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Identity retention and sense of belonging : an examination of second generation Eritrean youth in Toronto

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IDENTITY RETENTION AND SENSE OF BELONGING:
AN EXAMINATION OF SECOND GENERATION ERITREAN YOUTH IN TORONTO

by

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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
Immigration and Settlement Studies

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ABSTRACT

This research examines identity perceptions of twelve Eritrean youth (aged 20 to 27) residing in Toronto, Canada. With the help of qualitative techniques, this research seeks to investigate what it means to be Eritrean and Canadian as well as multiculturalism policy and how it all impacts the identity of Eritrean youth. The findings suggest an emphasis on primordial and national Eritrean identity, while their Canadian identity is interpreted as a mindset and is embraced situationally. While youth accept a black identity, the results indicate the development of a hyphenated Eritrean-Canadian identity with greater emphasis on the Eritrean identity. Moreover, participants are critical of and view multiculturalism policy as ineffective in promoting tangible results. Through an analysis of the debates in the existing literature on ethnic, national and racialized identities, this research concludes that Eritrean youth develop a symbolic identity towards being Eritrean and Canadian.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Canada is a country rich in immigration history. With the exception of the aboriginal community, all members of Canada have arrived through migration at some point in their ancestral history. The tradition of immigration continues as Canada accepts approximately a quarter of a million newcomers annually. In this respect, Canada may be described as an immigrant nation (Li, 2003). There are currently three main immigrant classes: economic, family and refugee class.

Recent settlement trends indicate that immigrants gravitate towards large urban areas, mainly in Toronto, Vancouver and Montréal. These three Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) account for a third of the country's population but attract nearly 70% of all recent immigrants to Canada (Statistics Canada, 2008). Of the three CMAs, Toronto continues to be a large magnet for immigrants as a majority (68%) of Ontario's foreign born population resides in the City of Toronto (ElDakiky and Shields, 2009). Within this large diverse area, newcomers must negotiate their multiple identities and determine whether they should be fully expressed or suppressed.

Research Problem

Identity is frequently understood as a fluid production (Hall, 2003) evolving through various socio-historical processes (Hier and Bolaria, 2006). Identity can encompass several characteristics including gender, religion, sexual orientation and class. Additional elements include ethnicity, nationality and "race"[1]. The final three elements continue to shape an individual's identity and will thus be the focus of this paper as each identity enables a sense of belonging and sameness among its members.

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[1] The terms "race", "black" and "white" are deliberately placed in quotation marks to signify the contentious definitions.

The proliferation of globalization and modernization may lead some to assume these identities would cease to play an active role. This assumption, however, fails to recognize the unbalanced power relations between groups which potentially lead towards fragmentation; causing these identity markers to resist the pressures of modernization (Bariagaber, 1998) and shape modern societies (Chiu, 2003). Through increased levels of migration ethnic, national and racial divisions are being transplanted into receiving countries with relevant consequences as these identities begin to develop new priorities (Berns McGown, 1999).

An increasing body of literature is beginning to explore the importance of identity. Increased awareness of identity behaviours and attitudes allows receiving countries to comprehend their capability in integrating immigrants. Moreover, it allows for an understanding of belonging and which may facilitate social cohesion[2]. While the two terms are distinct they can effectively be measured through an examination of identity. Understanding identity and belonging is valuable as it is an integral component of the integration process.

It is important and relevant to expand this discussion to include members of subsequent generations, particularly for one and a half[3] as well as second generation[4] immigrants. First, it provides an understanding of the long term effects of migration not as a static event experienced solely by initial immigrants but as acquiring a relevant impact on subsequent generations. Second, it brings insight into the second generation's ability to incorporate into the dominant society. Since the one and half and second generations are socialized in Canada it is assumed that their identity reflects the dominant views. Rather these generations can be understood as acting

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[2] Belonging refers to an affective sense of "homeness"; social cohesion promotes egalitarianism through cultural sameness and institutional structures (Hedetoft, 2007).
[3] Refers to individuals who are not born in Canada but arrived at a young age.
[4] Refers to children of first generation immigrants. The term is controversial for some scholars (Ali, 2008; Kobayashi, 2008; Sykes, 2008) as it assumes a difference from the native born population despite being born in Canada.

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as a cultural bridge between their parents' way of living and Canadian expectations (Kobayashi, 2008). Given their generational location they must negotiate between a Canadian and the various alternative identities within a multicultural society.

The existing literature provides an extensive amount of studies measuring identity among various immigrant groups and to lesser extent members of the second generation. When examining the African community in particular there are even fewer pieces of literature (Tettey and Puplampu, 2006) despite settling in Canada for several centuries. Therefore, this paper attempts to fill the gap in second generation identity on the "black" community by focusing on identity among Eritrean youth in Toronto.

Based on the most recent census, there are approximately 10,000 Canadian residents of Eritrean descent of which slightly over half reside in Toronto (Statistics Canada, 2006). Eritreans are relatively new to Canada as most began to arrive in the 1980s (Sorenson, 1990; Magocsi, 1999; Hassan, 2008). Overall, a limited literature examines the experiences of Eritreans in the diaspora. Most tends to focus on their strong transnational capabilities (Al-Ali, et al 2001; Bernal, 2004; Hepner, 2008). Specifically, in the Canadian context, Sorenson (1990; 1991) as well as Matsuoka and Sorenson (1999; 2001; 2005) provide important insight into the experiences of newly arriving Eritreans participating in long-distance nationalism and identity while attempting to integrate into Canadian society.

Literature on Eritreans in the diaspora relies heavily on the experiences of first generation immigrants. Few studies examine second generation youth in any capacity[5]. Specifically, experiences of retention of identity among second generation Eritrean youth in Toronto – a city

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[5] Notable exceptions include: Andall (2002) who examines citizenship and belonging among youth of various African descent in Milan, Italy. A draft paper by Conrad (2006) uniquely outlines the experience of Eritrean-German youth as they travel through Eritrea. Meanwhile, in the Canadian context Hassan (2008) examines the educational and labour market integration of second generation Eritrean youth.

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with the largest number of Eritreans in Canada - is yet to be examined. By concentrating on this topic in the Canadian context the existing findings on identity by Matsuoka and Sorenson (2001) can be updated and expanded.

Research Objective

The key objectives of this study are to determine what it means to be Eritrean in Canada as well as how Eritrean identity is constructed among the second generation. Specifically, this paper seeks to determine if youth maintain their Eritrean identity or adopt a Canadian culture and behaviour. The answer to these questions may bring insight into the characteristics of an Eritrean identity in the post-independence period in Toronto. Moreover, it assists in determining if Canada is truly an inclusive society in which its citizens can freely choose their identity.

To assess identity this study will measure both its behavioural and affective attributes. Behavioural manners are determined through activities such as ties with the community and language acquisition. While, affective characteristics of identity are measured by understanding the attitudes of what it means to be Eritrean and Canadian. Conducting the study in Toronto is well suited for this research as it is where most Canadians of Eritrean descent are located. As well, since Toronto is one of Canada's most multicultural cities it provides insight into how Eritrean identity can be retained in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural atmosphere.

Chapter Outline

This research paper begins with an outline of the current literature on the understanding of ethnic, national and racialized identities. It presents debates of each form of identity. From this it will specifically discuss the history, migration and diasporic identities of Eritreans. The aim of this chapter is to provide context of the Eritrean experience and outline a demographic profile of Eritreans in Canada. While the focus of this research is on second generation youth,

comprehending the broader Eritrean experience allows for a framework in gaining insight to the findings. The fourth chapter presents the methodology of how data was collected. It provides a rationale for selecting a mixed-method approach and outlines a synopsis of the key characteristics of the participants. Findings regarding the level of acceptance and belonging are presented and discussed in the fifth chapter. This chapter demonstrates the characteristics of an Eritrean and Canadian identity as well as how they interact. It also engages with multiculturalism policy and its impact on identity. The paper concludes with a summary of the main findings and a discussion of opportunities for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of identity in general. The aim is to present the current literature on ethnic, national and racialized identities. Each of these forms of identity is fundamental in the development of an Eritrean identity among youth in Toronto. This chapter concludes with a brief discussion of how identity may shift through the process of immigration based on the assimilation, segmented assimilation and acculturation model.

Identity

Identity is a complex term frequently used in academic literature and everyday conversations. Generally speaking it provides a sense of self and attempts to describe the core elements of an individual. Hall (2003) states that identity should be understood as a 'production' which is continually in process and constituted within representation.

