is valued and left behind, community members tend to replicate bonds similar to those between extended family members in their home countries (Matsuoka and Sorenson 2001). In such a practice, newcomers are then welcomed as new members of the social group. As previously explored, given the dynamics surrounding their immigration experiences, reestablishing community is essential to the recapitulation of their identity and its retention through how they socialize their children. Understanding parents’ immigration and settlement experiences is thus imperative to a study of second-generation experiences with identity.

Study Design

A qualitative research paradigm was used to explore how identity formation as a social experience was for youth paradigmatically situated in a social matrix that allows them to surf between two cultures (their parents’ and that of their own birth country) and discover and conciliate their own identity in such a way that they maintain the links with their families and achieve full citizenship.

In line with the paradigm, the research question “What is the process of identity formation of second-generation Ethiopian and Eritrean youth in Toronto?” subsumes the multifaceted interpretations of the human experience in addition to the constant relation that exists within social and cultural systems (Gall et al. 1996). The research question conveys two salient points of consideration. First, arriving at a successful understanding of respondents’ process of identity formation requires an understanding of the lived experience of respondents’ parents (first generation). The role of parental influence on identity development is an important conceptual piece to understanding the process by which their children forge their identity.

Second, the research question implies an explanatory purpose in its discovery of this process. In social work, the interactions between individuals, persons, and their environment is considered critical; thus, this study does not endeavor to establish objective facts about the social world but rather seeks to explain how research participants would understand, or make sense of, their lived experiences. Therefore, the qualitative research tradition of constructivist grounded theory was found to be congruent with the discovery mode and explanatory orientation of this research question.

Recruitment consisted of community and social networks distributing copies of a notice to prospective research participants, as “collaborating with community members is an essential first step that is eased when the researcher knows and is known by community members and elders” (Eide and Allen 2005, p. 44). In Ethiopian and Eritrean cultures, “being known” and “knowing” are central to every activity as it pertains to the community. Cognizant that both communities exist in this context, the recruitment process was consistent within these cultural norms. This process gave way to introductions to prominent youth leaders in the community, and their willingness to open up their social networks allowed for a rapid dissemination of this study’s objectives to a wide catchment of potential participants. Concurrently, I employed the strategy of prolonged engagement whereby I was consistently involved in various youth events in the community as a volunteer slowly building my familiarity to the youth (Milgram 1972). After 5 months, I was invited by a non-profit youth-led organization serving both communities to attend their annual 5-day camping retreat with 55 Ethiopian and Eritrean youth. It was decided that sampling from this context would likely generate robust, rich data that would produce deep levels of understanding (Thompson 1999). This opportunity presented a specific group of people who either possessed characteristics or lived in circumstances relevant to the social phenomenon being studied (Mays and Pope 1996). In accordance with these principles for sampling, 20 youth were recruited during the camping trip. The criteria for participation were youth between 18 and 30 years of age, Canadian-born, and a child of first-generation parents who are either Ethiopian or Eritrean. Theoretical saturation was reached at 20 participants.

Data was collected through in-depth, face-to-face interviews ranging from 60 to 90 min in length. The interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed by myself. Prior to the interview, demographic information was collected and participants were asked to classify themselves in one of six mutually exclusive categories that defined how they self-identified in their formative years and at the time of the study: Ethiopian/Eritrean, Canadian, bicultural, somewhat Canadian, somewhat Ethiopian/Eritrean, or other. This question was then later used as a primer to open the interview by asking for further clarification about how they self-identified.

The semi-structured interview questions consisted of a standard set of open-ended questions that focused on participants’ knowledge of their parents’ migration and subsequent acculturation process and how, in turn, this informed the development of their own identity in their formative years. They were also asked about factors (e.g., Ethiopian or Eritrean community) that may have played an influential role in their process of identify development in their formative years.

