

1-1-2007

Second generation Somali origin children's understanding and organization of their multiple identities

Muna Jama
Ryerson University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.ryerson.ca/dissertations>



Part of the [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jama, Muna, "Second generation Somali origin children's understanding and organization of their multiple identities" (2007). *Theses and dissertations*. Paper 125.

618194230

FC
3097.9
'86
J36
2007

SECOND GENERATION SOMALI ORIGIN CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING AND
ORGANIZATION OF THEIR MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

by

Muna Jama, B.A, University of Ottawa, 2005

A Major Research Paper
presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in the Program of
Early Childhood Studies

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2007

© Muna Jama 2007

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this major research paper.

I authorize Ryerson University to lend this paper to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

Signature

I further authorize Ryerson University to reproduce this paper by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

Signature

SECOND GENERATION SOMALI ORIGIN CHILDREN'S UNDERSTANDING AND ORGANIZATION OF THEIR MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

© Muna Jama, 2007

Master of Arts
Early Childhood Studies
Ryerson University

ABSTRACT

The younger generation of the Somali community has faced certain hardships, in part, as a result the contradiction between their identities at home and their identities in public. The focus of this research was on the saliency of second generation Somali origin children's multiple identities. The 10 children between the ages of 5-10 that were interviewed indicated that they considered their Muslim identity their strongest identity, followed by their Somali identity, then their Black identity and lastly their Canadian identity. Their reasons for choosing the Muslim identity first were due to culture and religion. Their reasons for choosing the Somali identity second was due to the fact that Somalia is their parent's birth place. As for the Black identity some of the participants stated reasons related to skin colour as to why they chose this identity while others considered this an identity that did not apply to them. Lastly, they chose the Canadian identity because Canada is their birth place and place of residence. The implications of this study are that both parents and teachers need to be actively encouraging the formation of children's racial and national identity.

Key words: Somali origin children, Muslim identity, Somali identity, Black identity, Canadian identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank Allah (SWT) for making it possible for me to get to this point. I would not have been able to get through this process if it was not for my faith.

I would like to thank my incredibly beautiful family for always being there for me and for constantly reminding me that I did not have the option of not finishing this research. Special thanks to my wonderfully talented and patient sister and equally talented cousin who proof read every version of this paper.

This research could not have been possible without the support and encouragement of my wonderful supervisor, Dr. Mehrunnisa Ali. Thank you for keeping me focused, steering me to the right direction, and reading and re-reading my many revised drafts. Most of all, thank you for constantly verbalizing the importance of this topic, you are a wonderful teacher and mentor. Also, I would like to express my gratitude to my second reader, Dr. Gloria Roberts-Fiati. Your feedback was indispensable, highly valued, and appreciated.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Judith Bernhard (Program Director). If it was not for your vision, hard work, and dedication none of us would have had this wonderful opportunity. Thank you for your support and encouragement.

I would like to give a special thanks to all the wonderful professors and friends that have been instrumental in helping me get to this point. I appreciate everything that you have all done for me for the past 12 months.

I would like to acknowledge the parents and participant who made this research project possible. Especially, to the children who gave me their insightful responses and challenged my preconceived ideas of what children know or don't know, I thank you.

Lastly, I would like to thank baby Sumaiya, who helped me keep it all in perspective.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION	iii
ABSTRACT	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT S	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Research Questions	3
Literature Review	3
Identity and its Features	3
Identities are ascribed	4
Identities are internalized/rejected/modified	5
Identities are in flux and can be shaped	6
Multiple identities	7
Dimensions of Identity	9
Ethnic identity	9
Racial identity	11
National identity	11
Religious identity	12
Confusion and overlap among the dimensions	13
Factors that Influence and Shape Identity	16
Parents/family	16
School	17
Societal contexts	18
Children's Identity Development and its Significance	20
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY	23
Rationale for Qualitative Approach	23
Sample	25
Access and Permissions	26
Site	27
Data Gathering Strategies	28
Data Analysis Approach	30
Researcher Characteristics	31
Strengths and Limitations of the Study	32
CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS	36
Hierarchy of Identities	36
Rationale Given for Identity Claims and Denials	37
Muslim identity	37
Somali identity	39

Black identity	45
Canadian identity	48
CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION	49
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION	56
Implications	56
Future Research	58
Closing Statements	59
REFERENCES	61
APPENDICES	69

INTRODUCTION

In the early and mid 1990's, as a result of a brutal civil war, a wave of Somali refugees immigrated to Canada. The largest settlement destination for Somalis in Canada has been Toronto, Ontario. According to Reitsma (2001) the actual size of the community varies between 50,000 and 70,000. First generation Somali immigrants who came to Canada in the last twenty years have since settled, married, and started having their own children. Thus, for the first time, there are a significant number of Canadian born children of Somali origin immigrants now living in Toronto.

This is an important community to study for the following reasons: first, compared to other immigrant groups they are considered relatively new and as such there is very little data/research on them. Second, a large segment of the community has faced considerable hardships during the process of integration into Canadian society. The most notable of these hardships is difficulties with the education system. In fact, they are dropping out of school, designated as behaviorally challenged, and placed in inappropriate grade levels in disproportionate numbers (Reitsma, 2001). Some of these challenges are rooted in the competition that exists between Somali second generation children's identity at home and the one being cultivated by the outside world. At home they have the identity of being Muslim and Somali while at school they may be expected to form a Canadian and/or Black identity (Collet, 2007; Reitsma, 2001). Understanding their multiple identities and their effects on this community is the key to developing a framework for addressing the above-noted challenges which this immigrant community faces.

Identities are at the root of who people are. They identify our differences and uniqueness as individuals and at the same time our sameness when part of a group. They include the internal sense of self and at the same time they are related to an individual's place in society and also the categories in which they are placed in by others (Taylor & Spencer, 2004). Moreover, one's identity is not a stagnant non changing characteristic. It is constantly affected by social, historical, cultural, political and economic factors (James, 2001). It can be thought of as a process that is continually negotiated between the individual and others. Some people are more aware of this process than others, for example, groups that have been on the margins of society are acutely aware of the dynamics involved in negotiating their identities (Taylor & Spencer, 2004). It is important to investigate the topic of identity because it shapes people's perceptions of themselves as well as of others. These perceptions, in turn guide people's actions and interactions with those they see as similar to or different from themselves.

Social identities such as race, ethnicity, and nationality have been at the center of the identity debate (Alcoff, 2003). Ericksen (2002) claims that race is an important part of an individual's identity because it is something that is imposed on an individual from an external source. Somalis living in Canada are considered Black because of their racial characteristics. For their Canadian born children, the issue is whether this identity, created by external forces, is welcomed or rejected. Ninety nine percent of Somalis are Muslims (Elmi, 1999). In a post September 11th political climate there are certain challenges linked to the Muslim identity. How much do the children born in the Somali community recognize this marker as part of their identity and just as with the previous identity, is this seen as a positive or negative characteristic? The third identity of

importance is the Canadian identity. Does the fact that these children are born in Canada, go to school in Canada, have their friends in Canada lead to self-identification as Canadians? Finally, how important is their Somali identity? To what extent does their parents' birth place determine their own ethnic identity? Will a place they have never visited hold any significance for them or will their current place of residence be seen as more significant?

Research Question

The research questions of this study are:

- 1) For second generation Somali origin children, which aspects of their identities are more salient and why?
- 2) Which one of their ascribed identities do they claim or reject and why?

It should be noted that the term *second generation* refers to children born in Canada but whose parents were born outside of Canada, in this case Somalia.

Literature Review

The topic of identity is a broad topic that has been the object of investigation in multiple fields of study. It has been explored from various epistemological stances and from various theoretical perspectives (Shahsiah, 2005). This literature review will include an explanation of the common features of identity, the different dimensions of identity and their significance, factors that shape and influence identity, and an overview of the significance of children's identities.

Identity and its Features

As stated by Alcoff (2003), identities are often "created in the crucible of colonialism, racial and sexual subordination and national conflicts, but also in the

specificity of group histories and structural position” (p.3). There are social meanings attached to such things as skin colour, ethnicity, religion, and nationality, which shape how people perceive themselves in relation to others. By studying the conditions (cultural, political, social, etc) under which identities are shaped, we learn to be aware of how identities are constructed, and whether or how we should claim or contest them. Identities are ascribed, internalized and claimed, or rejected or modified. They are in flux and can be shaped by external and internal factors. Individuals have multiple identities that are triggered by contextual modules (Britzman, 1994, as cited in Ali, 1996)

Identities are ascribed

The one aspect that is clear regarding this topic is that individuals are not fully independent in choosing their identity. A major characteristic of the notion of identity is the fact that they are ascribed by others to an individual. According to Stone (1971) identity is rooted in social relationships. Identities are established when there is a correspondence between the information one receives about who they are (identity announcements) with the categories that others place the individual in (identity placement). But, this is not a stable and fixed process. On the one hand there is the possibility that identity announcements and identity placement are a perfect fit and on the other hand announcements and placements may not be a good fit, thus resulting in “identity invalidation and role enactment confusion” (Ajrouch & Kusow, 2007, p.75). Implicit in this idea is the fact that identities are information dependent. In essence, others play an integral role in the formation of identity for an individual. An example of this characteristic of identity is demonstrated by Ajrouch and Kusow (2007) who argue that, in North America, immigrants are ascribed an identity based on their “closeness to and

distance from certain cultural, physical, and moral ideals" (p.73). If an individual is perceived to be close to the "white" ideal then they are ascribed the white identity, if they are close to the "non-white" category they are ascribed the minority identity.

Identities are internalized/rejected/modified

There is an internal sense of self that is part of an individual's identity. This is described as the personal part of the individual that is protected and valued by the individual. This is different from the "outside identities" because it is not readily described by others. Britzman (1994, as cited in Ali, 1996) refers to this as "the self". Participants from Jones and McEwen's (2007) study used words such as "intelligent" and "kind" to describe their internal identity. The notion of the internal identity is indicative of the assumption that the individual is not a passive agent when it comes to the formation of their identities. They internalize, reject and modify the various identities that are imposed on them from external sources. They are active agents involved in the negotiation process of their identity formation (Shahsiah, 2005). Sorenson (1991) claims that Ethiopian immigrants in Canada do not readily accept their Black identity, instead opting to focus on their national origin. This is in contrast to Jamaican Canadians who embrace their Blackness, and despite Canadian governmental policies that ascribe the Black identity to all dark skinned people regardless of where they come from (Sorenson, 1991).

Yon (2000) writes about the resistance and active decision making youths in a Toronto school exercised regarding their identities. When given the opportunity to describe themselves, many of his participants resisted the idea of being categorized by others. For example, one of his participants, who was born in Serbia, defined herself as

Spanish, based on the fact that she enjoys Spanish music and culture. Another participant who is originally from Vietnam was reluctant to call himself Vietnamese or any other category that drew upon his racial or ethnic identity. There were also Black and White participants that showed similar patterns of resistance in their responses. The importance of his research is that it showed that youth can be Black, Spanish, White in ways that differ from what the dominant discourse on being Black, White or Spanish is (Yon, 2000).

Identities also go through a process of modification; this was shown in a study conducted by Plaza (2006). His second generation Caribbean-Canadian participants indicated to him that as a result of their contact with more people of Caribbean descent in their schools their identity shifted from Canadian to one that was more Caribbean.

Identities are in flux and can be shaped

Research suggests that there is an ongoing construction of identities that is dependent on factors that are internal and external to the individual (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Sorenson (1990) argues that identity is not a set of fixed cultural attributes that exist in isolation; rather, he contends, that identity is fluid and changeable. Social constructionists state that the meaning of social identities cannot be fully understood as they are always changing and evolving (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007). Thus identity is conceptualized as “a fluid, situational, volitional, and dynamic phenomenon, one in which ethnic boundaries, identities, and cultures are negotiated, defined, and produced through social interaction inside and outside ethnic communities” (Plaza, 2006, p.214). An example of how identity is changing and being shaped at the community level is demonstrated by Somali immigrants who emigrated from a place where they were in the

majority to a place where they are considered "visible minorities". In their new designation the primary dimension of focus is their racial identity, which is a dimension they never had to consider since in their homeland everyone is the same race (Ajrouch & Kusow, 2007). At the individual level identities can be shaped by parents, family, school and greater society.