Identity markers can, among other characteristics include a person's "race", ethnicity, nationality, class, gender, and/or sexual orientation. These categories are not independent variables rather they interact with each other to shape an individual's overall identity. Since identities can be understood as situational and may vary over time, they are often described as fluid and socially constructed. In this respect, the fluid nature of social identities may cause individuals to negotiate and carry several identities. In other words, identities do not exist independently of time, place or circumstances but is a socio-historical construction (Hier and Bolaria, 2006). In addition, identity can be shaped by the marketplace, cultural industries and local institutions (Gilroy, 2007). Finally, through migration individuals' identities become increasingly complex. For instance, diasporic identities are constantly reproducing themselves through transformation and difference (Hall, 2003). Therefore in order to understand identities it

is also important to comprehend its social and historical context. Despite its complexity identity remains an important discussion topic as it allows for greater knowledge in the process of becoming (Hier and Bolaria, 2006).

The negotiation of identity is frequently understood as an individual task however there are also collective identities which develop out of a shared and rooted experience. These collective identities may become powerful especially when members seek to realize themselves in a political form. In this respect, the concept of collective identity is not only an opportunity to share a common experience but has transpired into an object of political thinking (Gilroy, 2007). While there are several points in which collective identities may be established this paper will examine ethnic, national and racialized identities.

Ethnic Identity

The term 'ethnic' derives from two Greek words. The first word 'ethnos' describes a number of people living together. The second word 'ethnikos' refers to people 'who are not like us' such as pagans and heathens (Isajiw, 1999 p.17). As a collective identity, an ethnic group can be defined as a group of individuals bonded with a distinct culture and a shared sense of peoplehood based on presumed shared sociocultural experience, ancestry, history and/or similar physical characteristics (Driedger, 2003; Isajiw, 1999). The inclusion of a racial element in sharing certain physical characteristics is a concept developed in the 19th century (Eriksen, 2005). In turn, this has caused difficulties in understanding ethnicity as it is often used as a euphemism for "race" (Ratcliffe, 2004).

Ethnicity provides individuals with a sense of identity and belonging. According to Driedger (2003) ethnic identity occurs when an individual believes s/he has a common ancestry

with a particular group based on their shared characteristics and an assumption of difference from others.

Through recent large movements of people and the rise of globalization one may assume the disappearance of ethnic identities. The belief is that global interaction leads to integration and a decreased salience of difference. Nonetheless ethnicity continues to play a role in mobilizing groups. This is evident through diasporic communities which disrupt the fundamental power of territory to determine identity. In other words, diasporas break the link between location, place and consciousness (Gilroy, 2007). Yet despite these assumptions ethnic identity has continued through the growth of migration and globalization. In order to determine why ethnic identity persist it is first important to understand how it develops.

Ethnic Identity Formation

Ethnic identity is a topic of great discussion in the literature, yet there is a lack of consensus on how it is formed. At a broad level, there are two main debates. First, theorists view ethnic identity as ascribed and stable, while others describe it as fluid and determined by individuals. The following discussion outlines key arguments and criticisms of both perspectives.

Primordial theorists are key proponents of the ascribed element of ethnicity. For primoridialists, also referred to as essentialists, ethnic identity is credited at birth. Specifically, it is a stable as well as fixed entity established and inherited from ancestors who share a common history and descent (Chiu, 2003; Isajiw, 1993; Matsuoka & Sorenson, 2001). Given its assumed innate nature, primordial attachment can be understood as natural, thus not requiring social interaction to acquire these attributes. Despite the final postulation primordial attachment can be socially constructed through the people, places and things that surround an individual. Therefore, it can be argued that the existence of blood ties is irrelevant to an ethnic identity, however the

belief of its existence is critical (Allahar, 2006). Overall, primordial elements of identity can be understood as an initial and foundational aspect of ethnic identity. In turn, it allows individuals to gain awareness of their ethnicity and develop a sense of belonging. A key criticism of primordialism is its inability to incorporate the role of individuals and societies in developing an ethnic identity (Chiu, 2003).

The simplistic form of primordialism steers the discussion towards a symbolic form of identity (Chiu, 2003). Under this conception, ethnic identity is associated solely for the purposes of identifying with a particular ethnicity while lacking formal or informal participation in ethnic organizations (Eid, 2007). This form of ethnic identity is frequently observed in individuals who are acculturated and assimilated into the dominant culture (Isajiw, 1993) in receiving countries. In this sense, when discussing the identity of second generation, symbolic identity is a relevant. Moreover, it also illustrates a degree of choice in selecting certain aspects of an ethnic identity.

The second set of theories continues to fill the inability of primordialism in examining the role of the individual. The post-structuralist, instrumentalist, epiphenomenon and constructionist approaches each follow this approach. First, the post-structuralist perspective argues against the perception that ethnic communities are unified, homogenous and stable. Rather ethnic identity is understood as developing from a "series of choices, decisions, creative transformation and adaptation" (Eid, 2007, p.19) established by the individual. With the ability to recognize the adaptive nature of ethnic identity, the post-structuralist perspective does not account for the networks and material gains to be obtained from strong links within an ethnic group.

Expanding from the limitations of the post-structuralist argument, instrumentalists interpret ethnic identity as a vehicle through which political, economic and social materials can be acquired. The achievement of these resources is only established through affiliation with the

ethnic group. In other words, an ethnic identity persists because it provides direct benefits to the individual. In this perspective, identity is shaped by the position of one's group in the socioeconomic power structure. Ethnicity is also interpreted through a strategic lens, in which it is manipulated for personal gain while neglecting the social and emotional attachments (Chiu, 2003). In turn, this illuminates the structural constraints in society (Eid, 2007).

The instrumentalist perspective is somewhat similar to the epiphenomenon approach. In this perspective, ethnicity is created or maintained due to an uneven economy or a product of economic exploitation (Isajiw, 1993). This originally derives from a Marxist perspective which argues that ethnicity as well as "race" is a by product of class relations (Isajiw, 1999). While this approach tends to focus on the structural and group aspects of identity it is important to understand as it plays a role in the historical development of an Eritrean identity.

Constructionist theory is the final perspective used in defining ethnic identity. Under this approach identity is negotiated and constructed through daily activities and interactions by individuals (Isajiw, 1993). In this sense, ethnic identity is viewed as fluid (Sorenson, 1991) and contingent upon multiple factors including location, level of interactions, time period as well as generations (Chiu, 2003). Thus, ethnicity becomes a multi-dimensional concept. Given the fluid nature, ethnic boundaries are maintained when individuals maximize their interactions within their ethnic group and minimize relations with outside groups. Critics of constructionist theory argue the flexible nature renders difficulty in developing a systematic understanding of the identity (Chiu, 2003).

The above stated formations of identity provide a contextualization of group experience. Overall, perspectives regarding ethnic identity formation present identity from varying vantage points. These perspectives include an ascribed innate interpretation while other interpretations

are more fluid in nature. Nonetheless, each perspective offers a unique and focused analysis while simultaneously neglecting other elements of identity. It seems there is no comprehensive widely accepted perspective which encompasses several elements of ethnic identity. Rather when speaking of identity one may use several perspectives to analyze identity among a particular group.

Nationhood and National Identity

The ability for ethnicity to bring individuals together and realize itself in a political form can allow for the establishment of a nation or nation-state. According to Jackson and Penrose (1994) through the course of history there have been three main methods of interpreting the term nation. Its initial usage somewhat follows an understanding of ethnicity. In this respect, nation is understood as a cultural entity defined by attributes such as language, religion, customs, traditions and occasionally used as a euphemism for "race". It later went on to describe 'a people', as a set of natural units of humanity. In the second understanding nation is signified as a political entity embodied in a state. In this sense, culture plays a role but is subordinate to the state. Finally, nation is often used to define a recognizable territory and used as a synonym for country. The various usages of the term nation illustrate its constructionist element as the definition has shifted.

A nation is not simply a political entity but also produces a system of cultural representation (Hall, 2006). National cultures provide the ability to construct identities which in turn define the components of the nation. These cultural representations include images, symbols, and narratives which being to represent a shared experience regardless of if there are multiple ethnic groups within a country. Therefore a nation has an assumption of a foundational myth and long-lasting tradition (Hall, 2006).

Nations and national identity share three main similarities with ethnic identity. First, the core elements of national identity are frequently represented as primordial, meaning natural and inherited. Moreover, it is understood as essential to the national character, as well as pure and original. Despite the primordial nature, the definition presented by Jackson and Penrose (1994) indicates that national identity has the ability to transform over time is based on historical events. Second, national identity offers membership and recognition within the national culture (Hall, 2006). Lastly, national identities are formed in relation to 'others' and assume that others are not part of the nation. With this, nationalists argue that political geographical boundaries should be enclosed within cultural boundaries. This final point is unique from ethnic groups who do not necessitate territorial acquisition (Eriksen, 2005). Therefore, while a nation is frequently based on a precise physical location, it is also a symbolic community which has the power to develop a sense of identity and allegiance (Hall, 2006). Overall, each element of national identity brings forth a sense of belonging and community. Given the emotions of pride and belonging espoused towards an individual's nation, national identity can have a profound and powerful effect.