Data Analysis

The data analysis consisted of the demographic information about the youth and the transcripts of the interviews. Based on the principles of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998), analysis occurred through three coding stages: open, axial, and selective coding. Open coding consisted of identifying, naming, and describing the phenomena as it assigns various conceptual codes to different pages of the interview (Strauss and Corbin 1998). The interpretive process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data was carefully accomplished through listening

to each interview shortly after it was conducted examining the data sentence by sentence. As a strategy, listening to the audiotapes proved useful as it allowed my full immersion in such analysis. I employed “key-words-in-context” analysis whereby I noted words participants used most often to describe how they understood their parents’ immigration and settlement experiences. For instance, phrases noted as important because of their frequency were “struggle to find their place, this [Canada] is different than what they know, they come from a place of community, building churches/mosques/opening restaurants/stores, community so they can be who they are, helped them settle and find their way, community so they can be Ethiopian, practice being Eritrean” to describe their understanding. Throughout and as the data collection evolved, as the frequent words or phrases were noted, I identified leads for follow-up, as well as gaps for further elaboration in future interviews (Charmaz 1990). During axial coding, other words and phrases that were identified as central to the ways the youth described their experience included: “strong pride, they know who they are, being Ethiopian, being Eritrean, they don’t know any other way to be” were used by respondents to describe the primordial nature or the “Ethiopianness or Eritreanness” of their parents’ identity. When it comes to how this influenced their process of identity development, participants described how “culture,” “religion,” “language,” “community” along with “transnational activities” where the primary means by which their parents practiced their identity and transmitted this to their children.

It was through this process of inductive analysis that this qualitative inquiry sequentially advanced from exploration to confirmation to creative synthesis through “immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important patterns, themes, and interrelationships” (Patton 2002, p. 41). During selective coding phase, along with researcher memos that documented for context providing insight into non-verbal communications and observational notes of the camp experience with participants, data analysis continued with several careful reviews of each interview transcript. Line-by-line open coding was conducted to highlight key phrases that represented themes. Similar coded phrases were grouped together and a list of emerging themes and categories emerged. Themes were further reduced and clusters created by grouping similar themes together. Themes were compared against one another to develop categories and investigate dimensions and characteristics of each category identified.

As a verification, preliminary findings were presented to the youth at their following camp event to obtain feedback about the accuracy of the interpretation of their experiences. All the youth indicated the findings expressed and captured their lived experiences accurately.

Findings

Twenty second-generation Ethiopian and Eritrean residing in Toronto, Canada—eight Eritrean and 12 Ethiopian—participated in the study. Ten were males, and ten were females. The average age of the youth was 20. Four youth were starting university; seven were currently in university; one had graduated from university; two had graduated from college; five were in their final year of high school; and one was attending an alternative high school program. Table 1 provides a complete summary of the demographic information about the youth participants.

Table 1 Sample characteristics

Total sample	Second-generation Ethiopian	Second-generation Eritrean	Female	Male	Starting university	Attending university	University graduate	College graduate	High school	Alternative high School
20	12	8	10	10	4	7	1	2	5	1

From the transcripts of the 20 interviews, two major categories of interrelated concepts emerged about the identity formation of Ethiopian and Eritrean youth in their formative years. These categories are (1) first generation, negotiating their identity and (2) the factors contributing to the identity transmission in second-generation youth. Three main factors were identified as important to identity formation in the formative years: language, personal networks, and connecting to “home” through transnational activities.

First Generation: Negotiating Their Identity

All study participants shared powerful narratives identifying that Canadian, Ethiopian, and Eritrean cultures played important roles in their first-generation parents’ definitions of their identity. According to all the youth, their parents’ intrinsic sense of self as Ethiopian or Eritrean and its influence on their bicultural functioning—namely, to assenting to moderate selective acculturation in the host country were important to their identities. To participants, what constitutes an Ethiopian or Eritrean innermost core is being born into an Ethiopian or Eritrean culture and feeling the resultant pride of being part of such a culture. One participant shared,

They are proud of where they are from [Ethiopia] and you see it in what they do and how they behave ... like when we have guests over and the conversations. Like they talk about growing up there [Ethiopia] how they know who they are because of it [having been born and raised in Ethiopia].