Multiple identities

In discussing the characteristics of identities it is important to mention that individuals possess multiple social identities as a result of their membership in multiple social groups and categories (Freeman, 2003). There are two opposing views on multiple identities. The first view is that identities are rank-ordered in a hierarchy of most salient dimension to least salient dimension (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). The second view is that multiple identities are experienced simultaneously as opposed to hierarchically (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007).

The proponents of the hierarchical view contend that identities within the self are organized in such a way that one identity can be more prominent than another one based on a certain quality or characteristic (Burke, 1991; Callero, 1985; McCall and Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1980 as cited in Stryker & Serpe, 1994). The most important determinant of the hierarchy is the salience of the particular identity. Salience refers to the "readiness to act out an identity as a consequence of the identity's properties as a cognitive structure or schema" (Stryker & Serpe, 1994, p.17). This means that numerous identities are organized by their likelihood of being utilized in any given situation (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). Moreover, the proponents of the hierarchal view contend that the more positive

feelings an individual has towards a specific identity the higher up that identity will be in the hierarchy (McCall & Simmons, 1978, as cited in Stryker & Serpe, 1994).

In opposition of the framework of hierarchy is the frame work of intersectionality. At the heart of this framework is the notion that socially constructed identities are experienced simultaneously instead of hierarchically. This framework has emerged from women's studies literature and the focus is on how identities connect as opposed to how they differ. The literature of this framework is based on personal narratives of women who stated that by bringing together their multiple identities without the restrictions of externally imposed definitions they were able to create a new integrated identity (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007).

For the purpose of this research I will contend that multiple identities have both an intersectional characteristic and a hierarchical one. This point of view is supported by Jones and McEwen (2004) who, in their study with 10 undergraduate women, found multiple intersections between the participants' identity dimensions and the existence of some identity dimensions that were more salient than others. For example, all the participants indicated the importance of their gender as an identity dimension (thus showing a higher hierarchal position for gender), but their notion of gender was closely linked to other dimensions, such as race or religion (e.g., being a Black woman or a Jewish woman). But the most important finding from their research relates to the fact that the most salient identity dimensions were those that have lower social status. This means that Black women were more aware of their racial identity. In contrast, the least salient identities were the ones that had a status of privilege (e.g., sexuality for the heterosexual women). This indicates that when it comes to multiple identities those who possess the

identity of privilege (such as the White identity or the heterosexual identity) are less aware of these identities.

No matter what the opposing views regarding multiple identities may be, what is relevant is the acknowledgement that no one identity can be understood in isolation. Multiple identities, such as race, ethnicity, religion, should be thought of as a whole, where each dimension is related to the other dimensions (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007). A more thorough explanation of how multiple identities are interrelated and connected will be provided in the following section.

Dimensions of Identity

In the following sections I will explain the four dimensions of identity that will be utilized in this research. Moreover, there will be an in-depth exploration of the significance of each dimension and an investigation of how the multiple dimensions intersect. The four dimensions are ethnicity, race, nationality and religion.

Ethnic identity

A common theme associated with the word ethnicity is the classification of people. The word ethnicity is derived from the Greek word "ethnikos", which means heathen, pagan or gentile (Ericksen, 2002). By the mid-19th century the word was used to refer to "racial" characteristics (Spencer, 2006).

Ericksen (2002) tells us in the United States the word "ethnics" was used at different times to refer to Jews, Italians, and the Irish. These groups of people were considered to be inferior to the majority of the population who were of British descent. This demonstrates that ethnicity itself is an unstable, shifting, intangible attribute ascribed to groups of people. Isajiw (1979) highlights the difficulties of providing a definition of

ethnicity. He states that part of the problem of defining ethnicity is that any definition given by a researcher is either too narrow (a specific group living in one state sharing one common language) or too broad (a group that define themselves as a particular group, i.e. Italians). The former definition cannot be used to discuss other groups of people and the latter definition only serves as a descriptive definition rather than providing any meaningful comparisons (Isajiw, 1979). Most times the word ethnicity is used to describe a common cultural identity. This includes people who share a certain culture, ancestry, language, religion and even race (Spencer, 2006). It does not necessarily include all of these characteristics but at least a few. More specifically, in everyday usage the word is associated with minority groups (racially, linguistically, religiously, etc) (Ericksen, 2002; Thompson, 1989).

The notion of ethnicity invites consideration of ethnic awareness and ethnic identity. Lin and Blila (1995) describe ethnic awareness as the "perception and acknowledgement of racial or ethnic distinctions in individuals and groups" (p.146). Ethnic identity refers to the shared characteristics of a group. It implies that there is a common value or goal within the group (Spencer, 2006). The implications of being part of an ethnic group is that one has to know the shared goals and values of the group. Furthermore, this common ethnic identity is used as an organizing principle to get collective action. It should be noted that the term ethnic identity is not stagnant. The definition of the word changes depending on who is defining it (Europeans, Africans, Indigenous peoples, second generation immigrants, etc) and the context in which they are defining it. It is a word with no fixed parameters. As Spencer (2006) states there are "only specific reading of ethnic identity at specific times and places" (p. 45).

Racial identity

The term "race" is equally as complex as the word ethnicity. In fact, it could be argued that race is more difficult to define because it is a socially constructed term by external factors outside of the one who the definition is being used for. It is a term that is particularly troubling to define because it has such historical and political importance. It is a dubious term with no actual biological basis, although it has often been used as though it does. Those against the notion of race argue that humans have always tended to intermarry, thus, making it impossible to draw fixed distinctions between the races (Eriksen, 2002). Even if this may be the case, it should be understood that the idea of race is very relevant in today's society because of the social and historical values placed on it. Race can be described as the social significance placed upon the physical differences of people (Van den Berghe, 1970).

National identity

Nationality entails the privileges and duties of a community or a group within the geographic boundaries of a nation-state. Miller (2000) argues that there are a number of facets to an individual's national identity. National identity requires the belief that the members of a nation belong together. This sense of belonging also extends to believing in a historical continuity (this refers to the connection that one has to the history of the nation be it to historical events or historical figures). There is also an active component to national identity. This means that there is a requirement of active participation from the citizens of a nation. Another component of national identity is a link to a particular geographic place. This component is the main difference between ethnic identity and national identity. Finally, a national identity includes the belief that people who have the

same national identity have distinct attributes that make them different from other people. Even though Miller (2000) argues that these attributes need not be racial or ethnic (they can be shared values or tastes), the reality is that they usually are shared ethnicities or races.

Religious identity

The term religion refers to a set of practices and beliefs that a group of people ascribe to. In most religions there are certain cultural traditions, history, mythology and beliefs that encompass the religion. Those who have the same religion practice a set of religious laws with specified rituals (Takriti, Barrett, & Buchanan-Barrow, 2006). Religion legitimizes and normalizes the values, beliefs and interpretations of reality for a group (Gilliat-Ray, 1998). Within the literature there is a blind spot when it comes to the role religion plays in identity formation. The primary focus of identity research is on race, ethnicity and gender. However, there is some research that has been instrumental in understanding why certain groups and individuals develop their religious identity more prominently than their ethnic, racial, or national identity. Peek (2000) summarizes a number of reasons as to why this is the case for some individuals. The first explanation she offers is the role of immigration in creating religious identities. Smith (1978, as cited in Peek, 2000) contends that for immigrants, the change and the confusion associated with moving to a new country makes them turn to religion. Moreover, religion becomes more central to their identity in the host country as opposed to their home country because of their minority status in the host country (Peek, 2000). Thus, when they were in the majority, establishing a religious identity was something that was taken for granted because everyone was of the same religion.

Another reason cited by Peek (2000) is the instrumental role of religion within society, not just for spiritual needs but also through the provision of "non-religious materials, psychological, and social benefits, including community networks, economic opportunities, educational resources, and peer trust and support" (p.5). As a result of these tangible and intangible supports there is an increase in the religiosity of the individual.

Confusion and overlap among the dimensions

These four dimensions of identity are not mutually exclusive. Some of the dimensions overlap greatly while others have only a slight or no overlap. The concept of race is very closely interrelated with ethnicity. It is very difficult and in some cases impossible to draw the distinction between the two terms. There have been questions raised as to whether the study of race should be distinguished from the study of ethnicity. Those who answered this question in the negative have argued that race is a subsection of ethnicity, while those who answered in the affirmative have argued that there is a distinction between race and ethnicity (Eriksen, 2002). They contend that race relates to characterizing others while ethnicity relates to identifying oneself as part of a group (Eriksen, 2002). The word ethnicity invokes the sense of being part of a collective community, the sense of an "us" (Spencer, 2006), whereas when the word race is used it invokes the sense of the other, it is as though it is referring to "them" (Van den Berghe, 1970).

The confusion and the lack of clear definition for either of these terms is also evident within some of the research. There are cases in which researchers use the two terms interchangeably and there are cases in which neither term is defined even though

both terms are an integral part of the research. A study conducted by Lin and Blila (1995) validates this criticism. The researchers were exploring ethnic awareness and attitudes in young children. Although they were interested in ethnic awareness the instrument they used was the Racial Awareness Response Form. In this particular study, there was no mention of how racial awareness differs from or is similar to ethnic awareness. This critique does not negate their research; it just validates the point that the line between ethnicity and race is not an easy one to distinguish. Furthermore, I would argue that some researchers completely disregard addressing these two terms in order to avoid explaining them.

The overlap between nationality and the other four dimensions is not as prominent as that between race and ethnicity but it is present nonetheless. The dimension that overlaps the most with nationality is ethnicity. This is due to the fact that nationality may be understood as being synonymous with ethnicity because a nation can be defined as people that are grouped together based on cultural self-determination rather than on relations with a state (Miller, 2000). It is not only the overlap with the other dimensions that creates confusion for the term nationality. Globalization has affected the common understanding of what constitutes as a national identity. As stated previously, the idea of national identity is very closely linked to the idea of the nation state. The phenomenon of globalization has decreased the role of national governments; undermined the notion of the distinct national culture by emphasizing cultural exchange, dramatically increased the flow of people with different characteristics across foreign borders through migration, thus changing the meaning of national identity (Castles & Davidson, 2000). For people that are part of a diaspora, such as the Somalis, globalization affects the type of

connections that these people make to their host country as well as the connection they create with their country of origin. Diasporas encompass populations that are dispersed from their homeland, the time frame away from the homeland is long (it need not be permanent) and there is the connection between the separated populations of the diaspora (Wong & Satzwich, 2006).

The identity dimension of religion is the one that has the least overlap with the other identity dimensions. Even though religious identity is mutually exclusive from racial identity it can overlap with ethnicity and nationality as is the case for Jewish people. Their national identity is linked with their ethnic identity which is connected to their religious identity. In the case of the Somalis, their religious identity as Muslims is strongly connected with the ethnic identity (Collet, 2007).

A noteworthy characteristic of the religious identity is its ability to transcend different dimensions of identity such as race, ethnicity, nationality, and gender. In a study on transnational identity formation among young Muslims between the ages of 15-30, Schmidt (2004) found that for Muslim youths it was possible to have a strong national identity at the same time as a religious identity. Schmidt's (2004) participants stated that they can be both a Pakistani Muslim and a Danish Muslim, and feel at home in both contexts, being Pakistani and Danish. This is a characteristic that is unique to religious identity. Through shared worship diverse communities are brought together, and things such as race and ethnicity are set aside for the more all encompassing identity of religion (Peek, 2000).

Despite the confusion and criticisms surrounding these terms I chose to use them for this research because they are the ones that are most relevant to the children who are

the subject of this study. They are the most easily understood identity dimensions for these children. Thus for the purpose of this research ethnic identity will refer to the shared common language and culture of Somalia; racial identity will refer to their classification as Blacks; their national identity as Canadian because of their place of birth and residence, and religious identity as Muslims. The next section will provide an explanation of the factors that shape and affect these dimensions of identity.