Benedict Anderson (1991) conceives of a nation as an imagined community. For Anderson (1991), the nation is territorially limited, sovereign and with a sense of community based on camaraderie and fraternity. This sense of community is imagined because its members will never know everyone in their community however they understand they belong to the same group of people. Thus, while a nation is culturally varied it attempts to unify all people, whereas, ethnicity is an attempt to comprise a particular group of people within an area (Hall, 2006).

In nations with multiple ethnic groups, a shared ethnicity is not necessary to build nationhood rather there is a supra-ethnic community which develops above existing ethnic groups (Eriksen, 2005). In these situations, the supra-ethnic community is distinct from all other ethnic groups and has the ability to capture the identities of individuals within the various ethnic groups. This is established through a common culture, language or experience. Yet even in this situation Eriksen (2005) acknowledges primordial values are capable of mobilizing its members and shifting attention away from the supra-ethnic community as there is a shared foundational myth which provides a sense of belonging

The shift towards increased global interaction would assume an increase in shared identities and fewer cultural distinctions. Yet similar to ethnic identity, nationalism continues to play an impact in identity.

"Race" and Racial Identity

This section outlines a definition of "race", blackness and a racialized identity in the context of migration. The above discussion of ethnic and national identity simply provides a broad understanding of identity. "Race" is as equally important to discuss as it is an alternative designation of difference placed on individuals particularly as they migrate. Through migration, immigrant minorities may lose their ethnic or national identity and reconstruct it as "race" (Brown and Rong, 2002). "Race" is a broader category which encompasses a multitude of ethnic groups and nationalities. Despite its expansive interpretation, "race" is difficult to clearly define as it has had various designations throughout history. Given these historical shifts "race", similar to ethnicity and nation, can be understood as socially constructed. Nevertheless, many continue to use "race" to imply biological differences based on visible physical differences such as skin colour, facial features and hair texture (Waters, 1999).

Blackness

To gain a greater appreciation of "black" identity it is important to comprehend blackness and its roots. The term "black" and the concept of blackness emerged in part due to the forced

migration of West Africans to the newly discovered lands in the Americas. Typically, "blacks" in their native land define themselves based on their shared common history and ancestry, in other words ethnicity, not "race". This is due to the alternate spectrum upon which "race" is classified. Thus, it is through migration that blackness, in part, becomes a racial category, which is not limited to a particular national, cultural or linguistic border. Through migration, in this environment, individuals of African descent must negotiate between the dominant and minority cultures. Specifically, African migrants must navigate their identity between an emphasis on group identity (hypercollective) and a hyper-individual identity, in which emphasis is placed on the self (Wright, 2004). Consequently through blackness, individuals are able to retain their ethnic differences while continuing to be unified on their perceived racial commonality. Yet, in practice the differences within the "black" community are overlooked by the Western dominant society and an emphasis is placed solely on physical differences. Since "race" is not integral in defining one's social identity in Africa, with the exception of South Africa (Ibrahim, 2004), blackness is a concept that has generally been taken up in discourses in the Western world. This argument limits the contributions of "black" immigrants and therefore does not expand the experiences and interpretations within blackness.

For Ibrahim (2004), blackness is not a category based solely on physical ascriptions such as skin colour or hair texture. Rather it is a set of norms and narratives preformed daily. Thus similar to gender, "race" is not a category in which an individual is automatically suited in, instead it is a performed identity and becomes a choice. What Ibrahim (2004) fails to clearly outline is that individuals do not always have a choice to perform an identity.

Racial Identity Formation

Through the process of migration, racialized immigrants and subsequent generations must decide to accept or reject racial categories promoted by receiving countries. When accepting racial categories immigrants may feel comforted and drawn towards members of the same racial group (Waters, 1999). This sense of belonging derives from an establishment of 'otherness' which creates a feeling of togetherness and a perception of a common threat or injustice (Dei and James, 1998). Alternatively, communities have the ability to create their own racial categories. In either scenario, identifying with a particular label requires individuals to internally examine personal meanings and adopt those meanings into their identity. Choosing a group or label consists of selecting qualities which are perceived to be most desirable to one's social and political environment. Consequently, in developing a racial identity, individuals must continually examine their experiences and distinctiveness (Thompson and Carter, 1997).

According to Thompson and Carter (1997) when developing a racial identity, "blacks" in undergo four steps beginning with pre-encounter status and ending with internationalization. In the first phase, "blacks" contend their "race" and culture as inferior to their white counterparts. The second phase in racial identity formation develops when members of the pre-encounter stage recognize their inability to gain full status within the white society. Through the encounter phase, the individual seeks to develop a "black" identity which allows them to enter into the immersion category. In this phase the individual attempts to immerse within the discourse of blackness. Furthermore, in the complete opposite of the pre-encounter individuals, members in this stage, idealize "blacks" and Africans while rejecting the culture of whites. Lastly, the internalization phase is reached when an individual is able to merge their fully developed understanding of blackness into their repertoire of being.

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The formulation of racial identity through various phases indicates its fluid nature and ability to shift based on interactions with the dominant and "black" community. The above pattern of racial identity however, assumes a straight line approach where the final, presumably positive objective, is to internalize "black" culture into an individual identity. The authors fail to outline the performative elements consisting within a "black" identity. Nor do they specify the implications of attaining or rejecting the final phase of internalization. To balance the discussion of racial identity formation, an interpretation of the acceptance of racial labels can provide greater insight into the current identity of "blacks".

The primary method upon which immigrants can challenge the binary "black/white" illustration of "race" is to refuse its construction (Merenstein, 2008). In Canada "blacks" have a greater opportunity to be labeled within ethnic, national or racial categories especially for those who reside in Canada for ten generations or less (Boatswain and Lalonde, 2000). A desire to distance oneself from the "black" label arises from a perceived distinction immigrants have from "black" Americans. The descendants of slaves are interpreted as different because certain immigrants view them as not taking advantage of opportunities and the lack of a common culture (Waters, 1999). For immigrants these differences become an adequate basis for distancing from "black" Americans. In turn, "black" immigrants receive a hostile reception from "black" Americans who are afraid they will take away their employment opportunities (Waters, 1999). Nonetheless, some "black" immigrants sympathize with the experiences of "black" Americans and admire the persistence of civil rights leaders (Brown and Rong, 2002).

In the short term the repudiation of the "black" label allows immigrants to be comforted with their national or ethnic identity. However the term "black" conceals the similarities among it members and the existence of racial discrimination. Moreover, it does not reconcile the imposed "black" label placed upon individuals. The decision of "blacks" to focus on their national or ethnic heritage rather than a racial identity may be caused by a desire to gain upward social mobility which is perceived to be difficult when carrying a "black" identity (Boatswain and Lalonde, 2000).

The current literature provides a substantial amount of information to understand various forms of identities. While the focus of the paper is not to present all aspects of identity, it has outlined elements of ethnic, national and racial identities. A key recurring theme through these perspectives is the fluid nature of identity and its ability to provide a sense of belonging.

Identity and Acculturation through Migration

Through the process of migration levels of ethnic, national and racial identities begin to shift based on various priorities. While individuals may hold a strong ethnic identity in their home country, attachment may be altered in receiving countries. In these countries the process of developing an identity is understood under the main models of assimilation, segmented assimilation and Berry's (2006) acculturation model.

The first and longest standing theoretical approach has been the assimilation model (Gordon, 1964). In general terms, assimilation is defined as a complete cultural adoption of another social group to the extent that an individual or group no longer has the characteristics which identify him or her with their previous culture. For Gordon (1964) assimilation occurs over time and through seven key phases. In this specific order, the phases of assimilation are: cultural or behavioral, structural, marital, identificational, attitude receptional, behaviour receptional and civic assimilation. Briefly, cultural assimilation involves the change of cultural patterns to mimic the attributes of receiving countries. The second phase, structural assimilation, occurs through an individual's involvement in clubs and institutions of the receiving country.

The third phase involves intermarriage which then leads to a sense of peoplehood with the members of the receiving country. The final three phases involve the elimination of prejudice, discrimination and power conflict. Through these phases an individuals becomes increasingly acculturated with the dominate society. Unique to the constant acculturation model, both the first and second generation undergo upward mobility at an equal pace (Eid, 2007).

Critics of this straight line form of assimilation argue that integration into a society can be segmented (Zhou, 1997), particularly for the second generation. According to Zhou (1997) the path of assimilation for second generation immigrants is dependent on the human and financial capital of their parents, the social condition of their family as well as their cultural patterns. Moreover, Zhou (1997) is aware that the family or ethnic community plays an important role in positively developing an identity. Segmented assimilation also recognizes the unequal possibilities offered to various immigrant groups. In turn, these opportunities limit the integration process and may move away from Gordon's (1964) straight line model.