Having an intrinsic sense of “Ethiopianness” and “Eritreanness” was also described by study participants as being represented through the cultivation of and ascription to cultural values (i.e., religion, family orientation, and food preferences) in addition to keeping with cultural activities. As one participant described,

My parents stuck to their culture [Eritrean] and growing up my friends were their friends’ kids [second-generation Eritrean peers]. We spent so much time together that they were family. We [the kids] called each other cousins and their parents are like my parents ... they act the same way. We did everything together, even going to church. Religion plays a big part. Just the whole morals, the respect, it’s very Eritrean.

Contrastively, participants noted how their first-generation parents bicultural designation of self was one of selective acculturation, and this is evidenced in their holding on to core values at home (i.e., religion, food preferences, esteem for family connectedness) while adapting to Canadian sense of self with regard to one’s professional life (i.e., workplace conventions and interactions, dress codes). A participant shared,

They [parents] see it as a sense of practicality [bicultural functioning] ... we live in Canada ... we have to function as Canadians. We have to go [through] the education system. We have to work. You know, we have to buy a house, et cetera, et cetera. We have to function as Canadians. So my parents are very practical about that and understand that so they will adjust their way of thinking accordingly when it's necessary.

This cognitive approach to their bicultural identity is further explained by another participant who related,

I remember a quote that some lady said. It was like, "Immigrants don't leave their culture at the airport," right? When they come here, they didn't just like drop their culture in the customs, right? They still have them. And my parents kind of taught us these things through subtle and explicit means. They didn't like purposely do it. But like, it just naturally comes out. So you know, speaking their language, that's a big thing, right? So maintaining who they are [Ethiopians] is very important to them, but at the same time they are not at home [Ethiopia] and they know that. They will adopt Canadian ways because they are here [Canada], they have responsibilities, they have a family to support and they want us [children] to do well.

Factors Contributing to Identity Transmission in Second-Generation Youth

Language

Parents' national identity retention and subsequent transmission of identity on to the second-generation is closely tied to the first-generation's psychological and behavioral sense of belonging to their group. They established social connections as part of their settlement process not only to make sense of their new environment but also as a means of maintaining their national identity. Within this domain, participants' identity was shaped first through speaking their parents' language of origin and practicing traditions as the family provides the context for attitude formation, and in the early formative years of a child's life, language is one of the primary means by which cultural attitudes are cultivated (Gardner and Lambert 1972). Thirteen participants of this study were primarily socialized in their parents' language of origin. As one participant related, "I spoke Tigrigna as a kid a lot. Like I would see videos of myself [and] I spoke it fluently, because that's what she [her mother] spoke to me first."

Though born in Canada, participants further related how English was not their first language; rather, their parents' language of origin was the primary means of cultural transmission. Participants shared how their self-concept was a reflection of the responses they received from their parents. Consequently, the exposure to and subsequent internalization of their parents' parenting practices, such as the uptake of traditional language, exposed participants to certain beliefs and customs which invariably channeled how they developed their self-concept. A participant shared,

I learnt Oromigna before I learned English so, to me, it wasn't something I really had to think of [her identity]. It was just who I was [Ethiopian]. So I never really took the time to think about what makes me different from everybody else. I just knew that I was Ethiopian. I had to go to ESL [English as a second language] to learn English when I went to school. I [still] speak Oromifa but then [in her formative years] I understood and saw things the way my parents did.

Feelings of group obligation make up the moral dimension of identity as “feelings of group obligation have to do with the importance a person attaches to his or her group and the implications the group has for the person’s behavior” (Isajiw 1992, p. 9). In this study, this scope was explored through the importance that was placed on teaching the language to one’s children. Feelings of obligation explain the commitment a person has to his or her group in addition to the group solidarity, which “can be said to constitute the central dimension of subjective identity” (Isajiw 1992 p. 9). These facets lead to affective or cathectic components of identity as they generate attachment to the group (Isajiw 1992). Language socialization has resulted in participants perceiving security and comfort as embodied in, and expressing associated preference for, members of their group through their identity repertoire.