Factors that Influence and Shape Identity

A number of factors are instrumental in the identities an individual forms. The primary focus of this section will be on investigating the influence of parents/family, schools and society in general.

Parents/family

The first source of information for an individual about their identities is the family. Parents teach children about the cultural aspects of their identities. They culturally socialize children by promoting some customs and traditions. This includes exposing children to their history, language, ethnic food, and their cosmology about the world (Hughes, et al. 2006). The salient role of parents in socializing children about different aspects of their identity is well documented in the literature. Hughes, et, al. (2006) stated that about 40% of African American parents that participated in the National Survey of Black Americans indicated that they promoted heritage pride in their children. Also, Hughes (2003) and Phinney and Chavira (1995) found that 85% or more of Dominican, Mexican and Puerto Rican parents indicated cultural socialization for their children. These studies indicate that cultural socialization is a consistent aspect of child rearing. Second generation Caribbean Canadians also highlighted how growing up in

households where they were exposed to their music, food, values, beliefs and culture strengthened their Caribbean identity (Plaza, 2006). In promoting culture, parents teach children from an early age the important role of cultural costumes in identity formation.

The integral role of the parents in the formation of the child's ethnic identity is also discussed by Andujo (1988). In examining the self perception of Hispanic children adopted by non Hispanic parents with Hispanic children adopted by Hispanic parents, Andujo (1988) found that parental attitudes greatly impacted a child's ethnic identity. Hispanic children with non Hispanic parents tended to gravitate to the Anglo American culture and deemphasized their ethnicity. This is due, in part, because their parents emphasized the children's "human identity" rather than their ethnic identity (Andujo, 1988). On the other hand, Hispanic parents raised their adopted Hispanic children to value their ethnic identity. Thus, these children had a stronger sense of ethnic identity because of their parents.

School

Schools have an implicit and explicit role in the formation of certain identities in individuals. In a study by Plaza (2000), second generation Caribbean Canadians talked about how attending university transformed their identity. These participants described the period after entering university as a period of identity change. They credited this change to courses that allowed them to discuss ethnic and racial issues, being taught by Caribbean professors, and forming friendships with other Caribbean-origin individuals (Plaza, 2006).

Another explicit attempt of schools to shape identity is demonstrated by faith based schools. The purpose of religious schools is to contribute to the formation of

religious identity of students (Vermer & Van Der Ven, 2001). That is precisely why parents enroll their children in faith based schools. They want to place their children in an institution that will make a conscious effort to shape their religious identity. For example, many Muslim parents are worried about how public schools negatively influence the formation of religiosity within their children thus they enroll their children in schools that will maintain their Islamic lifestyle (Zine, 2007).

Some scholars have argued that public schools also serve as shapers of identity, in particular national and patriotic identities (Waters & Leblanc, 2005). The two opposing views regarding the role of the public school in the formation of the national identity is the orthodox liberal view and the multicultural view. The orthodox liberal view contends that schools should be a place that reinforces the formation of a single national identity for all its students regardless of their cultural affiliation. The second view is the multicultural view and it contends that there should be an active recognition made of the different cultural identities of students. From this perspective there is emphasis placed on recognizing and celebrating the identities of the different cultural groups (Collet, 2007).

Zine (2007) argues that while faith based schools are open about their attempts to shape the identity of students, public schools present themselves as a universal and neutral place. The reality is that public schools are not a neutral space. By presenting secular Eurocentric knowledge as the norm public schools are reinforcing formation of certain identities.

Societal contexts

Society in general is also instrumental in shaping the identities we value and ascribe to for ourselves and to other people. In North American society, as a result of

economic, historical and political reasons there are certain identities that are relegated to a position of privilege. The most privileged identity of all is the White identity (Spencer, 2006). The power that is associated with this identity is rooted in the fact that it is the identity that is considered the "norm". The implications of this fact are that the formations of those identities that are perceived as different from the "norm" are seen as negative or less prestigious. This is the case for the Black identity. Negative stereotypes have been rampant in North American society regarding Black people (Miles & Brown, 2006; Kelly, 2004). Those assumptions and stereotypes about Black people have even affected how Black people identify with this identity. In investigating the ethnic and racial identities of second-generation Black immigrants (Caribbean, Haitians, etc), Water (1994) found that the foreign born Black immigrants perceived themselves as hard working and ambitious in comparison to their Black American counterparts, whom they saw as lazy, disorganized and with low family values. The foreign born Blacks believed their status is higher than the American Blacks and they tended to emphasize their identity as immigrants more than their identity as Black people. This study indicates that the negative connotations that are associated with being Black, influence how Black people identify themselves.

From a theoretical perspective the social identity theory attempts to explain how the larger society affects identity formation. Social identity theory stipulates that social groups are responsible for an individual's social identity. Social identity is the "aspects of an individual's self-image that is derived from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging to" (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p.16). It is what defines the "us" in a group membership. Integral to this theory is the idea that those that are part of the in-

group are seen to possess positive attributes and therefore subject to in-group privileges. In contrast those that are part of the out-group members are seen in a less positive light (Nesdale, 2004). According to Tajfel and Turner (1986) the three components that contribute to in-group bias are as follows: the importance one places on identifying themselves with the in-group to the extent that this is part of their social identity, the importance placed on creating comparisons between the in-group and the out-group and the perceived importance of the comparison group.

It is evident that there are a number of agents that are responsible for influencing identity formation. The next section details why it is important to examine the topic of identity as it relates to children.

Children's Identity Development and its Significance

An important point to mention when studying children and identity is that children become aware of the different dimensions of identity from an early age. From the cognitive development perspective children are seen as agents that are actively processing information about themselves and other people (Vaughan, 1987). Children start to differentiate between people based on physical cues (such as skin colour), this act of identifying and classifying others is an indicator of the child's knowledge of his own identity (Vaughan, 1987). According to Nesdale, Durkin, Maass, & Griffiths (2004) this awareness is in place by the age of 4.

Previous research with minority children is a testament to how important it is to study children's perceptions about identities. The most notable study of all is Clark and Clark's (1950) famous doll study. When Clark and Clark (1950) gave Black children the option of choosing between black dolls or white dolls, the children demonstrated an

overwhelming preference for the white dolls (Clark & Clark, 1950; Hopsin & Powell-Hopsin, 1988). This study demonstrated that children comprehend and are very aware of the differences between the races. Moreover, the results of the Clark and Clark experiment indicated that Black children had a severe negative opinion of their own racial group.

More recent studies with children have demonstrated how children are aware of the hierarchies of identities. Van Ausdale and Feagin (1996) observed preschool children in their setting for a nine month period. Their results indicated that many of the children understood and were aware of the higher status society awards to White people. This higher status represented power and prestige.

The importance of mentioning the hierarchies lies in the fact that these hierarchies affect children's awareness of their own identity markers. Verkuyten (2004) argues that for children, their awareness of their own ethnicity varies depending on their status as a minority or a majority group member and the homogeneity or heterogeneity of those they are in contact with (Verkuyten, 2004). Additionally, the minority group status significantly affects the chance of a child correctly identifying with their own ethnicity. In a study conducted in New Zealand, Vaughan (1987) tested children between the ages of 4 and 12. Half the participants were Maori (Polynesian) and the other half were Pakeha (Caucasian). The children's self identification, discrimination, assembly and classification skills were tested by examining their responses to a set of questions about a few dolls and some pictures. Vaughan (1987) found that the responses of the Pakeha children indicated that they had an awareness of ethnic differences and an awareness of their own ethnic identity. In comparison, Maori children, although aware of ethnic differences, could not

self identify their ethnicity until they were 9 to 10 years old (the Pakeha children were able to self identify by age 4). These are particularly important finding because they indicate that minority children's self identification occurs at a later age. Vaughan's (1987) findings are supported by Nesdale (1999) who states that children prefer to be part of the higher status group. Similar to Vaughan (1987), she also suggests that minority status children will misidentify themselves with the dominant group. Concurrently, children belonging to the dominant group will rarely misidentify their ethnicity.

These studies highlight the significance of examining minority children's identity perceptions. Previous research has attested to the fact that for minority children the development of a healthy self perception has been impeded. However, when the negative attitudes of society shifted, there was a positive change in minority children's self perceptions. For example, in the period following the Clark and Clark (1950) experiment there were certain political changes that occurred in the United States. There was the rise of the Black pride movement. This was an oppositional movement to the negative conceptualization of the Black race. This was a period in which new identities and new racial ideologies were being constructed (Omi & Winant, 2006). Following this period, subsequent experiments with Black children revealed that they had a less disparaging self perception of themselves (Porter & Washington, 1979).

The following section will detail the methodology used for this study. It will include a rationale for the approach used, information about the sample and site, how access and permissions were granted, data gathering strategy, information about myself, study limitations and strengths, and finally, the data analysis strategy.

METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Qualitative Approach

The characteristics of the qualitative approach made it an appropriate choice for this research. The nature of qualitative research is such that there is value placed on the opinions of each participant (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). Connolly (2001) states that rather than attempting to fit the responses of the respondents into preexisting categories created by the researcher, qualitative methods allow for the participants to supply their own responses. This is particularly important for a topic such as ethnicity. The complexity of this topic is evident in the literature, thus it was important that my research project allowed individuals to express their own views of their identities.

Qualitative approaches tend to be used in areas of research that have been neglected in traditional investigations that typically have relied on the use of quantitative research techniques (Morse & Richards, 2002). The identity of Somali origin children is not a topic that has been explored by past researchers. More importantly, the intricacy of the topic required an in-depth exploration that I would not have been able to do had I employed a different approach. Furthermore, this type of research allows for a smaller number of participants because the purpose is not to generalize the findings but rather to generate new concepts and link them to what is already known (Creswell, 2005).

In particular, the qualitative approach is appropriate for this research because of my participants. Some researchers have considered children to be unreliable informants. Their lack of linguistic capabilities has often been confused with unintelligence (Hogan, 2005). However, from the qualitative perspective, many researchers have shown the benefits of conducting research with children as participants (Clark, 2004; Danby &

Farrell, 2004; Mishna, Antle & Regehr, 2004). Connolly (2001) argues that the qualitative approach allows the researcher to draw out subtle and context-specific elements of children's attitudes.

For the data analysis I utilized the grounded theory strategy. Grounded theory is defined as "theory derived from systematically gathered data, arising through the research process" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p 12). This strategy is based on the idea that theory should emerge from the data (Dey, 2004). Creswell (2005) states that this strategy is used when there has been no previous theory generated from the specific topic under study. This factor made this strategy a proper fit for this research as there has been nothing written about the topic in the published literature. For a breakdown of how the grounded theory approach was utilized in my study please refer to the Data Analysis section.

Those who use grounded theories recognize that reality is socially constructed by the participants and researchers should be "learning from the participants how to understand a process" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p.55). My choice in selecting this strategy is due to the fact that I am influenced by the social constructivist paradigm. I am concerned with how people construct their understandings (Barclay-Mclaughlin & Hatch, 2005). In terms of this research, I was interested in exploring how children who are seen in a certain way view themselves and other people. Therefore, although I recognize that I have my own world views and truths, I also recognize that others have their own truths and that neither one is the ultimate truth. What my research participants revealed to me was of importance because I recognized that it was their truth. But I also have to admit the fact that any piece of data that is seen as relevant has that relevance because I, the researcher, saw it as pertinent. This idea is supported by Corbin and Holt (2005) who

argue that there are many realities that emerge from the data and the researcher's own interpretations affect what theory that emerges.