Recently the discussion regarding the concept of assimilation has shifted towards a dynamic and multi-faceted understanding of the adaptation process of immigrants particularly among members of the second generation. For Berry et al. (2006), acculturation is described as "the process of cultural and psychological change that follows intercultural contact" (p. 305) and is comprised of four strategies. The first acculturation strategy is the *assimilation* approach. Similar to assimilation it refers to a relinquishing of ethno-racial identity and an incorporation of the dominate culture. Alternatively, the second strategy is described as *separation* and involves, retaining cultural identity while avoiding interaction with others. The third strategy, *integration* is officially adopted in Canada and occurs through the maintenance of one's original culture and the involvement with the larger society. Lastly, *marginalization* arises when there is no cultural

maintenance or interaction with the dominant groups. Each of these strategies becomes associated at the larger society level with the melting pot, segregation, multiculturalism and exclusionary policies respectively (Berry et al., 2006).

From each of these theories we are able to understand how identity is formed and influenced. Acculturation is not a process that rapidly occurs in the receiving society; instead it is a process which is multifaceted, variable and assists in the development of an identity. Interestingly for second generation youth, as presented by Zhou (1997) the straight line assimilation model is not directly applicable. As an alternative, youth fuse selected elements of their ethnic and receiving society's culture to develop a novel identity. An understanding of identity formation and acculturation will assist situating the case of Eritrea and provide context to the study of second generation youth.

Chapter 3

Eritrea and Eritreans: History, Migration, and Diasporic Identities

In the previous chapter the debates in the literature regarding ethnicity, nationalism and "race" were broadly illustrated in the context of identity. The aim of this chapter is to develop an awareness of the context in which Eritrean youths negotiate their identity in the Toronto CMA. Towards this goal, first, a brief history of Eritrea is outlined. This includes a discussion on the development of Eritrean identity as a national identity. Second, information is presented of the pattern of Eritrean outmigration and the development of the Eritrean diaspora, both globally and particularly in Canada. Finally, a demographic profile of Eritreans in Canada is created, based on two secondary data sources: the 2006 Canadian census data and records from the Permanent Resident Data System (PRDS)[6].

History of Eritrea

An awareness of Eritrean political history is critical towards understanding how Eritrean identity has emerged as a national identity over time. Eritrea - a country of 5.6 million people (CIA Factbook, 2009), is located along the coast of the Red Sea in the Horn of Africa and is one of the world's newest nations.

Figure 3.1: Map of Eritrea
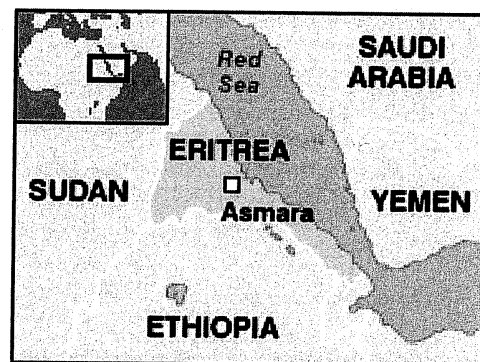
Source: *BBC News* on the Web, (2007, August 13). US moves to shut Eritrean mission. Retrieved August 6, 2009, from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6944846.stm

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[6] The dataset was formerly named Landed Immigrant Data System (LIDS). It contains landing record information for all immigrants who arrived between 1980 and 2005. Data was obtained from CERIS – The Ontario Metropolis Centre.

The Eritrean state was formally established in 1993 following a thirty year armed struggle of independence from Ethiopia. Prior to Ethiopian rule, between the 16th and the 19th centuries Eritrea was occupied by several foreign powers particularly along the Red Sea coastline. Occupiers include the Turkish Ottoman Empire, the Egyptians, and the Italians. Italian dominance originated in 1869 when an Italian priest, Giuseppe Sapeto purchased the port of Assab from a sultan. Italy formally consolidated its rule as a result of an agreement with the Ethiopian Emperor Menelik II (Abbay, 1998; Wrong, 2005)[7]. During Italian colonization (from 1890 to 1941), while economically Eritrea began to industrialize, socially it became segregated through the imposition of strict racial laws[8] (Wrong, 2005). These were key issues that led Eritreans to develop a distinct identity.

Although with the end of the Second World War a number of African states were able to gain self-determination, Eritrea did not gain independence during this phase. In its place Eritrea was under British administration until 1952 when the federation with Ethiopia was implemented. In Article 3 of the United Nation's Resolution 390A(V) passed in December 1950, it indicates that "Eritrea shall constitute an autonomous unit federated with Ethiopia under the sovereignty of the Ethiopian crown" (as cited in Abbay, 1998 p.56). Even though the United Nation's federation agreement ensures Eritreans retain a significant level of autonomy, in 1961 Ethiopia violated the terms of the federation and annexed Eritrea.

The annexation of Eritrea by Ethiopia led to a thirty-year Eritrean armed struggle for independence. Initially Eritreans were led by the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), however, in 1971 a splinter group entitled the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) emerged. While the

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[7] The new colony was named "Eritrea" deriving from the Latin term "Mare Erythraeum" meaning Red Sea (Abbay, 1998).

[8] This was most prominent during Fascist rule (post-1935) and included the physical and social distance of the two racial groups. For instance, racially mixed marriages were illegal

objectives of both groups were to create an independent nation, the EPLF's additional goal was to transform Eritreans socially and create a new civil society (Hepner, 2003). In 1991 after the death of an estimated 65,000 EPLF fighters (Bernal, 2004) and the displacement of thousands of Eritreans, Eritrea was victorious in gaining independence from Ethiopia. A referendum on May 24, 1993 formalized independence and allowed Eritreans to develop a real sense of nationhood.

The Historical Development of an Eritrean Identity

Although the brief historical overview indicates that Eritreans have been under the rule of foreign and neighbouring powers for several decades, it is the political struggle of Eritreans to gain independence which marks the foundation of Eritrean identity. Eritreans, in Eritrea and abroad, have struggled to defend their distinct identity to the international community. Abbay (1998) indicates that Eritreans, particularly those from the highland region (*Kebessa*) share a common history, culture, political economy, language and an acceptance of intermarriage with those from the Ethiopian province of Tigray. Through a historical examination of Eritrean as well as Ethiopian politics and social behaviours, Abbay (1998) concludes that the Eritrean identity is imagined and invented through nationalism. This parallels Benedict Anderson's (1991) perspective of a nation which is an "imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (p.6).

Abbay's (1998) conclusion is based on the lack of primordial history among Eritreans particularly between Muslims and Christians. The difficulty with Abbay's (1998) argument is that it primarily focuses on examining two groups, the Tigrayan in Ethiopia and the Tigrinya in Eritrea. While it may be argued that both groups share a common language and culture, the Tigrayan group is only one out of several in Ethiopia (Matsuoka and Sorenson, 2001) while in Eritrea there are an additional eight ethnic groups. Therefore, the argument that Eritrea and

Ethiopia share a common identity based on a joint history and culture between the Tigray-Tigrinya groups neglects all other ethnic groups in both states and the strong political ties that each group has towards their state.

The Eritrean identity has been mainly established on a shared historical oppression (Sorenson, 1990; Tronvoll, 1999) experienced by all nine ethnic groups. For Eritreans, historical oppression derives predominantly from Italian colonization (Tronvoll, 1999; Woldemikael, 2005). The impact of Italian colonization is experienced in three ways. First, Italian colonizers developed a racist ideology to separate groups who were within their colonial power (Eritreans) and those who were not (Ethiopians) (Tronvoll, 1999). More specifically, Italian colonialists distinctively referred to those within their colony as "Eritreans" while Ethiopians were referred to as "Natives" (Ogbagzy, 1999). Second, colonization enabled Eritrea to experience strong levels of economic growth incomparable with their southern neighbour. An emphasis on economic differentiation follows the epiphenomenon perspective of ethnic identity formation described earlier. Lastly, 50,000 Eritreans fought alongside Italians in an attempt to expand colonial domination into Ethiopia (Tronvoll, 1999). The battle and bloodshed further solidified an Eritrean identity and its uniqueness from Ethiopia. Thus, Italian colonization facilitated an Eritrean identity that viewed their territory as more developed and therefore distinct from the Ethiopian Empire. Aware of these elements of historical distinction based on territorial development, liberation leaders used this to form a basis for self-determination (Tronvoll, 1999).

The Ethiopian annexation entailed a denial of the Eritrean flag, languages and federation powers. Additionally, Eritreans faced derogatory statements and discrimination in the labour market by the Amhara Ethiopian ethnic group (Abbay, 1998). These examples illustrate the inability to openly express an Eritrean identity. Nevertheless, a positive aspect of the constant

external denial and repression of Eritrean identity is its capacity in allowing Eritreans to further strengthen their identity (Soresnson, 1990).