Personal Networks

In addition to language, participants’ primary socialization was defined by their participation in personal networks such as family and friendship networks (known as “Mehaber”) and engaging in group functions and institutions. As part of their adaptive strategy of selective acculturation, parents’ relied on their community as a form of social capital to socialize their children by transmitting specific values strategically. All study participants recounted how their community was their main outlet for social engagement and that the language spoken at home was that of their parents’ country of origin. Their socialization was reinforced by the community through weekly church attendance, Sunday school, monthly Mehabers, and other events ranging from weddings and birthdays to cultural holiday celebrations. As such, because of the nature of their restrictive socialization, participants indicated that in their formative years, they identified, much like their parents, as Ethiopians or Eritreans. The constricted nature of their upbringing was well encapsulated by the recounting of a 22-year-old female participant of Eritrean descent. She described it as follows:

It was like we were living in our own little world kind of thing. Like we just ignore where we live, like we don’t interact with the people in the neighborhood at all. When I was a kid, my mom would never interact with a single person in the neighborhood. Maybe our neighbors, acquaintances like [saying] “hi,” “bye,” type of thing, but she would keep her Eritrean friends close, [they’d] come over and visit, we would go there and visit, and that was it. I mean how we were in our community was the same as home except with more people. I identified like her [mother], Eritrean. There was no doubt about that.

In accordance with the previous narration, the following participant related that his sole social outlet consisted of family, the Ethiopian community, and how his familial

and community socialization corresponded with his parents’ intrinsic sense of being Ethiopian. He shared the following:

My parents had a lot of Ethiopian friends. [They were] very social. It was nice, it was a good time. I had Ethiopian friends that I would go to their birthday parties and things like that. We [second-generation Ethiopian peers] were raised together and I was always proud of being Ethiopian. I never wanted to be anything different. They [parents and community] raised us with this pride, you have inside.

Fundamentally, because culture is understood through the practice of traditions, customs, and values, the Eritrean and Ethiopian communities abroad engage in celebrating religious and secular holidays, celebrate country-of-origin public holidays, and tell stories with their cooking; engaging in such cultural celebrations and activities allows for the retention and transmission of the first generation’s identity to the second generation. Parenting practices of the first generation highlight that when parenting children “within a culture that is notably dissimilar from their culture of origin,” the existence of a community that provides cooperative support in family and cultural socialization is paramount (Inman et al. 2007, p. 93).

Identity, Connecting to Home: Transnational Social Activities

Transnational social activities in the form of maintaining contacts with family and friends and participating in social remittances in their country of origin are additional means by which the first generation transmit their identity to their children. The telephone, according to participants, was the primary means by which their parents maintained contact with family and friends in their country of origin. Given that all participants spoke their ancestral language, they also developed relationships with family members in Ethiopia or Eritrea, as they regularly spoke to family when their parents made such calls. A participant shared,

I remember my mom would call home [Ethiopia] on Saturday mornings. Because it was like a ritual, everyone would be there for her to speak to, like her mom, siblings and even the neighbor that was like an aunt to her ... I would talk to my grandma also and because I spoke Amharic we understood each other ... I remember she [grandmother] would always say how happy she was that I spoke Amharic.

In conjunction with frequent telephone calls, visits were also undertaken as a means of transmitting identity. Eighteen participants traveled to their ancestral homes, and although regular visits were difficult to maintain due to the high costs of travel, when opportunities arose, summer was mentioned as the ideal time for travel. One participant shared, “because they were hardworking parents we couldn’t visit frequently ... they had to save. It was easier to go during summer because school is closed and we could all travel together.” During these visits, child-rearing practices as influenced by history, culture, religions, beliefs, and attitudes were further reinforced. A participant related,

I remember, on Sundays it was like the whole country was in church. My parents, grandparents, cousins, aunts, neighbors would go to church together. Everyone on the road was on their way to church. My grandma would ask me if we did the same in Canada, if we went to church every Sunday. I told her we did. Basically, it [the trip and rituals undertaken] was like we did at home [Canada] but in a bigger scale because everyone here was the same. Everyone did the same things ... even as 9-year-old, I never guessed I would have thought, like, it would have meant that much to me. But, I, like, I know I came back with, I don't know, like, just this other level of understanding of what my parents were doing with us [raising].