Sample

The participants were a sample of 10 children of Somali origin parents, who were born in Canada and have resided all or the majority of their lives in Canada. The residence restriction was required because if a child has spent a long period of time in other places it could have affected their opinions of what being Somali while living in Canada is. Their ages ranged between five to ten years old. The age restriction was required for two reasons. The first reason is related to my educational program's guidelines. The primary population of focus for this program is children in the early childhood period. The second reason for choosing children in that age range is due to the fact that there is research that supports the idea that children in that age bracket are aware of the multiple dimensions of identity (Nesdale, 1999; Vaughan, 1987). Thus I knew that these children would be able to provide insight into this subject matter. The table below provides a categorization of the children in terms of gender and age. Please note that each participant's name was changed to a pseudonym to protect their identity.

Name	Gender	Age
Hamza	Male	9
Hussein	Male	7
Mohamud	Male	9
Amal	Female	9
Ali	Male	5
Ilwad	Female	6
Lula	Female	7
Nur	Male	9
Hanad	Male	9
Yahya	Male	10

Access and Permissions

It should be noted that I do have a personal relationship with three of the children. Two of these children are related to me and one of them is the child of a friend. For two other children I am well acquainted with their mother but not with the children themselves. For the remaining five children I am neither acquainted with their parents nor with them, but I am well acquainted with their teacher.

Prior to the recruitment process I submitted my research proposal to the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. The Research Ethics Board gave its approval after I provided an in-depth explanation of the risks and benefits associated with my research study.

There were several methods used for recruitment. For the five children that I had the personal relationship with, I made contact with their parents. I spoke with the parents and explained to them the research project. Once they gave their consent, both verbal and written (see Appendix A) I spoke to their child and let him or her know about my research and explained to him or her the voluntary nature of the project. I explained to the children that any information they offer is considered of value and if any question causes them discomfort they can decline to answer that specific question by saying "pass". Furthermore, I told them that they had the final choice of whether or not they spoke to me and there would be no consequences if they choose to stop our interview at any given time.

For the remaining five children that I did not know, a teacher at their school, who is a friend of mine, contacted parents whom she thought would allow their children to participate in the research project. After I was informed of the parents' consent I came to

the school and spoke to the children and the parents themselves. Just as with the other parents, I gave a description of my research project. After they consented, I went through the same meticulous process of stressing the voluntary nature of the project to the participants.

After thoroughly explaining the project to all the participants I gave each of them their assent form (see Appendix B). For two of the children I read and explained the assent form to them. The remaining eight participants read the assent form themselves, but I also explained to them the content of the form. Each child signed the assent form.

My motivation in stressing the voluntary nature of the interview was due to the fact that I wanted the children to be free to say "pass" or "stop" if they did not want to go through with the interview. During the interview seven children opted to pass on at least one question. Two of those children opted to pass on several questions. In each case I immediately moved on to the next question. There were some instances in which I felt the child was passing on a question while at the cusp of an insightful point, in those cases I reworded the questions and posed them at a later time. If the child passed on the reworded question the subsequent time, I no longer asked that question in any form. I understood this second pass as the child's resistance to my question (Hill, 2004). In all the interviews I encouraged the presence of a parent or a teacher. I wanted to make sure that both the parents and the teachers understood that this was a transparent process whereby the children were not being asked to answer any inappropriate or stressful questions. Some parents declined this invitation and some accepted the offer.

Site

In regards to location there were three places that were utilized. For four of the

participants the site of the interview was their primary residence. Each of these four participants chose where they wanted to be interviewed. Three chose to be interviewed in their bedrooms and one wanted to be interviewed in the living room. For one participant the interview took place at his older sister's home. The interview took place in a room of his choosing, which was the study. For the remaining five participants the interview took place at their school. The school was a mid size elementary Islamic school in Etobicoke, Toronto. This was a convenient site where I had access to children in the age group that I required. Each student was interviewed individually in an empty class room. The class room was chosen by the teachers in the school. For three of the interviews that took place at the school a teacher or a parent was present during the interview and for two interviews a teacher was outside the door. These were the later interviews and the teachers were already familiar with my questions thus they did not need to monitor what I was asking the children.

Data Gathering Strategies

I used a semi-structured interview method in a one-on-one interview format. Prior to asking any questions I handed each participant four cue-cards. Each card had a different identity dimension written on it (e.g., Muslim, Canadian, Somali, and Black). Then I proceeded to ask the participants to read the cards carefully. To make sure that they understood what was written on the cards I asked them all to read each card out loud. For only one participant I had to read the contents of the cards. After this point I asked them to put the cards in hierarchical order, from the one that described them the best to the one that described them the least. The purpose of using the cue-cards was to make the interview process an interactive one. I did not want the participants to feel as

though they were in a formal interview. The cue-cards allowed the participants a chance to get comfortable and at ease with the upcoming task of being interviewed.

I used probes and open ended questions to collect my data. The semi-structured interview allowed the participants to give their own information. They were able to provide their own opinions with little constraint. At the same time, this method allowed me to make sure that the subject of conversation was geared towards my topic of interest. Furthermore, this method facilitated the interview process for me. It allowed me to remember the important questions I wanted to focus on. The one-on-one interview method, although time consuming, is a method that allowed me to give my full attention to each participant that I was talking with. I also used open ended questions and probes to get responses from the children. For each participant I began with the open ended questions and I used the probes only when the participants did not provide in-depth responses to my open ended questions. Please refer to Appendix C to get examples of the questions and probes that were used.

The conversation between the participants and I was tape recorded. There were two purposes to tape recording the interviews. The first purpose was, this method facilitated the interview process as I was not distracted with writing all the information that was transpiring between the participants and myself. Instead, I was fully engaged in the interview process. Also, after the interview was finished, I was able to go through the whole interview without worrying about any missed dialogue. Moreover, this gave each child the opportunity to listen to his or her interview after the interview finished. This enhances the trustworthiness of my research. I was able to do member checking with the tape recorder (Creswell, 2005). Each participant had the option of hearing the whole

interview and was asked to add any additional information they deemed necessary. Although the majority of the participants declined to add any extra information, one did choose to add further information. Having a tape of the interviews would also allow others to check the validity of my data. The tape would be a way for others to check if what I am reporting is what was actually said by the participants.

The information from the tapes was transcribed verbatim. The tapes were dated and labeled the same name as the transcription document. Then the tapes were placed in a secure place that I only have access to. This was to ensure that participants' confidentiality was secured and to also ensure that I do not misplace these important artifacts.

Data Analysis Approach

In analyzing the data I read through the transcriptions thoroughly and in-depth several times. This was the preliminary exploratory analysis (Creswell, 2005). Following this I started to divide the data into codes. The coding process was divided into three phases: open, axial and selective (Dey, 2004; Neuman, 2003). In the open phase I read through the data slowly looking for critical themes. After locating the themes I assigned labels to each theme in order to condense the data into categories (Neuman, 2003). In the axial phase I took the categories that were created in the open phase and made comparisons that described the relationship between the categories (Dey, 2004). During this phase I focused on making linkages between themes, combining themes and dropping some themes. From the data I also found support for my themes (Neuman, 2003). Lastly, in the selective phase I scanned the data and previous codes. The primary purpose of this phase is that "researchers look selectively for cases that illustrate themes

and make comparisons and contrasts after most or all data collection is complete” (Neuman, 2003, p. 444). During this ongoing process I copied and pasted each theme into its own Word document file.

To ensure the accuracy of my interpretations, I utilized two measures to enhance the credibility of my research. The first method was member checking. I reviewed the tapes with the participants as soon as the interview was over. This gave them a chance to change, add, clarify or delete any information they wanted to (Creswell, 2005). It should be noted that all but one participant was given the option of hearing the tape. The only reason why that one participant was not given a chance to hear himself is due to the fact that a school announcement was made regarding prayer time. I did not want to keep the student from his religious duties so I let him go as soon as the interview was over. Another method of increasing the trustworthiness of my findings was to fully transcribe the data as an accurate reflection of what was said by the participants.

Researcher Characteristics

This research project has personal significance for me. I am a young Muslim Somali woman. I left Somalia as a young child due to the civil war. Many of my personal ideas and assumptions about what it means to be a Somali living in Canada drew me to this topic. On the one hand these personal experiences could help me better understand the research participants’ responses, but on the other hand they could bias how I interpret the responses of the participants. Even with my bias I am aware of the fact that these children’s point of reference differs from mine.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Strengths

Having the cue-cards was a great benefit. The children immediately showed interest in them and they were an excellent ice breaker. Having the interview guides was also useful to me; it allowed me to stay on task and to remember the relevant questions I wanted to cover. But because I was not bound to the questions I also had the option of asking questions that were not written in my interview guide.

Conducting the interviews in the children's homes was advantageous to both the participants and myself. Because I was already acquainted with the parents of these children I did not feel as though I was intruding on the family. Moreover, this meant that I was not under any time constraints. For the participants, being interviewed in their homes provided them with an added sense of comfort. They had their parents or guardians close by thus if they felt uncomfortable with my questions they had someone to go to.

In terms of the volume of information that was provided by the participants there was a difference between the information provided by those participants that were acquainted with me and those that were not. Those participants that were acquainted with me were the same ones that also had their interviews in their homes (or a family member's home, in the case of one participant). Overall, these participants provided more in-depth answers. They took their time with their responses and in looking at their transcriptions it is evident that they said more. I believe that my personal relationship with five of the participants facilitated the interview process. Because they knew me they

felt at ease to express themselves. There are some exceptions though; two of the five participants gave the same length answers as those that were interviewed in the school.

My identity as a Muslim and a Somali benefitted me in certain ways (limitations associated with my identities will be discussed later). Because the children and I share the same identities, we were able to have an easy conversation regarding potentially controversial topics such as race and ethnicity. It is possible that the children did not have to filter their responses in the same way they would have with someone who was from a different ethnic or religious background. In this case, our similar identities were very beneficial.

Limitations

There were a few ways in which my identity as a Somali and a Muslim probably influenced the way the children responded. One way was how the children did not need to explain certain concepts to me because they knew that I am a Somali and a Muslim person. Thus, when I would ask them how they knew they were Muslim, they would give me a peculiar look and respond "because I am a Muslim" without offering any further explanations. My being Somali probably encouraged them to not give further explanations of their answers because they assumed that I would know what they were referring to.

Moreover, my identity as a Muslim and a Somali could have encouraged the children to give answers that were socially desirable. They may have given the answers they thought I wanted to hear. These may be answers that emphasized their Somali or Muslim identity more than their other identities. In certain regards my personal identities were a great benefit but in some cases they were a limitation.

There was another limitation related to my position as an older person. The Somali culture is one that emphasizes respect and obedience to one's elders. I was concerned that the children may view me as an elder and therefore, assume that my role as a researcher was synonymous with my role as their elder. This was not an impediment in working with the children that I was acquainted with. Their verbal and non verbal behaviour did not indicate that they were responding to a question that they did not want to. Moreover, they asserted their power by instructing me to "pass" on a question that they did not want to answer. However, I am not certain if this was the case with those children I interviewed in the school (those with whom I was not acquainted). Their responses were shorter and they gave more one word responses than the other participants and they also did not ask me to "pass" as often as the other participants. In giving the children the option to say "pass" they had the opportunity to pass on all and any questions they wanted to. Although this option gave the children control over what questions they wanted to answer it also gave them an opportunity to pass on questions while they might have been at the cusp of an insightful response.

There were a specific set of challenges in the school setting. The day I was at the school conducting the interviews was the same day as the school picnic. This could be an explanation for why these children gave shorter responses. Their incommunicativeness could have been due to their eagerness to partake in the fun activities as opposed to being interviewed. Although I tried letting them know that if they wanted to they could go out and play they all opted to stay and finish the interview but probably wanted to get it over with quickly.

Another limitation related to the school has to do with the site itself. The Islamic school could have prompted the children to respond in a certain way. Representations of the Muslim faith, teachers that are dressed in Islamic clothing, announcements of Muslim prayer times over the intercom could have prompted the children to emphasize their Muslim identity more than any of their other identities.

Another challenge I faced in the school was related to the presence of parents and teachers. I believe that their presence could have influenced the children's responses. For the most part, when the parent was present they were neither intrusive nor obstructive but there was one particular case in which the child was coached by the parent to answer questions in a certain way. I attempted to explain to the mother the value of the child's responses even if she perceives them as an incorrect response. However, she did not heed my suggestion and continued to provide answers to the child. At which point I let her, and continued with the rest of the interview.