During the struggle for independence the EPLF was critically aware of the cultural, linguistic and religious differences within Eritrea and thus discouraged these distinctions as a basis for creating social, political or economic disruptions. Instead the establishment of new symbols and a focus on the nation were promoted as identification markers (Sorenson, 1990). In order to further conceive an Eritrean identity several steps were taken to indicate inclusivity within Eritrea. For instance, a prominent Christian liberation leader, Wolde-ab Woldemariam shared a meal with a Muslim (Abbay, 1998), crafts from various ethnic groups were jointly celebrated, radio messages were conducted in all languages and cultural shows from all ethnic groups were preformed (Sorenson, 1990). Through these efforts the EPLF's mission was to create a pan-ethnic nationalist movement which minimized internal differences (Sorenson, 1990, p.301). This parallels Eriksen's (2005) discussion of a supra-ethnic group. The Eritrean state itself occasionally acts as the supreme ethnic group in the country, with its own symbols and cultural representations. Thus, the supremacy of the nation and its proceeding national identity may be at the core of Eritrean identity. Through a discussion of identity creation, Eritreans recognize that their national identity is shaped by history and evolved out of repression, resistance and exile rather than a pre-existing identity (Matsuoka and Sorenson, 2001). Despite the historical emphasis, Eritreans are united through their struggle and are proud to have gained independence in spite of the obstacles.

Following independence Eritreans continue to emphasize their uniqueness from other African nations based on their perceived advanced state and citizenry, as well as the cleanliness and crimelessness of the capital city. By emphasizing on its uniqueness, Eritreans are seeking to create a primordialist, essentialist and naturalized identity (Woldemikael, 2005). Despite the observed pride, Woldemikael (2005) argues that Eritrea is continuing to search for its identity and attempting to justify its independence.

Eritrea: It's People

Eritrea is a multicultural state which is home to nine official ethnic groups and two dominant religions. Eritrea's diversity arises from a combination of indigenous and migrant populations as well as a blending of people. This leads some scholars to posit that Eritreans have an ethnic and racial identity unique from other groups in sub-Saharan Africa (Woldemikael, 2005).

Eritrea's nine ethnic groups each carry their own distinct culture and language. The largest group, Tigrinya, encompasses 50% of the population. Meanwhile, the second largest ethnic group, Tigre, comprises of 30% of the population. The remaining 20% consist of Saho, Afar, Beja/Hedarib, Bilen, Kunama, Nara, and Rashida groups (CIA Factbook, 2009; Woldemikael, 2005). The final three ethnic groups illustrate Eritrea's oldest and newest inhabitants. The Rashida are Arab migrants who arrived in the 19th century. Meanwhile both the Kunama and Nara have settled in Eritrea for several centuries. Each of these groups are considered at the periphery of Eritrean society with the Rashida having distinct appearances and cultural goods at one end of the spectrum while the Kunama and Nara are typically described as having more 'African' features (Woldemikael, 2005). The remaining ethnic groups remain in between this continuum.

There are two main religions in Eritrea: Christianity and Islam; and the population are equally divided among these religious groups. Among the various linguistic groups however, a majority of the Tigrinya and fragments of the Bilen and Kunama are Christians while the

remaining population follows Islam. More specifically, Tigrinya speaking Eritreans who practice Islam are commonly referred to as Jeberti. It is important to understand these divisions among Eritreans as religion almost functions as a subnational ethnicity seeing that the two religious identities live socially separate and intermarriage is unusual (Woldemikael, 2005).

Despite the internal cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, Eritreans are able to live together in relative harmony. This has been facilitated by the government's insistence of secularization as well as through the joint historical struggle for independence. The rationale of unity may be understood through a fervent Eritrean identity.

The Formation of an Eritrean Diaspora

A segment of Eritrea's inhabitants historically settled in Eritrea after migrating from various parts of Africa and the Middle East. Simultaneously, Eritrea's recent conflicts have caused a large level of emigration and with it a strong and vibrant diaspora. There are three distinct phases of Eritrean emigration--- a) Ethiopian federation phase in the early 1950s, b) during the thirty year civil war with Ethiopia (1961-1991) and c), between 1998 and 2000 during the most recent border conflict with Ethiopia.

Eritreans who emigrated during the first period were predominately students settling in the United States to pursue education.[9] In the second phase, Eritreans primarily migrated to the Middle East, Eastern Europe, the United Kingdom (Arnoe, 2008). Few Eritreans migrated directly to Western Europe, the United States or Canada instead many settled in transitional countries such as Ethiopia, Sudan, Djibouti and parts of the Middle East. In this phase migrants sought both political security and aspired to fund the national struggle. Most of them pursued

educational credentials to assist Eritrean citizens upon their return and become ambassadors for the Eritrean cause (Arnoe, 2008; Koser, 2003).

In the third phase, there are two distinct subgroups of migrants—Eritrean youth who seek to escape military service and those in search of better economic opportunities. Many migrants in this group also carry opposing political opinions to the current government (Arnoe, 2008). Little is known about the migration experience of this most recent group of emigrants.

It is difficult to determine the precise number of Eritreans who settled in the diaspora during these three phases of emigration. Some of the difficulties arise from the categorization of Eritrean migrants as Ethiopians prior to 1993 by both receiving countries and the United Nations. However, estimations can be made from the voter registration documents at the 1993 referendum on independence. Approximately 85,000 votes were cast by Eritreans abroad. The most significant countries outside of Africa include Saudi Arabia (37,785) North America (USA and Canada 14,941) and Germany (6,994)[10] (Al-Ali et al., 2001b; Koser, 2003). Currently, it is estimated that the diaspora comprises between a third and a quarter of the total Eritrean population (Hepner, 2008).

Eritreans in Canada

Eritreans are a recent addition to Canada's cultural mosaic. Although Eritreans first arrived in Canada during the 1970s and 1980s (Sorenson, 1990) it is difficult to estimate the precise number of Eritreans in Canada during this period. As indicated earlier this is primarily due to their classification as Ethiopians. Key informants estimates however indicate that prior to Eritrean independence there were 6,000 Eritreans in Canada (Magocsi, 1999). According to the

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[9] These students went on to launch the Eritreans for Liberation in North America (ELNA) which raised nearly $1 million for the Eritrean nationalist cause (Hepner, 2003).

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[10] These figures only include eligible voters, 18 years of age or older. Consequently, the actual number of Eritreans in the diaspora is much higher.

2006 Canadian census there are slightly over 10,000 individuals of Eritrean origin in Canada. Of these, about one half (5,335) reside in Toronto (Statistics Canada, 2006)[11].

The PRDS data indicates that between 1985 and 2005, 2,071 Eritreans arrived in Canada.[12] Although a sizable number of Eritreans settled in Canada after independence in 1993, a significant number (73%) have migrated between 2000 and 2005, as indicated in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: Number of Eritreans Landing in Canada (1980-2005)
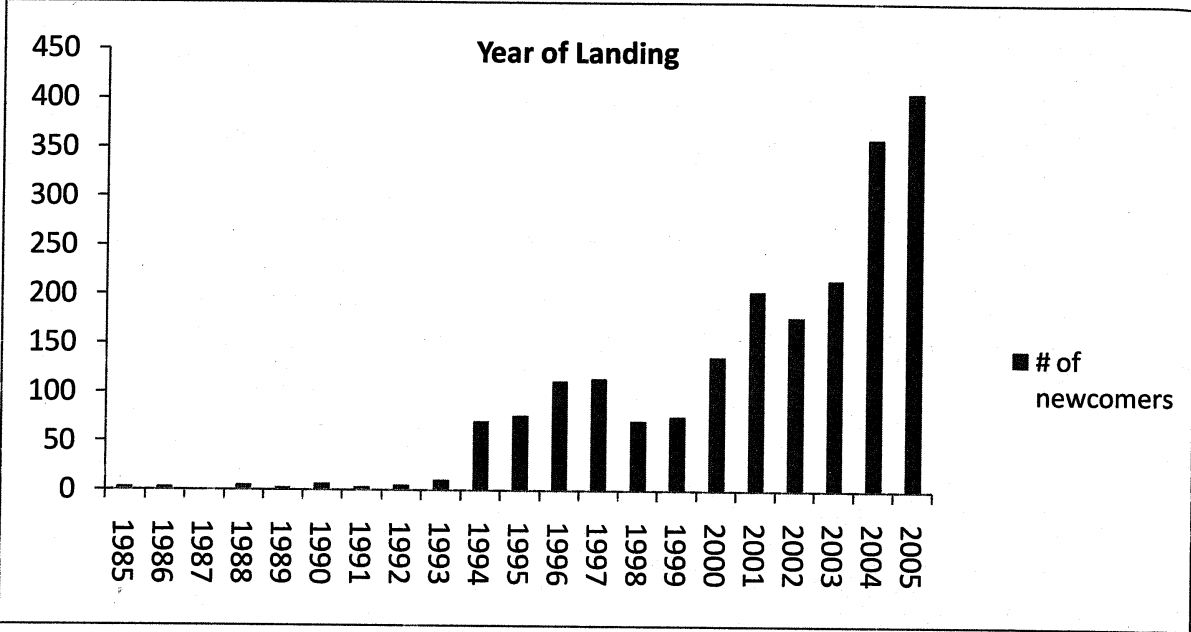
While it is difficult to determine the ethnicity of Eritreans, three-quarters (74%) speak Tigrinya, thus they may comprise of the largest Eritrean ethnic group in Canada. More than one half of all Eritrean immigrants to Canada between 1985 and 2005 are refugees (59%)[13] and a slightly over a third (35%) arrived under the family class designation. Most (70%) Eritrean migrants have an educational level of secondary school or less. More than half (54%) were between the ages of 20-34 upon arrival. The marital status of migrants is equally divided as 46%

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[11] These figures may be an underestimation of the Eritrean population in Canada given that some respondents may be included in the generic category of "Black".