Engaging in these transnational social activities was a means of beginning the process of building connections for their children with community members in their ancestral home. This further emphasized to participants' that the childcare system is based on multiple caregivers and shared responsibility among families and community members. As one participant described,

I really wasn't expecting anything. I just didn't know what to expect at all, and I was just thinking, oh, I'm leaving here [Toronto], you know. [Once we arrived] it was, like, whoa! I had, like, all these family members there and this super extended family. And, like, it was really overwhelming. We have a community here [Toronto] but nothing like it was there [Ethiopia]. I had so many parents there [parental figures] and they would teach me things about the culture like how to receive guests, the different types of greetings, share lots of stories about the past, history. [I] came back with, like, a lot of memories about the culture and how to be.

These types of social remittances (Levitt 1998) allowed for identities, values, and ideas to be maintained and transmitted. To this end, transnational social activities while engaging in cultural practices and activities (language, national holidays) in the host country are the means by which the first generation recreate, maintain, and transmit their identities to their children.

Discussion and Implications for Social Work

The literature notes that the lived experiences of refugees are most often fraught with experiences of uncertainty, violence, fear, and ambiguity (Matsuoka and Sorenson 2001). Namely, the context of human displacement is a series of concatenations that speak to a multitude of practices and challenges that include “nationalism and racism xenophobia and immigration policies, state practices of violence and war, censorship and silencing, human rights and challenges to state sovereignty, ‘development’ discourse and humanitarian interventions, citizenship and cultural or religious identities, travel and diaspora, and memory and historicity” (Malkki 1995, p.496). Recreating a community in the host country affords immigrants with a comfortable atmosphere to make sense of the unfamiliar, as the community acts as a “symbolic center in an indifferent world to keep intact a vision of a lost paradise”; in this social environment, it

is a place of refuge (Hoffman 1998, p. 53). This ethno-cultural space provides the arena whereby first-generation immigrants can rediscover their national origin and identity. In the Canadian context, the Eritrean and Ethiopian communities accomplished this by engaging in transnational activities (i.e., economic and social) that contributed to the "reconstruction" of home in the host country as a means to consolidate their anchorage in settlement and renew their identification with their country of origin in the new country (Al-Ali et al. 2001).

To help better understand this complex method of rediscovering identity and finding "belonging" in the host country, Kumsa (2006) offers "dispersal-affinity" as a framework "that provides a contextual and relational understanding of refugee experiences" (Kumsa 2006, p. 236). "Dispersal" denotes dislocation and displacement, whereas "affinity" connotes contending with disruption, dislocation, and displacement; thus, dispersal-affinity signifies the strong desire "to relocate disrupted social ties and their intense longings to belong" (Kumsa 2006, p. 236). This framework also interweaves four paradoxical spaces: temporal, relational, glocal, and reflexive. The temporal space speaks to how the past is both continued and discontinued as first-generation immigrants negotiate their identity and search for cohesion. In this instance, the first generation's negotiation process (i.e., identities and social ties) as they acculturate in their new environment results from the internal dialogue that takes place "between multiple imagined pasts and anticipated futures" (Kumsa 2004, p. 39). In this light, "as they negotiate multiple crisscrossing discursive fields, each moment of encounter contributes to the constitutive process of identity and cohesion" (Kumsa 2004, p. 39).

In the relational space, as the individual negotiates identity and cohesion, the multiple identities one embodies (i.e., Ethiopian/Eritrean, male, husband, female, wife, and so on), along with the multiple social ties and affinities through this process of negotiation, find expression through the singularity of the individual. The relational space creates room for first-generation immigrants, in their process of acculturation, to "simultaneously link their multiple selves to multiple points of affinity in and beyond multiple national and continental boundaries" (Kumsa 2004, p. 40). The glocal speaks to the global and local and the concurring experiences of dislocation and location it yields in the immigrant experience. While the glocalizing process (i.e., reasons for flight) may "disrupt the relationship between people and places, thus dislocating refugees and deterritorializing their identity and cohesion, localizing processes create novel relationships between peoples and places, thus reterritorializing refugees and relocating their identity and cohesion in new and creative ways" (Kumsa 2004, pp. 40–41).