My small sample size is another limitation of this study. I only interviewed ten participants. Thus their responses, although valuable, cannot be used to make a general statement regarding the multiple identities of all second generation Somali origin children.

Although I did encounter certain limitation in my approach, overall, I believe that these limitations did not negatively impact my findings. The next section will provide an in depth reporting of the findings from the data.

FINDINGS

The findings are organized into two distinct sections. The first section will detail the findings related to the hierarchy of identities. The second section will detail the rationale the participants gave for claiming or denying the four identities.

Hierarchy of Identities

When asked which label written on the cue-cards described them best, Black, Canadian, Muslim or Somali, the majority of the participants, seven of them, indicated that Muslim was the one that described them the best. The second most salient identity was the Somali identity. Seven respondents stated that this identity described them second best. These two identities were the dominant identities. The Muslim-Somali combination was both first and second choice for seven of the ten participants. For two other participants one of these identities was either their first choice or their second choice. There was only one participant that did not have either of these two dimensions as her first or second choice. The third identity that was selected by the participants was the Black identity. Five of the participants stated that this was the third identity that described them. The identity that was chosen last by the majority of the participants was the Canadian identity. Four participants stated this was the identity that described them last. The Black-Canadian identity dimensions were the weaker identities. Six of the participants chose these identities as the ones that described them the least. For two participants at least one of these dimensions was the last one chosen. There was only one participant that had these two dimensions as her first and second choice. Below is a chart that highlights every participant's choices.

	Name	Age	1 st identity	2 nd identity	3 rd identity	4 th identity
1	Hamza	9	Muslim	Somali	Canadian	Black
2	Hussein	7	Muslim	Somali	Canadian	Black
3	Mohamud	9	Canadian	Somali	Muslim	Black
4	Amal	9	Black	Canadian	Muslim	Somali
5	Ali	5	Somali	Muslim	Black	Canadian
6	Ilwad	6	Muslim	Somali	Black	-
7	Lula	7	Muslim	Somali	Black	Canadian
8	Nur	9	Muslim	Somali	Black	*Canadian
9	Hanad	9	Muslim	Canadian	Somali	Black
10	Yahya	10	Muslim	Somali	Black	Canadian

- Indicates that the child stated that Canadian was not one of her identities.

* Indicates that the child switched from Muslim, Somali, Canadian and Black to his current list.

Rationale Given for Identity Claims and Denials

After each participant put the identity dimensions in a hierarchical order I asked them to tell me why they chose that particular identity. When I presented the list of the four categories to the participants I was under the assumption that each participant would identify with each of the categories. I was not certain to what extent they would identify with the categories but I was certain that they would recognize the applicability of each category to themselves. But as I discovered with some of the participants this was not the case. In this section I will discuss the rationale the participants gave in ascribing to certain identities and rejecting others.

Muslim identity

When asked why that particular identity described them the most, the participants made references to Islamic dress code, culture, places of worship and specific references to Islam. They stated that they chose Muslim as the first identity because of a sense of obligation. For example, Yahya (10) stated "Because Allah said you have to be a Muslim and if you don't become a Muslim you are going to go to hell fire". Supporting what

Yahya stated, Nur (9) said "because I am a Muslim and I want to be a real Muslim and obey Allah" and lastly, Hamza stated "Because I am Muslim and that's kind of like my culture I have to put that first". One other participant chose Muslim because of specific actions that she performs, Ilwad (6) stated, "because I wear Hijab (Islamic head scarf)". This response indicates that wearing the Islamic dressing is a strong marker of identity.

It is important to note that there was a strong connection between the children's Muslim identity and their Somali identity. Some of the responses from the participants revealed that they did not perceive these two terms as mutually exclusive.

MJ: Is there a difference between being Somali and being Muslim?

Amal (9): No

MJ: They're the same, is that they are connected or ...

Amal (9): They are connected

Hamza (9): Umm, I don't really know it's kind of hard between these two (referring to Muslim and Somali)

MJ: You are referring to the Muslim and the Somali?

Hamza (9): Yeah

MJ: Why is it hard between these two?

Hamza (9): Because this is ... my ...this is like my culture (referring to Muslim) and this is like my ... umm...pass.

MJ: So these two are the hardest ones, between the Muslim and the Somali. Is it because they are alike?

Hamza (9): Yeah

MJ: So it's difficult to say which one is first and which one is second?

Hamza(9) : Yeah

It was not only that Somali and Muslim were connected but rather that these two terms were used interchangeably. In many incidents these two terms were used as one. Hanad's (9) response to my question relating to language was an answer related to religion and Ilwad's (6) response to my question about parents was also an answer related to religion.

MJ: What about someone who, let's say for example they say that they are Somali but they don't speak Somali, would they still be considered Somali?

Hanad (9) : No

MJ: Why?

Hanad (9): Because if they don't know Somali they are not Somalian, what if they are Kufar (non believer)

MJ: So is it, are all Somali people Muslim then?

Hanad (9): Yes

MJ: Ok, so what about somebody who has one parent that is Somali and one parent that is not Somali?

Ilwad (6): That can't be

MJ: That can't be?

Ilwad (6): There is only one Somali, how can you have a Galo (non believer) parent, it's divided

Somali identity

The participants cited two reasons as to why they identified with the Somali identity. The most frequent reason was that their parents are from Somalia. The second reason given was related to language.

Yahya (10): Because I am from Somalia

MJ: You're from Somalia, where you born in Somalia?

Yahya (10): No my mom was

MJ: Both your mom and your dad?

Yahya (10): Yeah

MJ: So that's how you know you're Somali then, because your parents were both born in Somalia.

Yahya (10): Yeah

Nur (9): Because I speak Somali and my mom is from Somali

MJ: Why is Canadian after Somali even though you were born in Canada?

Nur (9): Because my mom and dad are from Somali and they take care of me mostly

MJ: And how do you know you are from Somalia?

Lula (7): Because my mom is from there

When asked "how do you know you're Somali" Ilwad (6) stated "because I speak in a different language". It should be noted that she was the only person who gave this response.

There were certain criterions that the participants cited as to what makes an individual Somali (or not Somali) and the difference between Somali people and non Somali people. One of the most salient reasons given for what makes someone Somali is familial birth place. As stated previously, this was the reason given by the majority of participants when they were asked how they knew that they were Somali.

MJ: So as long as your parents are from Somali that's how you become Somali?

Amal (9): Yeah

MJ: Ok

Amal (9): Or if one of your relatives

MJ: Relatives, like your grandmother?

Amal (9): Yeah, or aunt

MJ: As long as somebody comes from Somalia, you have someone in that family you're Somali

Amal (9): Yeah

MJ: But if you have no body?

Amal (9): Then you're not Somali

Familial birth place was given as the primary answer for 6 participants. Most of the participants believed that having parents or family from Somalia is sufficient enough to ensure that someone is Somali irrespective of the fact that they were not born in Somalia and that they may lack the tangible facets of a culture (e.g., language). When asked more specifically, if both parents need to be Somali in order for an individual to be Somali the responses were divided. Some participants were adamant that both parents need to be Somali in order to be Somali and some believed that one parent that was Somali was sufficient enough to make an individual Somali. The responses below illustrate these opposing views.

MJ: Ok, so you have to have both parents be Somali in order for you to be Somali?

Yahya (10): One parent can be Somali and you can still be from Somali

MJ: You could still be Somali, so you could have just one parent that is Somali, one parent that is not Somali and you could be Somali yourself. Ok.

MJ: What about someone who let's say for example their father is Somali but their mother is not Somali, would they still be Somali?

Hanad(9): No

MJ: No, Ok, why?

Hanad (9) : Pass

Language was another reason cited for what makes someone Somali, but the opinions regarding language were not as clear as those regarding familial birth place. When it came to language four participants were of the thought that speaking Somali makes someone Somali, while three believed that it was not essential to speak Somali in order to be a Somali.

Hamza (9): They speak like umm, they speak a different language than Canadians that's for sure.

MJ: Ok.

Hamza (9): Since they have their own language, since because they are in a completely different country, so they have to speak their own language to communicate with each other.

MJ: So, language makes some body Somali?

Hamza (9): Yeah.

MJ: Let's say someone was born here and they said they were a Somali person but they don't speak Somali at all are they still a Somali person?

Nur (9): No

MJ: They're not?

Nur (9): Yeah, actually they are they are

MJ: Why?

Nur (9): They don't know their Somali they might not know if they don't know their language but they just started to

MJ: So you can still be Somali if you don't speak the language

Nur (9): Indicates "yes"

MJ: Let's say if someone didn't speak any Somali at all but they said that they were Somali

Mohamud (9): They could still be Somali

MJ: Could they still be Somali?

Mohamud (9): Yeah

MJ: Even if they don't speak the language?

Mohamud (9): Even if they don't speak the language

Lastly, two participants cited race and religion (in addition to language) as a requirement for being Somali. When asked how she knows her teacher is Somali Lula (7) responded with "she speaks Somali ... she looks Black ... she is a Muslim". Ilwad (6) also responded in a similar fashion to the same question. When she was asked how she knows her mother is Somali she responded "because she is wearing the hijab (Islamic head scarf) ... because she is Black"

In regards to the difference between a Somali person and a non-Somali person there was a myriad of responses given. It should be noted that there were only 8 participants that gave a response to this question. Two participants cited that language was the primary difference between Somali people and non Somali people.

MJ: What is the difference between someone who is Somali and someone who is not Somali?

Ilwad (6): Difference is they speak English and we speak Somali

One participant believed that race was the difference between Somali people and other people. This participant stated Somali people were Black while other people are not Black. One participant referred to different cultural practices as the primary difference between Somalis and non Somalis. One other participant referred to location as the primary difference he stated that "Somali people live in Somalia and unSomali people don't live in Somali" (Hanad, 9). Another participant cited race, parental birth place and language as the difference between Somali people and non-Somali people. A further participant cited religion and language as a differentiating factor between Somalis and non Somalis.

MJ: What about, some people say that Somali people are Canadian, what do you think about that?

Hussein (7): That's not true

MJ: How is that not true?

Hussein (7): Because we go to the mosque and we don't go to church like other Canadians do.

MJ: So ...

Hussein (7): We pray there and we say in our language and they say in their language. And we have different language, one is Somali language and the one is English.

MJ: Who speaks English?

Hussein (7): The Canadians

MJ: And Somalis speak Somali?

Hussein (7): Yeah

Lastly, one participant gave race, language and religion as the difference between Somali people and non-Somali people.

MJ: Ok. Is there something different between a Somali person and a person who is not Somali, what is the difference between the two?

Lula (7): The person who is not Somali is White and the person that is Somali is Black and they language they speak and if they are Muslim or they are not

As discussed previously, it was clear from the participants' responses that they recognized an overlap between their Muslim identity and their Somali identity. But, when asked about the possibility of being Somali and Canadian simultaneously the participants gave two responses. One response was that it is possible to be both Somali and Canadian and the second response was an ambiguous response of that it is both possible and not possible to be Somali and Canadian.

Two participants answered that it is possible to be both Canadian and Somali. One participant argued that this is a possibility because the fact that she is born in Canada makes her a Canadian and the fact that her parents were born in Somalia makes her a Somali.

MJ: Ok, so if you had to tell someone if you are Canadian or Somali, what would you tell them?

Amal (9): Both

MJ: Both, ok, so you would tell them you're equally both

Amal (9): Because I was born in Canada and I am Somalian because both my parents are from Somalia

The second participant that believed that it was possible to be both Somali and Canadian made a reference to immigration as to how this coupling could be possible.

MJ: Can a Somali person be a Canadian person?

Hanad (9): Kind of

MJ: Kind of, how?

Hanad (9): Some, what if some are born in Somalia and they went to Canada

MJ: So that's how they can be both, if they were born in Somali first and then came to Canada they can be both?