[12] The figures for Eritreans who arrived prior to 1993 are an underestimation as most Eritreans were classified as Ethiopians.

[13] This includes: privately sponsored refugees (26%), Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) (21%) as well as asylum refugees (12%).

are single and 47% are married/common law. Although a large number of immigrants to Canada settle in Montréal and Vancouver, a plurality (37%) of Eritrean newcomers select the Toronto CMA as their intended destination. Data for Eritrean immigrants is summarized in Table 3.1.

Eritrean Identity in Canada

The demographic profile above simply outlines the statistical characteristics of Eritrean newcomers; it does not present their reception in Canada nor the impact on their Eritrean identity. A prominent effect on identity can be examined through the classification of Eritreans as Ethiopians by Canada. This denial not only has symbolic importance but also carries relevant practical influences. For instance, Eritreans were frequently referred to Ethiopian settlement agencies to receive newcomer information. As such, Eritreans were expected to gain services from individuals they held responsible for their migration (Matsuoka and Sorenson, 2005). The insensitivity to the conflict in Eritrea indicates a lack of awareness and concern not only by Canada and by the general public.

Eritreans in Canada were also viewed as the 'other', classified as blacks (Ogbagzy, 1999) and faced racism (Matsuoka and Sorenson, 2005). Yet within the black community, some activists rejected the Eritrean independence movement and were in favour of a pan-Africanist ideology (Sorenson, 1990; Obgabzy, 1999). This further illustrates a denial of the Eritrean identity and the inability to be accepted in various communities.

Table 3.1: Eritrean Immigrants from 1980-2005 based on Permanent Resident Data System (PRDS)

		Count	%
Place of Birth	Eritrea	2071	100
Recent Immigrants	2001-2006[14]	1535	n/a
Immigrant Class	Refugee	1219	59
	Privately Sponsored	533	26
	Government Assisted Refugees	443	21
	Asylum Refugees	243	12
	Family	719	35
	Other	133	6
Education	None	255	12
	Secondary or Less	1445	70
	Formal Trade Cert. or Apprenticeship	81	4
	Non-University Certificate or Diploma	73	4
	Bachelor's Degree	114	6
	Master's or Doctorate Degree	47	2
	Some University/ Post Graduate - No Degree	56	3
Intended Destination - Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)	Toronto	757	37
	Winnipeg	273	13
	Calgary	136	7
	Ottawa	116	6
	Edmonton	111	5
	Vancouver	101	5
	Elsewhere in Canada	577	28
Mother Tongue	Tigrinya	1536	74
	Amharic	180	9
	Other African Languages	254	12
	Other Languages	101	5
Age	0 -9 years old	81	4
	10 - 19 years old	249	12
	20 - 29 years old	774	37
	30 - 39 years old	547	26
	40 - 49 years old	210	10
	50 - 59 years old	114	6
	60 - 104 years old	96	5
Marital Status	Single	943	46
	Married/Common Law	980	47
	Widowed/Divorced/Separated	147	7

[14] Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/hlt/97-557/T404-eng.cfm?Lang=E&T=404&GH=4&GF=1&SC=1&S=1&O=D

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Despite the clear rejection of 'Eritreaness', Eritreans remained dedicated to their nationalistic cause through various volunteer organizations.[15] The associations allowed Eritreans to develop personal relationships with members of the community, erase feelings of neglect for emigrating and provide informal immigration settlement information. Moreover, these organizations are the most significant force in which identity could be maintained (Sorenson, 1990) during the pre-independence phase.

This chapter traces the foundation of Eritrea through a historical overview beginning with Ottoman occupation and ending with independence. The sense of Eritrean identity is rooted in history and becomes a method in consolidating unity among its ethnically diverse citizenry. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the establishment of three migratory periods leading to the formation of a diaspora. Understandably, many of the newcomers arrived to Canada as refugees. Diasporic communities as a whole continue to support Eritrea, particularly during the struggle for independence. This strong sense of support is based on an identity rooted in Eritrean nationalism. Yet, ascribing to an Eritrean identity was not easily accepted and was frequently denied. It is under these circumstances that members of the 1.5 and second generation cultivate a sense of 'Eritreanness' in Canada. Through a historical understanding of Eritrea, Eritrean identity and the composition of Eritreans in Canada we are able to gain context into how Eritrean youth negotiate their identity.

[15] These include: Eritrean Relief Association in Canada (ERAC), National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEWmn) and Research and Information Centre on Eritrea (RICE).

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Chapter 4

Methodology

Previous chapters have examined the current understanding of ethnic, national and racial identities as well as the shifting of identity through acculturation. The remainder of this paper seeks to explore identity among Eritrean youth in Toronto, Canada. Specifically, the objective is to analyze issues related to how youth interpret and express an Eritrean identity, the role of the Canadian identity and the impact of Canada's multiculturalism policy in mediating identity. The key research questions are: what is Eritrean identity for youth in Toronto? What does it mean to be Canadian? Lastly, how are these identities are expressed? These questions will provide an understanding of the foundational elements of an Eritrean identity while residing in Canada. This chapter will specifically outline the method in which data was collected. First, this chapter presents the rational in selecting a primarily qualitative approach (individual interviews and focus groups) as well as quantitative methodology through the analysis of two datasets: PRDS and brief surveys at the beginning of interviews. The second section outlines the recruitment procedure as well as the characteristics of participants. Third, this chapter outlines my postionality as an Eritrean youth in Toronto and its possible implications on the study. The chapter closes with a brief outline of the limitations of the study.

Qualitative and Quantitative Methodology

Qualitative Approach

There are two main methodological options when conducting empirical research: qualitative and quantitative. The exploratory, interpretative and in-depth approach of qualitative research allows for a detailed investigative stance upon which one may understand the complex issue of identity. Most qualitative research including the proposed study, stem from an Interpretive Social Science (ISS) approach (Neuman, 2006). This perspective will be used to understand Eritrean identity and seeks to provide meaningful social action through existing Eritrean associations or through policies such as multiculturalism. Following the tenets of the ISS approach this study will not provide a definition of Eritrean identity, instead it will allow participants to construct their own designation. While acknowledging some of the ascribed and fixed elements of Eritrean identity, the aim is to provide participants with the agency to create their own definition. Unlike quantitative instruments, interviews provide an opportunity to develop in-depth follow-up questions. Allowing participants to self-define identity brings forth various interpretations without pre-judging their beliefs.

Through this research qualitative data was collected through two key informant interviews and two focus groups. The relevance of key informant interviews derives from their frequent contact and communication with Eritrean youth. Through their community outreach and networks, key informants provide insight at a wide level which may not be captured through focus groups. The questions posed to key informants are available in Appendix 1.

The second qualitative instrument involved two focus groups. This instrument allows for a semi-structured group discussion on the topic of identity. Given the construction of this major research paper over a relatively condensed period, focus groups allow for the gathering of large data efficiently. In summation, the focus groups' ability to allow for exploratory research and collect large sums of data in a short time period makes it a feasible and valuable methodological option. The questions as part of the moderator's guide are available as Appendix 2.

Qualitative Methods: Limitations

Similar to all other research instruments, qualitative methods carry certain disadvantages. In all face-to-face interviews regardless of the formant, participants may read cues by the

investigator and choose to provide specific responses in order to support the research (Neuman, 2006). Focus groups in particular have two key shortcomings. First, given the group nature, participants may not be comfortable in discussing their opinions in an open venue. This concern may develop out of shyness or fear of being negatively labeled by other participants. Consequently, participants may embellish or twist their responses. A further limitation is the researcher's inability to ensure complete anonymity as participants may identify each other when in the community. The confidentiality of participants is important given the relatively small size of the Eritrean community in Toronto.