Lastly, negotiating identity and cohesion in the reflexive space comprises a complex interaction between external structures and the past life. Far from linear, dispersal-affinity provides an added conceptual tool to understanding how, through multiple moments of discontinuity in their identity, immigrants negotiate to create continuity with elements of their past into their futures (Kumsa 2006). Taking this into account, for first-generation Ethiopians and Eritreans, the host country represents a new reality that removes "many of the conditions that previously underpinned identity and a sense of belonging" (Varvin 2003, pp. 175–176). Settlement is experienced partly as a homogenizing process that concurrently places them into subaltern spheres of citizenship/nationality, race, and gender (Kumsa 2009). Dispersal-affinity helps us understand how displacement and resistance operate in building the lives of refugees. For Eritreans, the battle for independence from Ethiopia resulted in their seeking refuge

in the West. This process of glocalization in conjunction with their battle for independence propels them to relocate their dislocated affinities and persist in their resilience to reassert their national identity in settlement. Specifically, “groups’ subjected to extreme discrimination and derogation of their national origins are more likely to embrace them even more fiercely” (Portes and Rumbaut 2001, p.187). Not unlike their counterparts, Ethiopians sought refuge from civil war and a totalitarian government. Ethiopians are heterogeneous group each vying to reclaim and reassert their identity. In consequence, retaining traits and practices associated with their native culture benefits their process of negotiating their identity in this new milieu. For the members of these displaced groups, as cultures and ideas are deracinated from their place of origin, these cultures, practices, and values become exceedingly important, further informing their process of acculturation and relationship building (i.e., within their community and host community). Concomitantly, their parenting (i.e., parlaying their adaptive process onto their children and influencing their identity) styles in general and parenting strategies become critical in reclaiming, reasserting, and sustaining their identity (Gupta and Ferguson 1992).

Parenting within this context, the first generation sought the maintenance of their cultural identity in how they parented their second-generation children. For this group, immigration seems to have come at a considerable cost as they navigate through this new environment without the guidance of the familial and extended family ecosystem they were accustomed to (Szapocznik and Kurtines 1993). This transforms how they take on parenting as for the most part raising children in a new environment can be challenging with parents intent on “defending” their children from what they perceive to be overly permissive (i.e., allowing young children to choose their food) and irresponsible (i.e., allowing young children to choose their style of dress) contemporary Western parenting. This leniency for instance is counter to their practices and aspirations of raising respectable children who will identify and emblemize Ethiopian or Eritrean identity. Compromising on these values is conducive to raising self-indulgent individuals lacking in self-identification (Remennick 2015). As such, maintaining cultural continuity by upholding cultural mores of dress, belief, and behavior from generation to generation is paramount especially in a new setting that perpetuates a continual onslaught of unfamiliar cultural practices that differs from the more traditional views of the first generation. Given their experiences, and consistent with the literature, first-generation Ethiopian and Eritrean immigrants affirmed their cultural identity by recreating their culture of origin in their new environment—by generating a community that was in line with their values. In essence, the first generation took a more systemic approach whereby they navigated in tandem with the influence of larger systems (i.e., community and family) to engender cultural meaning, thus fostering cultural resilience.

In response to these challenges, parents mostly followed an authoritative style of parenting with high regulation and excessive parental control aimed at rearing children that would not slip into indulgence but one that espouses a self-development that fulfills “traditional values of common good and respect for social hierarchy (Remennick 2015, p.373). Therefore, second-generation children were culturally socialized through parenting practices that instilled knowledge about their heritage and history, and participants’ understood this experience as their parents’ strong desire for cultural retention and identity transmission as emanating from their experiences with flight and their own challenges with settlement. The “ability to identify with and feel at home in the host

society has long been considered a necessary ingredient for immigrant success" (Chacko 2003, p.493). The settlement process is a multifaceted and complex process encompassing cultural, social, political, and economic ramifications that are intricately entwined. This process of identity formation/transformation among immigrants surges in complexity "particularly among minority groups that often encounter persistent barriers to assimilation stemming from a multitude of factors, particularly those of race/ethnicity and socioeconomic class" (Chacko 2003, p.494). For participants, this reaffirming of their identity speaks to their parents' general aversion to an undistinguished Black identity as experienced in the host country and signals a disfavor toward a practice of individuality that is devoid of community. For participants, this was also their parents' way of "setting them on the right path".