Hanad (9): Yeah

The second response to the question of whether someone can be both Canadian and Somali was complex and unclear. The participants stated that it is possible that a person can be both Somali and Canadian, and yet it is not possible that they can be both Somali and Canadian.

MJ: Are you Canadian?

Hussein (7): Half

MJ: How are you half Canadian

Hussein (7): Because I am all Muslim and because of a Muslim and a Somali and I am not a Canadian (inaudible)

MJ: You are Canadian or you are not a Canadian

Hussein (7): I am not a Canadian I am a Somali

MJ: Ok, you're not even a little bit of a Canadian

Hussein (7): I am half

Similar to Hussein's response, other participants answered yes it was possible to be both Canadian and Somali yet, in a follow-up question they answered that it was not possible to be Somali and Canadian.

This response from Mohamud (9) indicates that there are certain stipulations to being Canadian. One has to be born here to be Canadian but those who emigrated from Somalia cannot be Canadians.

MJ: Can Somali people be Canadians?

Mohamud (9): Yeah like me

MJ: Ok, so what happens if someone was not born in Canada and they came from Somalia can they be Canadian?

Mohamud (9): No

MJ: So you have to be born here to be Canadian?

Mohamud (9): Yeah

Black identity

When it came to explaining their racial identity the participants gave a multitude of responses. Some of the participants were clear on the fact that they are Black, while others were clear on the fact that they are not Black. For those that chose this identity marker there was only one rationale given for this choice. Four of the respondents made references to physical attributes as to the reason why the Black identity described them.

Ali (5): Ummm, because I see that I am Black

Nur (9): I am Black because I was born like that way, and Allah made me like that

Lula (7): Because I am the colour Black

Ilwad (6): Because I look at my hands

Although three participants initially chose Black as the fourth identity that described them when I questioned them about why that identity described them last they stated that they were not Black at all.

MJ: What about the Black, why is that the last one?

Hamza (9): I am not really Black.

MJ: ... Why is Black the number four one?

Mohamud (9): Black, I am not Black

MJ: Ok, ok, so are you Black?

Hussein (7): No I am Brownish

In examining how the participants understood the racial identities of Somalis there were two different sets of responses. Some of the participants stated that Somali

people are Black people. They used reasoning related to physical appearance to come to this conclusion.

MJ: Some people say that Somali people are Black people, is that true?

Lula (7): A little bit

MJ: Can you tell me more

Lula (7): (Silence)

MJ: How do you know that they are Black people?

Lula (7): Because of their colour

Those who thought that Somali people are Black people were in the minorities, the majority of participants indicated that Somali people come in different races. The belief was that Somali people come in a spectrum of colours from White, to light Brown, to Black.

MJ: Some people say that Somali people are Black people?

Yahya (10)-Some people are Black and some people are Brown

MJ: So some Somali people could be Brown and some could be Black, so not all Somali people are Black?

Yahya (10): Indicates "yes"

MJ: ... Is there anything else you want to add about being Somali?

Ali (5): We're different colours.

MJ: You and other Somali are different colours, how?

Ali (5): Some are White, and Brown and Black

MJ: Some are Black and some are White?

Ali (5): Yeah

MJ: Some people say that Somali people are Black people is that true?

Hussein (7): No we're brownish. Our skin is Brown

MJ: Your right, your skin is Brown. What about those who say that Somali...

Hussein (7): Some Somalis come in different colours

MJ: Oh, what do you mean, what colours do they come in?

Hussein (7): Some come in darkish Brown and lightish Brown.

MJ: Ok, so different colours.

MJ: But what about if you had to tell someone about your skin colour what would you tell them?

Mohamud (9): Light Brown not Black

More responses from Mohamud (9) indicated that Black was seen as a different category of classification. In other words the Somali identity and the Black identity were seen as mutually exclusive. Black was seen a different culture belonging to other people. It was something that was designated to other dark skinned people such as people from Jamaica not to Somalis.

MJ: Is there a difference between being Black and being Somali?

Mohamud (9): Somali people eat culture food, and Black people eat their culture food,

MJ: Can you give me an example of who you think is Black?

Mohamud (9): In my class, anybody, I know someone in my class

MJ: Who?

Mohamud (9): D

MJ: And why is D Black. You said D is Black, how do you know D is Black?

Mohamud (9): Cause his face is dark.

MJ: Because he is darker, ok, where is D from?

Mohamud (9): What?

MJ: How do you know D is Black?

Mohamud (9): He eats different food than other Somali people.

MJ: Is he Somali?

Mohamud (9): No

MJ: What is he?

Mohamud (9): Jamaican

It was clear that the questions related to how Black and Somali are connected caused great confusion to the participants. Looking at Hamza's (9) response is a testament to this fact.

MJ : So is there a difference between being Somali and being Black?

Hamza (9): Being Black is like it's not very, you can't, it's not very suspi, suspi, suspic, ahh, I pass.

MJ: You can use another word if you like to describe what you're saying.

Hamza (9): I can't really say it in another word, because I don't really think it will make any sense.

MJ: Ok, no no, I am curious to know what the difference is even if you use something different that would be great too.

Hamza (9): It's not really .. ahhh... it (being Black) doesn't really say anything, it's only a colour. Black is the colour of people's skin, it doesn't say anything, it's just Black.

MJ: So, Black is just a colour but Somali is something else.

Hamza (9): Yeah, it's (Somali) a whole different culture, it's a different everything.

MJ: So being Somali includes the culture the food, the language and Black is just a colour.

Hamza (9): Yeah.

Canadian identity

The Canadian identity was chosen last by the majority of the participants. In one case, a participant indicated that she did not consider Canadian as an identity that described her. For those participants that did ascribe to this identity when asked why this identity described them they gave only two reasons. These reasons were Canada is their place of birth and Canada is their place of residence.

Yahya (10): Because I live in Canadian

Ali (5): Because I live in Canada

Nur (9): Because I was born in Canada and I was Canadian

Lula (7): Because I was born in Canada

The responses of these participants provide an understanding of how children organize and understand their identity dimensions. The data can be best understood in light of other literature on the topic.

DISCUSSION

From the onset it was clear that the participants had identities that they regarded as dominant (Muslim and Somali) and there were identities that the children considered weaker (Canadian and Black).

Diasporic identities are emergent and situational; hence, the importance of religion for diasporic communities that have never lived in highly secular environments cannot be dismissed nor diminished (Collet, 2007). The higher propensity for the children to identify themselves as Muslims is closely linked with the diasporic identity of the Somalis. The combination of being part of a diaspora and living in a secular society like Canada, have increased their need to want to adhere more to their religion (Collet, 2007). It is as a result of this direct importance of religion and the fear of the secular influences of public schools that prompts Somali parents to place their children in Islamic schools. Religious schools shape and affect the religious identity of children (Vermeer & Van Der Ven, 2001). Thus it is no surprise that the five children who attended a religious school claimed Muslim as the primary identity that describes them the best. The fact that artefacts of faith are prominent in the school, the teachers are all dressed in Islamic dressing, the call to prayer is announced over the intercom all reinforce the formation of religious identity prior to any other identity.

The second explanation for why the participants chose the Muslim identity most frequently is likely due to today's political climate. In a post September 11th political environment the Muslim population has been dealing with backlash and discrimination. In response to this intolerance there have been attempts made by the Muslim community to cast Islam in a positive light. This attempt by Muslims in Canada is analogous to the

Black pride movement of the late 1960s in the United States. Although the circumstances which prompted the Black pride movement are distinguishable from the backlash against the Muslim community in North America, there are nevertheless some similarities. Both these groups have faced discrimination on a large scale. What is noteworthy about the Black pride movement of the 1960s is that during this period, studies indicated that Black children in American society had a higher regard for their racial identity in comparison to the period proceeding this time (Washington & Porter, 1979). Children were beginning to have more positive self images because they were being told by their community that "Black is Beautiful" regardless of the negative messages mainstream society was sending them. I believe the same message is reiterated to Muslim children by their parents and the Muslim community in general. Parents are encouraging their children to be proud of their identity as Muslims regardless of the fact that negative images of Muslims are prominent in the wider culture. Thus, this positive message at this crucial time of the Muslim community's history has increased the participants' likelihood of identifying as Muslims.

There is no denying that both Black and Muslim identities are currently negatively perceived, so the question becomes why did the children claim one identity but not the other? This can be explained by Jones and McEwen (2007) who found that those identities that had more of a social significance were more salient (e.g., race for a Black woman) than those that were perceived as less significant (e.g., race for a White woman). Therefore, the children claiming their Muslim identity more so than their Black identity could be due to the fact that their daily lives are currently shaped more by their religion than their race. The challenges that are facing Muslims are more prominent than those facing Black people. For these children their parents as well as their school (for five

of the participants) seem to be reinforcing their Muslim identity probably as a reaction to wide spread islamphobia in North America. As such they are more aware of their Muslim identity than their Black identity.

The other dominant identity that the children identified with is the Somali identity. When the participants were asked which identity they most identified with (Canadian or Somali), the emerging trend was that most placed Somali ahead of Canadian. The participants' decisions in choosing Somali as their second identity and Canadian as their last identity are most likely both due to Somali parents' cultural socialization. This point is supported by Hugh, et. al (2006) who argue that parents make an effort from an early age to socialize children into adopting their own cultural view points. To expand this point, I would contend that parental socialization in a community that lives in a diaspora is different than a community that is not a diaspora. Somali parents try to transmit to their children the dream of one day "going back home." To them it is important that children understand the difference between where they are born, and where home is. Just because they were born here, it does not make it their home. That is the reason why the participants emphasized the role of their parent's birth place as opposed to their own birth place. This point is supported by Plaza (2006) who found that for many second generation Caribbean participants, home was not necessarily the place of birth or residence but rather the place where their parents were born or where they still had family.

Therefore, when growing up as a Somali in a foreign country there exists a sense that this situation is temporary notwithstanding the fact that the only home one has known is the adopted home. You grow up surrounded by an ever-present mantra that

some day when possible you will return home. This is passed from parents to their children and re-emphasized through trips back to the country of origin. Moreover, I would argue that it is as a result of frequent communication with people in the homeland that the idea of "going back home" is ever more present (Miller 2000). Plaza's (2006) research has shown that second generation Caribbean-Canadians revealed that the internet, the media, and air transportation, have all affected their adoption of a Canadian identity. They contended that being in contact with kin and friends from the Caribbean have facilitated their adoption of a transnational identity. The same point can be argued for the participants of this study. As a result of the idea of the imagined return to "home" and the contact with the home land the participants' Somali identity is strengthened and their Canadian national identity is weakened.

Another explanation for the strong Somali identity and the weak Canadian identity could be due to the fact that some of the parents are aware of the difficulties associated with integrating into "White" Canadian society. These parents are aware of the privileges that are available for those that are considered part of the in-group and the obstacles that are in place for those that are part of the out-group (Nesdale, 2004). Thus, the parents' ability to fully integrate into Canadian society is impeded by their perception of discrimination and the vulnerability they feel regarding their role in the greater society (Jimenez, 2007). Hugh, et. al (2006) highlighted the important role that parents play in the socialization of their children. It is reasonable to argue that some of the parents could be teaching their children that there is no real need to establish a Canadian identity since they will never be allowed to fully integrate into Canadian society.

The most noteworthy finding from the research pertains to the weak status of the Black identity. When asked about their racial identity three of the participants stated that they were not Black. It should be noted that in their responses the participants did not make obvious negative statements about Black people but there was an undercurrent of the possibility of a negative attitude. I believe their inability to view themselves as Black is due to the fact that these children are aware of the negative stereotypes that are perpetuated about Black people. As such they have distanced themselves from this identity. Moreover, I suspect that the difference between their own identity and the Black identity has been stressed by their parents. Water's (1994) study with foreign born Black immigrants in the US supports this point. She found that foreign born Black immigrants perceived themselves differently than their Black American counterparts. They distinguished themselves by assigning more positive attributes to themselves (such as hard working and ambitious) and negative attributes to the Black Americans (such as being lazy). Thus to distinguish themselves from the Black Americans they emphasized their immigrant identity more than their Black identity. Similar to Water's (1994) findings, Ajrouch and Kusow (2007) found that their Somali participants preferred to use their Muslim identity instead of their Black identity to describe themselves. Both of these groups used other identities to distance themselves from the Black identity.