Aware of these limitations, steps were put in place to reduce the impact of these shortcomings. First, in all interviews the investigator did not openly interfere in the discussion, thus allowing participants to fully engage in the topic without interruption. Second, to ensure confidentiality the researcher ensured personal information remains undisclosed.

Quantitative Approach

A mixed method approach can frequently add credibility to a study as it is able to work against any weakness inherent in both research approaches. To balance the heavy emphasis on qualitative data, elements of this study utilize quantitative data to compliment the research. For the purposes of this study, there are two quantitative datasets. These instruments include the Permanent Residents Data System (PRDS) as well as a demographic profile submitted by all participants at the commencement of all key informant interviews and focus groups.

PRDS is a comprehensive dataset which contains detailed information on immigrant landing records. The variables in the dataset include immigration class, country of birth, country of last permanent residence, year of landing as well as several other categories. These variables are available for each immigrant entering Canada from 1980 to 2005. While the focus of this study is on Eritrean youth raised in Canada, the PRDS provides demographic characteristics of immigrants which is critical in setting a foundation in which youth have the ability to navigate their identity. The significant findings based on PRDS have been presented in chapter three.

Secondly, quantitative data was collected through a brief survey distributed at the onset of each individual interview and focus group to all participants (questions are available in Appendix 3). The results of the concise survey provide a demographic profile of the participants which is presented in Figure 4.1.

Sample and Recruitment

In total, 12 Canadians of Eritrean descent were recruited, two as individual key informant interviews while the remainder participated in two focus groups. Given the dual qualitative instruments, two sets of criteria were established to recruit key informants and focus group participants.

First, key informants had to be active members in the Toronto Eritrean community and frequently engage with Eritrean youth. As outlined earlier, their involvement in the community allows for a broader understanding of issues facing youth and identity. Meanwhile, greater parameters were set in place for focus group participants by which they must fulfill three requirements. First, at least one parent had to have been born in Eritrea. Second, participants must have been born in Canada or immigrated by the age of ten. Lastly, participants must be between the ages of 18-30 at the time of the research.

As outlined in chapter three a number of Eritreans immigrants are recent arrivals to Canada. Consequently, there are only a few Eritreans above the age of 18 and born in Canada. Therefore, members of the one and a half generation were included to expand the sample size. Since several studies have concluded that members of the one and half as well as the second

generation have similar characteristics (Skyes, 2008) including both sets of generations should not impact the results of the study[16]. Lastly, the composition of the focus groups will attempt to incorporate members of Eritrea's various religious and ethnic groups.

Participants were initially recruited through purposive sampling (Neuman, 2006) from three Eritrean youth association in Toronto. Announcements regarding the study were conducted at events held by these organizations as well as through their email lists. Due to difficulties in recruitment during the initial phase, a snowball sampling technique (Palys, 2003) was also implemented to increase the sample size. While preliminary recruitment began with support from Eritrean youth organizations, most participants were referred to the study by a friend.

The Participants

Participants of the study had various differing characteristics however there are some similarities. Most participants were born in countries such as Sudan and Saudi Arabia. Interestingly, none of the participants were born in Eritrea, although some indicated going there on travels. All participants reside in Toronto, however, two participants spent a number of their formative years in Ottawa, Ontario while an additional participant was raised mostly in London, Ontario. Nearly half (five) of the participants settled in transitional countries prior to arriving in Canada. This explains why most participants were not born in Eritrea or Canada. Despite the multiple migrations, participants have spent most of their time in Canada as all arrived by the age of eight. The majority of participants are either Christian or a member of the Tigrinya speaking ethnic group. The predominance of this group is perhaps due to the snowball sampling technique or my positionality (to be discussed further in the subsequent section). The initial demographic measurements indicate Eritrean youth have a limited tangible attachment to an Eritrean identity. For instance, only four participants have Eritrean Identity (citizenship) cards. Moreover, merely

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[16] For this study, the term second generation will also include the one and half generation .

seven participants are able to speak in one of the Eritrean languages, although most can communicate in it occasionally. Therefore, all key informant interviews and focus groups were conducted in English. The following table summarizes the main characteristics of participants:

Figure 4.1: Demographic Profile of Participants

Name	Gender	Place of Birth	Age	Age at Arrival in Canada	Religion	Ethnic Group
Key Informants						
Yonas[17]	Male	Canada	24	n/a	Christian	Tigrinya
Dawit	Male	Saudi Arabia	27	8	Christian	Tigrinya
Focus Group1						
Zaineb	Female	Saudi Arabia	23	4	Muslim	Jeberti[18]
Adiam	Female	Sudan	20	<1	Christian	Tigrinya
Samrawit	Female	Sudan	25	6	Christian	Tigrinya
Hana	Female	Saudi Arabia	20	2	Muslim	Jeberti
Berhane	Male	Saudi Arabia	25	7	Christian	Tigrinya
Lemlem	Female	Canada	23	n/a	Christian	Tigrinya
Focus Group 2						
Nardos	Female	Germany	22	5	Christian	Bilen
Muna	Female	Saudi Arabia	23	5	Muslim	Tigre
Faniel	Male	Canada	25	n/a	Christian	Tigrinya
Rahwa	Female	Germany	23	7	Christian	Tigrinya

Positionality

Positionality is commonly determined by an individual's relation to 'the other' (Merriam et al, 2001). In any research, it is important to understand one's social location as it may influence the outcome of the study. While conducting the investigation I am acutely aware of my own position. As an Eritrean youth born in the Middle East and arriving in Canada at the age of four, I share a number of similarities with the participants. My status as an insider most likely aided in the recruitment process and may have enabled participants to project forthright and candid responses. Positivists argue that researchers as insiders provide thoughtful meanings of

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[17] To ensure confidentiality all names are pseudonyms created by the author.
[18] As indicated in Chapter 3, Jeberti are Muslim members of the Tigrinya speaking ethnic group who view themselves as distinct. Jeberti are not officially recognized as a separate ethnic group by the Eritrean government, as they are amalgamated into the Tigrinya category.

experience (Merriam et al, 2001). On the other hand, my female Christian Tigrinya background deems me an outsider to those who do not espouse the same characteristics, which in turn may have limited sample options.

Understanding and fairly representing the participants' perspectives is a key element of any research. Conversely, through the analysis I am reflective of any assumptions I carry and accordingly there is constant aspiration to be impartial and objective. Regardless of my perceived insider position it is recognized that no research can be fully objective as all are subject and carry various assumptions.

Limitations of the Study

In all research there are shortcomings, this investigation of Eritrean youth is no different. Briefly there are three main limitations of this study: a) the sample size of twelve is small; b) a significant number of the participants are female and; c) this study lacks a proportionate distribution of participants from various religious and ethnic groups. Incorporating greater diversity in the sample size may provide richer and varied data. Moreover, these weaknesses do not enable the study to be generalizable to the Eritrean second generation population in Toronto. Rather it is exploratory and seeks to discover major themes within the topic of identity.

In brief, this chapter has presented a rationale in selecting a qualitative in-depth understanding of identity as well as achieving a demographic profile through a quantitative approach. While most of the participants were born outside of the Canada, all arrived prior to the age of eight. The remainder of this paper will present the findings and explore its contribution to the existing body of literature.

Chapter 5

Findings: Acceptance and Belonging

The previous chapter outlined the methodological process in which the data has been completed. In this chapter the key findings of this research paper are analyzed based on information collected from two primary data sources: a) the focus group discussions with ten Eritrean youths and b) semi-structured interviews held with two key informants. The research findings are presented in four sections. The first section deals with the nature and characteristics of Eritrean youth identity. In this regard, the specific role played by parents, friends and the Eritrean community as facilitators in the development of Eritrean identity is highlighted. The second section examines the characteristics of "being an Eritrean youth" in Canada. Under this theme are discussed three important issues—first, how Eritrean youths express their Eritrean identity in Toronto, their racialized identity and their struggles in retaining certain aspects of their Eritrean identity based on struggles experienced with parents and the community as well as the political and religious divisions. The third section outlines being Canadian. Under this topic there is also a discussion of an Eritrean-Canadian hyphenated identity as well as observations of Canada's multiculturalism policy and its impact on their identity. The chapter ends with a discussion of the main themes in conjunction with the existing literature.

Section 1: Nature and Characteristics of Eritrean Youth Identity

During both the focus groups and key informant interviews, most participants interpreted identity as a vital component of the self as it imparts a sense of acceptance and provides the ability to shape one's future. When discussing identities, focus group participants frequently alluded to its ability in allowing an attachment to a community. In other words, it permits for a sense of belonging. Focus group participant Nardos indicated that identity allows individuals to

be part of a larger collective and assumes an acceptance within that particular group. This sense of belonging enables participants to be anchored in their sense of self. Additionally, it provides social networks through which one may gain a sense of support and obligation from its members.