Participants were critical of their parents' rearing styles and strategies. Though expressing understanding and empathy, in hindsight they also criticized their parents for lack of constructive parenting. Verbalizing their intentions and actions was not part of the parenting experience, and as a whole, participants' felt they lacked a detailed and nuanced explanations of parental decisions. Nevertheless, there was an understanding that in their formative years by virtue of having either Ethiopian or Eritrean parents, being able to converse in their parents' mother tongue, and immersed in a culture and way of being emphatically reinforced by a community resulted in their adoption of an Eritrean or Ethiopian identity. Data for this study was primarily derived from second-generation Ethiopian and Eritrean youth. This is an accounting of their lived experiences, and though a strength, a limitation of this study is that parents' were not interviewed for this study. Additionally, participants' were recruited from an agency serving both communities. Future studies should sample from the greater community populations and interview both parents and second-generation youth to build a stronger overall base.

Immigration and acculturation are significant transforming forces on families. The first generation's process of acculturation and its associated stress lasts throughout the lifespan and must be considered by social workers—especially as these experiences impact child-rearing practices (Padilla and Perez 2003; Smart and Smart 1995). Immigrant parents contend with strikingly contradistinctive presumptions and challenges than their non-immigrant counterparts. This is especially evident in the critical appraisal of their parenting practices by mainstream social institutions. When Western-based categories of parenting are applied to non-Western immigrant communities, they are for the most part inadequate, fail to take into account/comprehend cultural values and norms thus further pathologizing communities (Ochocka and Janzen 2008). Parents' cultural conversance surrounding the meaning of parenting and within this the importance of the host country context in impressing parental styles needs to be emphasized. This emphasis needs to also be considered in the context of the ongoing negotiation that takes place between traditional values and the influence of external conditions that relate to their settlement experiences. As such, notwithstanding its important consideration, "understanding immigrant parenting only" through a cultural lens is simplistic (Ochocka and Janzen 2008, p.87). Internal struggles inherent in their reasons for flight, resettlement, and loss of social networks can impinge on their integration and that of their children. Second-generation immigrant children function within the context of their home, mainstream Canadian society, and community environment; therefore, it is important to highlight "that the process of parenting and

the process of adapting to a new country are dynamic, dialectic,” and they influence one another (Ochocka and Janzen 2008, p. 109). Accordingly, it must be stressed that group perspectives on parenting are not homogeneous, but rather, individuals across similar cultural groups differ in their approach and styles.

Conclusion

This paper explored the pre-migration, migration, post-migration experiences of first-generation Ethiopian and Eritrean immigrants and how in their formative years, this impacted second-generation children in their identity development. The first generation’s acculturation process included the rediscovery of their native culture and identity through the formation of ethnic enclaves. The community acted as a protective system rooted in culture and fostering adaptation through the practice of religion and cultural traditions that promoted values, beliefs, attitudes, and epistemology congruent with their country of origin. Correspondingly, the rediscovery of community positively influenced the recovery process of the first generation in relation to their pre-immigration (i.e., war, refugee conditions) and post-immigration (i.e., adaptation) stressors serving as a protective factor in the first generation’s personal and cultural resilience. In consonance with this, the first generation invariably adopted selective acculturation as means to balance the reconstruction of their lives within their communities, while also working to integrate into a new society by gaining cultural competencies in the form of acquiring language facility, understanding social customs, and gaining new employment skills.

When it came to their parenting strategies, this study found that most parents relayed their acculturative trajectory how they were raising their children because they wanted their culture and identity to be retained through their children. This was accomplished by building an ecosystem that further imparted cultural norms and traditions and that further supported in-home practices. As a result, this parental influence shaped the second generation’s identity trajectory and repertoire in their early formative years, to match that of their parents.

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