In my conversations with many members of the Somali community as well as my own personal experiences I have learned that Somalis have always differentiated themselves from other Black people. They have instead stressed to their children their lineage and ethnic proximity to the Arab community. This has taken many forms, such as stressing their difference in features and skin tone from other Black people. These

HYNDSON UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

differences have influenced the current tribal and social hierarchal system in Somali communities. Although these differences were present before colonization they have taken a new form since the introduction of white colonialists in the horn of Africa (Besteman, 1998; Spencer, 2006). The advent of colonization has stressed these differences and the race terminology at that time has legitimized Somali views of themselves in comparison to other Black people. In this regard, due to their distinct physical features Somalis have perceived themselves as a separate ethnic-racial entity that is neither Black nor White. They choose to describe themselves in a category of their own. Spencer (2006) highlighted the brutal effects of colonization on the people of Africa. I would also contend that colonization had a deleterious effect on the way Africans relate to each other. It created a sense of separation between Africans that is still evident today.

When it came to their multiple identities I found that the children were unable to distinguish between their Muslim and Somali identity. The inseparability of the Somali and Muslim identity was also something that was reiterated by Collet (2007) in his study with Somali youths regarding national identity and religious identity within a school setting. He discovered that his participants highlighted the important role of Islam to the Somali identity and how it was virtually impossible to separate culture from religion. Moreover, my findings were similar to Collet's (2007) in that both of our interviewees stated the implausibility of being Somali and non Muslim. Collet's (2007) participants reasoned that the social isolation from the Somali community serves as preventative measure for any Somalis that want to denounce their Muslim identity

There is one finding that is difficult to analyze. This is the finding related to the possibility of being Somali and Canadian at the same time. One of the responses from the participants was that one can be Somali and Canadian and yet one cannot be both Somali and Canadian. There were no clear reasons given for their responses. I cannot conclude from the data that the responses from the participants were a result of contradiction in their reasoning or simply if my question was unclear regarding the matter. I am inclined to believe the later because this question could have very easily been understood as a question pertaining to Somalis living in Somalia and Canadians living in Canada as opposed to what I had intended for it to mean, which was if it is possible for Somali origin people living in Canada to be Canadians as well as Somalis. Moreover, in creating the four dimensions of identity, I had intended for the Somali identity to be the ethnic identity but with this question it is possible that the children understood the Somali identity as the national identity.

CONCLUSION

A sense of identity is an important factor in a child's life. In this study, I examined how a group of minority children organize and understand their multiple identities. This is a vital issue for Canadian society, and in particular all stakeholders in the education system. The movement of people and families across geographic borders is a more prominent and frequent phenomenon in our world today than ever before. More importantly in a multicultural society, such as Canada, that is dependent on immigration to bolster its population, the questions of identity and the determinants of identity take on a wider significance.

Implications

This research has implications for both parents and teachers. For parents and family members the findings of this study indicate that, although they are doing enough to encourage the formation of healthy religious and ethnic identities within their children they need to be doing more to encourage the development of racial and national identities.

Parents may not want to discuss racial issues with their children since they themselves may not be fully clear or comfortable with aspects of their racial identity (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). However, parents need to be cognizant of the fact that they are raising children who may be negatively stereotyped by the larger society based on their racial group. Teaching or encouraging them otherwise will have a detrimental effect on their self perceptions. Society sends clear explicit and implicit messages about the lower status of the Black race, a child that is ambiguous about what their racial identity is will not have the coping mechanism to offset this negative

messages sent by society. Moreover, if parents are not willing to be the first source of information for their children regarding the positive attributes of being a Black person, then they allow other agents (such as the media), who may not be as invested in the child's healthy development, to provide this important information.

The development of a national identity is impeded in communities that have another notion of "home" (Castles & Davidson, 2000). The importance of this fact is that as long as children have an idea of another home land, they will not think of Canada as their true "home". This is not to say that they will not value living here, or creating a life for themselves here, it just means that the notion of a different "home" will be prominent in their minds. In terms of policy this translates to the need for policies that acculturate the parents of these children into Canadian society. This means the economic and social segregation of these communities should be addressed so that first generation immigrants can pass a positive message about being Canadian to their children.

The importance of teaching children to identify with their national identity has to do with the fact that Canada is their home. It is the place of their residence, it is where they receive their formal education and it is probably where they will set roots and have the most impact. Children need to learn that their presence will better this society. They need to feel that they will have a positive and lasting contribution. The ability to recognize the importance of having a strong national identity need not to minimize the importance of the children's religious or ethnic identity. In fact I would argue that the development of all these identities should be encouraged.

The allegation of promoting culture separation is often levelled against faith based schools. It is argued that faith based schools encourage only the religious identity of

students while playing down the importance of their identity as citizens in the greater society (Gutmann, 1996, as cited in Zine 2007). I would argue that public schools also encourage the formation of certain ideals for its students. The primary focus of public schools has always been on emphasizing Eurocentrism (Zine, 2007). This is proven by the fact that the contributions of marginalized groups has often been absent from the curriculum of these schools. This Eurocentric influence, evident in curriculum, has limited the ability of teachers to fully encourage the development of multiple identities which is essential to minority students. For example by reducing Black culture to one month during the whole school year teachers and administrator make Black culture something that is relevant only once a year. Instead, they should be infusing issues about Black culture in the Canadian context in every aspect of teaching. This can be done by discussing the impact and contribution of Black Canadians in Canadian society. By only highlighting the contributions of White Europeans in Canadian schools they are creating a monolithic view of who contributes to the establishment of this society. Schools need to communicate to children that it is not only one style of living or set of values that constitute the essence of what it means to be Canadian. Both parents and schools must actively and continually struggle to present evidence to children that confirms the positive attributes of their multiple identities. For these children to embrace their national identity they have to be part of a truly inclusive society. An inclusive society is one that accepts them in their differences and incorporates these differences into their institutions.

Future Research

There were certain limitations within this study that necessitate the need for further research on this topic. The small sample size, the children's inability to fully

comprehend the scope and terms of the study (e.g., ethnicity and nationality), their saying "pass" during crucial questions, along with my identity as a Muslim and a Somali combined with the fact that a portion of the participants were interviewed in a Islamic school are indicative of the fact that there is a need for future research that addresses these limitations.

It is not only the limitations that necessitate the need for more research the findings also lend credence to the fact that there is more work needed on this topic. There is a need for research that only focuses on understanding why some children claim their Black racial identity while others are adamant about their non-Black racial identity.

Another avenue of investigation is examining how the development of a national identity is affected when a community has an emotional connection to another geographic location. More specifically how does this affect children when it is their parents that are encouraging the connection to the other geographic locations and discouraging an emotional attachment to their current place of residence?

The third avenue of investigation pertains to conducting this research with other second generation Canadian children. It would be interesting to examine if the same findings will be evident in children that are not Somali.

Closing Statements

On a personal level this research is one that has value for me as a researcher. The civil war of the 1990s changed the social make up of the Somali people and has led to a new generation of Somalis who are born and raised in different cultural, linguistic and traditional societies than that of their parents. This has not only affected Somali society but it has also affected and changed the landscape of the societies the Somalis chose to

inhabit. Not much research has gone into understanding and illustrating the consequences of these changes on children.

Identity is fluid and non stagnant. The results of this research project are a snapshot of these children's responses at one particular moment in time. It is likely that as these children grow older their opinions regarding their multiple identities will change. The underlying significance of this research is that it gave an opportunity for children to express themselves regarding a complex and multifaceted issue. Most importantly we discovered the answers to the questions that have guided this research (for second generation Somali origin children, which aspects of their identities are more salient and why? Which one of their ascribed identities do they claim or reject and why?). In the process of this study I have learned that for these children some identities are prominent and strong while others are less salient and weak. Also, that multiple identities are organized and understood in certain ways.

REFERENCES

- Abes, E. S., Jones, S. R., & McEwen, M. K. (2007). Reconceptualizing the model of multiple dimensions of identity: The role of meaning-making capacity in the construction of multiple identities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48.1, 1-22.
- Ajrouch, K. J., & Kusow, A. M. (2007). Racial and religious contexts: Situational identities among Lebanese and Somali Muslim immigrants. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30 (1), 72-94.
- Alcoff, L. M. (2003). Identities: Modern and postmodern. In L. M. Alcoff & E. Mendieta (Eds.), *Race, class, gender, and nationality* (pp. 1-8). UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Ali, M. A. (1996). On becoming mentors: Teachers' construction of their identities as mentors. Doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University.
- Ausdale, D.V., & Feagin, J. R. (1996). Using racial and ethnic concepts: The critical case of very young children. *American Sociological Review*, 61(5), 779-793.
- Andujo, E. (1988). Ethnic identity of transethnically adopted Hispanic adolescents. *Social Work* 33(6), 531-535.
- Barclay-McLaughlin, G., & Hatch, J. A. (2005). Studying across Race: A conversation about the place of difference in qualitative research. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 6(3), 216-232.
- Besteman, C. (1998). Primordialist blinders: A reply to I. M. Lewis. *Cultural anthropology*, 13(1), 109-120.
- Bryman, A., & Teevan, J. J. (2005). *Social Research Methods: Canadian edition*. Ontario: Oxford University Press.

- Castles, S., & Davidson, A. (2000). *Citizenship and Migration: Globalization and the politics of belonging*. New York: Routledge.
- Clark, A. (2004). The mosaic approach and research with young children. In V. Lewis, M. Kellett, C. Robinson, S. Fraser, & S. Ding (Eds.), *The reality of research with children and young people* (pp.142-161). London: Open University Press.
- Clark, K. B., & Clark, M. P. (1950). Emotional factors in racial identification and preference in Negro children. *The Journal of Negro Education* 19(3), 341-350.
- Collet, B. A. (2007). Islam, national identity and public secondary education: Perspectives from the Somali diaspora in Toronto, Canada. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 10(2), 131-153.
- Connolly, P. (2001). Qualitative methods in the study of children's racial attitudes and identities. *Infant and Child Development*, 10, 219-233.
- Corbin, J., & Holt, N. L. (2005) Grounded theory. In B. Somekh & C. Lewin (Eds.), *Research methods in the social sciences* (pp. 49-55). London: Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE
- Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating qualitative and quantitative research* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Danby, S., & Farrell, A. (2004). Accounting for young children's competence in educational research: New perspectives on research ethics. *The Australian Educational Researcher* 31(3), 35-49.
- Dey, I. (2005). Grounded theory. In C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. Gubrium, & D. Silverman (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice* (pp. 80-93). London : SAGE.

- Elmi, A. (1999). *A study – on the mental health needs of the Somali community in Toronto*. York Community Services. Retrieved on April 11, 2007 from <http://ceris.metropolis.net/Virtual%20Library/health/elmi1.pdf>.
- Eriksen, T. (2002). *Ethnicity and nationalism: Anthropological perspectives*. London: Pluto Press.
- Freeman, M. A. (2003). Mapping multiple identities with the self-concept: Psychological construction of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. *Self and Identity*, 2, 61-83.
- Hill, M. (2005). Ethical consideration in researching children's experiences. In S. Green & D. Hogan (Eds.), *Researching children's experience: Approaches and methods* (pp. 61-87). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hogan, D. (2005). Researching "the child" in developmental psychology. In S. Green & D. Hogan (Eds.), *Researching children's experience: Approaches and methods* (pp. 22-41). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hughes, D. (2003). Correlates of African American and Latino parents' messages to children about ethnicity and race: A comparative study of racial socialization. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 31, 15-33.
- Hughes, D., Smith, E., Stevenson, H., Rodriguez, J., Johnson, D., & Spicer, P. (2006). Parent's ethnic-racial socialization practices: A review of research and directions for future study. *Developmental Psychology*, 42(5), 747-770.
- Isajiw, W. (1979). *Definitions of ethnicity*. The Multicultural History Society of Ontario.
- James, C. E. (2001). Introduction. In C. E. James & A. Shadd (Eds.), *Talking about identity: Encounters in race, ethnicity and language* (pp. 1-7). Toronto: Between the Lines.

- Jimenez, M. (2007, January 12). How Canadian are you? *Globe and Mail*. Retrieved on September 4, 2007 from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20070112.wximmigrant12/BNStory/National/home> .
- Jones, S. R., & McEwen, M. K. (2000). A conceptual model of multiple dimensions of identity. *Journal of College Student Development*, 41(4), 405-414.
- Kelly, J. (2004). *Borrowed identities*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Lin, K., & Blila, S. (1995). The development of ethnic awareness and attitudes in young children. *Contemporary Education*, 66(3), 146-150.
- Miller, D. (2000). *Citizenship and national identity*. UK :Polity Press.
- Miles, R., & Brown, M. (2006). Representations of the other. In S. P. Hier & B. S. Bolaria (Eds.), *Identity and belonging* (pp.19-30). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Mishna, F., Antle, B. J., & Regehr, C. (2004). Tapping the perspectives of children: Emerging ethical issues in qualitative research. *Qualitative Social Work*, 3(4), 449-468.
- Morse, J. M. & Richards, L. (2002). *Read me first: For a user's guide to qualitative methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Nesdale, D. (1999). Developmental changes in children's ethnic preferences and social cognitions. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 20(4), 501-519.
- Nesdale, D. (2004). Social identity processes and children's ethnic prejudice. In M. Bennett & F. Sani (Eds.), *The development of the social self* (pp. 219-245). Hove & New York: Psychology press.

- Nesdale, D., Durkin, K., Mass, A., & Griffiths, J. (2004). Group status, outgroup ethnicity and children's ethnic attitudes. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 25(2), 237-251.
- Neuman, W. L. (2003). Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative approach (5th ed.). United States of America: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2006). The racial state. In S. P. Hier & B. S. Bolaria (Eds.), *Identity and belonging* (pp.19-30). Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Peek, L. (2005). Becoming Muslim: The development of a religious identity. *Sociology of religion*, 66(3), 215-242.
- Phinney, J. S., & Chavira, V. (1995). Parental ethnic socialization and adolescent coping with problems related to ethnicity. *Journal of research on adolescence*, 5, 31-54.
- Plaza, D. (2006). The construction of a segmented hybrid identity among one-and-a-half-generation and second-generation Indo-Caribbean and African Caribbean Canadians. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 6(3), 207-229.
- Porter, J. R., & Washington, R. E. (1979). Black identity and self-esteem: A review of studies of Black self-concept, 1968-1978. *Annual Review of Sociology* 5, 53-74.
- Reitsma, K. (2001). *Needs assessment: Somali adolescents in the process of adjustment: Toronto 2001*. Community Development and Prevention Program Children's Aid Society of Toronto. Retrieved August 15, 2007 from <http://www.midaynta.com/documents/Somali%20Youth%20Coalition.pdf>
- Schmidt, G. (2004). Islamic identity formation among young Muslims: The case of Denmark, Sweden and the United States. *Journal of Muslim Affairs*, 24(1), 31-45.

- Shahsiah, S. (2005). Identity, identification, and racialization: Immigrant youth in the Canadian context. Major research paper, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada.
- Sorenson, J. (1991). Politics of social identity: "Ethiopians" in Canada. *The Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 19 (1), 67-87.
- Spencer, M. B., & Markstrom-Adams, C. (1990). Identity processes among racial and ethnic minority children in America. *Child Development*, 61, 290-310.
- Spencer, S. (2006). *Race and ethnicity: Culture, identity and representation*. New York: Routledge.
- Stone, G. P. (1971). Appearance and the self. In A. M. Rose (Ed.), *Human behavior and social processes: An interactionist approach* (86-118). London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Stryker, S., & Serpe, R. T. (1994). Identity salience and psychological centrality: Equivalent, overlapping, or complementary concepts? *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 57(1), 16-35.
- Taylor, G., & Spencer, S. (2004). Introduction. In G. Taylor & S. Spencer (Eds.), *Social identities: Multidisciplinary approaches* (pp. 1-13). London and New York: Routledge.
- Takriti, R. A., Barrett, M., & Buchanan-Barrow, E. (2006). Children's understanding of religion: Interviews with Arab-Muslim, Asian-Muslim, Christian and Hindu children aged 5-11 years. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 9(1), 29-42.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel & W.G. Austin (Ed). *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (pp 7-24). USA: Nelson-Hall Inc.

- Thompson, R. (1989). *Theories of ethnicity: A critical appraisal*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Inc.
- Van Den Berghe, P. (1970). *Race and ethnicity*. New York and London: Basic Books, Inc.
- Vaughan, G. (1987). A social psychological model of ethnic identity development. In J. S. Phinney & M. J. Rotheram (Eds.), *Children's ethnic socialization: Pluralism and development* (pp. 73-91). London: Sage.
- Verkuyten, M. (2004). Ethnic identity and social context. In M. Bennett & F. Sani (Eds.), *The development of the social self* (pp. 189-216). Hove & New York: Psychology press.
- Vermeer, P., & Van Der Ven, J. (2001). Religious identity formation. An educational approach. *International Journal of Education and Religion*, 2(2), 1-19.
- Waters, M. C. (1994). Ethnic and racial identities of second-generation Black immigrants in New York City. *The International Migration Review*, 28(4), 795-811.
- Waters, T., & Leblanc, K. (2005) Refugees and education: Mass public schooling without a nation-state. *Comparative Education Review*, 49(2), 129-147.
- Wong, L., & Satzewich, V. (2006). Introduction: The meaning and significance of transnationalism. In V. Satzewich & L. Wong (Eds.), *Transnational identities and practices in Canada* (pp. 1-15). Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press.
- Yon, D. A. (2000). Urban portraits of identity: On the problem of knowing culture and identity in intercultural studies. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 21(2), 143-157.
- Zine, J. (2002). Inclusive schooling in a plural society: Removing the margins. *Education Canada*, 42 (3), 36-39.

Zine, J. (2007). Safe havens or religious 'ghettos'? Narratives of Islamic schooling in Canada. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 10 (1), 71-92.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Ryerson University Consent Agreement

Master of Arts in Early Childhood Studies

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent for your child to be a volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many questions as necessary to be sure you understand what your child will be asked to do.

Investigator: Muna Jama, B.A. in Honours Psychology.

Purpose of the Study: This study is part of an assignment for a Major Research Paper. The purpose of this particular study is to examine how children develop their ethnic awareness. More specifically, how do they understand what it means to be Somali?

Description of the Study:

The data will be collected by interviewing your child and tape recording the conversation. Also, your child will be asked to partake in an art activity and/or game activity (Monopoly, Snakes and ladders, Tic-Tac-Toe, etc).

SOME SAMPLE QUESTIONS INCLUDE: Is there something specific that you think of when you think "Somali?", What makes someone Somali?, etc...

LOCATION: Child's home

TIME: Thirty minutes

What is Experimental in this Study: This is not an Experimental study. The only experimental part of this study is the gathering of information for the purpose of analysis.

Risks or Discomforts: It is possible that your child may be uncomfortable or wish to stop, but be unsure of how to say no to the researcher. Therefore, prior to commencing the study, the child will be reminded that she/he can say "no" or "stop now" or "next question." Additionally, the researcher will be alert to non-verbal signs of discomfort and/or fatigue on the part of the child.

Benefits of the Study: This study will allow me to gain experience in conducting research with children, which will be of use to me in my present and future work with children. It is hoped that your child will benefit by having her/his opinions and ideas validated in the context of a research study. I cannot guarantee, however, that your child will receive any benefits from participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The data and report will be only discussed with my academic supervisor. Audio-tapes and transcriptions will be in a locked filing cabinet no one other than I have access to. After one year the tapes will be erased. If your child's participation involves

drawings, if she/he requests them, they will be returned at the completion of the project (August 31st, 2007). Otherwise, I will store them in a confidential manner, in a locked filing cabinet, for one year after which time they will be disposed.

Obligation of Researcher:

If any information is revealed that leads the researcher to conclude that any child in the study may be in danger or at risk of harm, then the researcher has a legal obligation to report this information.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to have your child participate will not influence your future relations with Ryerson University. If you decide that your child may participate, know that you are free to withdraw your consent and to stop your child's participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

At any particular point in the study, your child may refuse to answer any particular question or stop participation altogether. Your child may communicate refusal verbally and/or non-verbally (signs of fatigue).

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact.

Supervisor: Dr. Mehrunnisa Ali, Ryerson University
Telephone Number: (416) 979-5000 ext. 6330
E-mail: maali@ryerson.ca

Principal Investigator/Study Coordinator: Muna Jama
Telephone Number: 416-901-7765
E-mail: Muna.jama@ryerson.ca

If you have questions regarding your child's rights as a human subject and participant in this study, you may contact the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board for information.

Research Ethics Board
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation
Ryerson University
350 Victoria Street
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3
416-979-5042

Agreement:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree that your child may participate in the study and have been told

that both you and/or your child can change your or her/his mind and withdraw consent to participate at any time.

You have been given a copy of this agreement to keep.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

(In signing this form I am identifying my child as a Somali person)

Signature of Parent/Guardian

(In signing this form I agree to have my child tape recorded)

Date

Name of Child (please print)

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix B

Ryerson University
Assent Form

Master of Arts in Early Childhood Studies

I am willing to talk and draw pictures with Muna about what I think being Somali, Muslim, Canadian and Black means.

It's OK by me that:

1. Our conversations will not name or identify me.
2. Our conversations will be tape recorded.
3. Only Muna and her teacher will listen to the tapes. Muna will protect the tapes by keeping them in a locked filing cabinet for one year and then will make sure if they aren't needed anymore to erase them.
4. I can stop the study at any time. One way I can do this is by saying "stop now" or I can say "next question."
5. Even though my parents said it was ok for me to talk to Muna, I don't have to if I don't want to.
6. I can end being part of the study at anytime without any questions being asked.
7. Muna might talk to someone responsible if she is worried about my safety.

My name

My signature or special mark _____

Today's date _____

Appendix C

Questions

Question 1

I will give you 4 words; I want you to put them into an order, from the one that describes you the most to the one that describes you the least. Can you tell me how you know you are ...?

Possible ways of expanding or simplifying Question 1:

If you had to tell someone about yourself, who you are and where you are from, what would you tell them

- A) Are you Somali? Can you tell me how you know you're Somali (or not Somali)?
- B) Are you Canadian? Can you tell me how you know you're Canadian (or not Canadian)?
- C) Are you Black? Can you tell me how you know you're Black (or not Black)?
- D) Are you Muslim? Can you tell me how you know you're Muslim (or not Muslim)?

Question 2

Some people say that Somali people are Black. Do you think that's right?

Question 3

Some people say that Somali people are Muslim. Do you think that's right?

Question 4

Some people say that Somali people are Canadians. Do you think that's right?

Question 5

Is there something specific that you think of when you think "Somali?"

Question 6

What make someone Somali?

Possible probes:

- . How about clothes, food, accent, etc
- . Let's say someone said they were Somali, but they never went to Somalia, would they still be Somali?
- . Some people say that if you don't speak Somali then you are not Somali, what do you think of that? What else?

Question 7

What is the difference between someone who is Somali and someone who is not?

Probes: Is there a difference between being Somali and being Canadian?

Is there a difference between being Black and being Somali?

Is there a difference between being Muslim and being Somali?

Question 8

Let's say someone had one parent that was Somali and one parent that was not. Would they be a Somali person? Why or why not (for some of the children I will be using an example of someone they know to simplify the question).

Question 9

Can you tell me some things that are different between you and other Somali people you know?

Possible probes: do they look different than you, do they wear different clothes, do they do things that are different than you, are your parents Somali or Canadian, how would I know if they are Somali (or Canadian).