When specifically examining an Eritrean identity, many participants said they were proud to be Eritreans. Yet several found difficulty in providing a definition of an Eritrean identity.

Zaineb for example stated that being Eritrean is:

> Something that we know is there but it's something hard to define. And then you run into issues when you try to define it. So what makes you Eritrean, because you speak Tigrinya? Or if you don't then you're not Eritrean? I don't know, I find that question really hard to define.

As outlined, participants exhibited difficulty in providing a clear definition as it may create a situation in which some are denied their Eritrean ancestry. Perhaps due to the inability to place clear parameters, there seems to be a tendency among the second generation Eritrean youths to focus on primordial elements of their identity – an identity placed upon them through birth. As Berhane pointed out:

> Aren't you Eritrean because you are born Eritrean? You can be raised in any way your parents want to but you are Eritrean because both your parents are Eritrean.

Nearly all participants agreed that an individual outside of the Eritrean ancestry is unable to claim an Eritrean identity as their own, regardless of their capacity to embrace the culture. This primordialism seems to be rooted in "race" as Rahwa pointed out:

> Let's say a white man says he wants to be Eritrean, he will never ever be Eritrean. He can learn the Eritrean culture and Eritrean traditions and language - he can learn, but he can never be born Eritrean.

"Race" is not the sole component of an Eritrean identity, a sense of ancestry and connection to a specific geographical location is also reinforced as a necessary element as suggested by Faniel:

> It's this thing of interchangeability that undermines the importance of land and ancestry and the connection. I was born in Canada, but I always believe

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that you are not always born where you come from and I think that works in both directions. I can go to a bush right now and collect land… even though they will laugh at me and maybe think I'm a foreigner - I still have certain legitimacy there [Eritrea]. If you are British in Kenya, Afrikaner in South Africa or Italian in Eritrea I do not believe that you will be fully accepted nor do I necessarily think you should. There's no hostility, I've seen Italians speak wicked Tigrinya with much better *injera*[19] hands than myself but I don't think that you can erase history and start over in one generation to earn something that you don't necessarily have access to.

For the participants Eritrean identity is difficult to define. Nevertheless at the basic level it can be understood as rooted in ancestry and race. Given that Eritrean youth have not lived in Eritrea, expressing their identity is facilitated by parents, friends and the community.

Facilitators of Eritrean Identity: The Role of Parents

Undoubtedly parents are vital in fostering a cohesive Eritrean identity as none of the participants have resided in Eritrea and only a few have been there on their travels. Through their lived experienced in Eritrea, parents have the ability to transfer the characteristics, morals, values and traditions of what it means to be Eritrean to their children. In a sense parents become the teachers and facilitators of deciphering and establishing the requirements of being Eritrean. Without parents, the Eritrean identity of youth would be solely based on racial and physical appearances. As Nardos stated:

> If my parents gave birth to me and they disappeared, the only thing that makes me Eritrean are my phenotypical features - I look like an Eritrean girl and then everything else is them.

Berhane echoed Nardos's comment by further acknowledging the significant role of parents:

> I'm almost certain that if I wasn't raised by my parents, Eritrean to Eritrean people, I would be a completely different person. I can be sure of that.

An active role from parents is critical in exposing members of the second generation to the Eritrean identity. Thus far it seems youth continue to identify with being Eritrean for two

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[19] A staple type of thin bread eaten at most meals without utensils.

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main reasons. First, it is part of their primordial identity and second the main tenets of their identity have been facilitated through its inheritance from parents.

Facilitators of Eritrean Identity: The Role of Friends

Following the critical role of parents, friendships play a secondary role in developing an Eritrean identity. Nationality is an irrelevant marker in the selection of friendship. However sharing similarities or following a parallel immigration path often attracts participants when developing friendships with certain individuals.

> Your friends are your chosen family. You don't get to choose who your family is but your friends support you with anything regardless if they're Eritrean or not. They help solidify your identity, they help make up your identity, reinforce it. So they play a role. (Zaineb)

Friends, in addition to family play an important role in bringing an awareness of one's identity. Although most of their friends are of non-Eritrean origin, for many participants their core circle of friends are Eritrean. Interestingly, this core group often emerged from social networks established by parents during their socialization as indicated by Nardos:

> I've never consciously looked for Eritrean friends. If my parents took me to a Jamaican girl's house every Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter I think I would be best friends with her but they didn't – they took me to Eritrean people's house. I never was like I need more Eritrean friends let me go look for them. They were always kind of around me or through family friends.

Thus, while parents play a role in transferring the Eritrean cultural traditions they also assist in the development of long-lasting friendships. All of this influences the participants' vision of an Eritrean identity.

Among Eritrean friends, identity can be strengthened as it provides an opportunity to further learn nuances of being Eritrean. Meanwhile, the experience of non-Eritrean friendships offers an opportunity in which their Eritrean difference can be emphasized and performed.

While parents and friends play a regular role in shaping Eritrean identity, the community of Eritreans is also influential in showcasing the identity through activities and expectations.

Facilitators of Eritrean Identity: The Role of the Community

As focus group participants emphasized the relevant role of parents and friends, key informants primarily stressed the importance of the Eritrean community in assisting youths in discovering their identity:

> What keeps identity strong is the community and how well they are organized, and that's what keeps identity going (Dawit).

As a result, youth may turn to the community to grasp a broader awareness of Eritrean identity. Through various community gatherings such as festivals, sporting events and Eritrean national holidays, youth have the opportunity to engage with their Eritrean peers and gain a collective sense of being Eritrean. Yonas is aware that community events in Toronto allow individuals to get a sense of Eritrean culture, particularly if they do not have established roots with Eritrea. Nevertheless, Dawit further stated that a community cannot be sustained without a strong identity:

> In order to build a strong community together we need to have a strong sense of identity. Without an identity I don't think the community can be built.

Thus, the community and the identity are intertwined. While youth utilize it to gain awareness of their identity, the very same identity is necessary in order to foster an effective community.

Based on the above research findings it seems Eritrean youths characterize identity as an element at the core of an individual's sense of self which provides the ability to belong to a group. Meanwhile Eritrean identity in particular is based on a primordial sense – ancestry and "race". For the participants, Eritrean identity is viewed and understood through three prisms. First, parents are the main facilitators in developing an identity, while friendships - although developed serendipitously as the participants did not actively seek Eritrean friends - also play a

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significant role in the development and maintenance of Eritrean identity. Lastly, key informants highlight the importance of the community in strengthening Eritrean identity.

Section 2: Being Eritrean

Defining an Eritrean was difficult for several focus group and key informant participants, however, 'being Eritrean' was slightly easier to outline. The key elements in expressing an Eritrean identity are through language and frequent participation in community activities.

Language was consistently mentioned by focus group participants and key informants as a key element of the Eritrean identity. Yet despite its significance merely a handful noted their ability to comprehend or communicate in one of the Eritrean languages. Rather, English was the primary language used when communicating to all individuals. Perhaps being mindful of this issue Nardos did not view language as a requirement in establishing an Eritrean identity:

> I think speaking one of the languages of Eritrea doesn't make you more Eritrean but it helps you deeply immerse in Eritrean culture and situations. When you go there you can do more, when you go to an Eritrean crowd you can communicate better and make more relationships but I don't think it makes you any more or less Eritrean. Speaking about Eritreans in Toronto I don't think it makes you Eritrean. I don't think it's the rule that Eritrean kids speak Tigrinya or a language. I think its sort of the exception: 'oh you speak Tigrinya that's amazing'. And speaking Bilen is definitely not expected of any Eritrean Bilen person.

There seems to be a general acceptance of low levels of language acquisition without it impacting an individual's ability to express their Eritrean identity. If language is not an identity marker, engaging in community activities can be an alternative option in articulating that identity. Nonetheless there were no clear indications of the specific ways in which Eritrean youths actively performed their identity in Toronto.

> We have our Independence Day parties, our Martyr's Day event. We hold events as Eritreans but it's not conscious. Its not like, 'I'm going to an event today because I want to practice my Eritreanness'. You just go because you want to be around other Eritreans on that day and support. (Samrawit)

While some youth may occasionally participate in community activities, many indicated that although important, participation in cultural activities in addition to speaking a language were not deemed as essential aspects of being Eritrean, but is rather an element of choice. As Lemlem suggested:

> I personally believe that if your bloodline is Eritrean than you are Eritrean but if you don't choose to identify yourself as Eritrean that's your choice. No one can enforce that on you.

The element of choice also exists with respect to speaking the language, consuming traditional food and partaking in traditional customs such as listening to music as outlined by Zanieb:

> I know people who are proud Eritreans but they don't speak Tigrinya or necessarily live in an Eritrean household. They don't eat the food or really like the music or any of those labels that we put on culture – that it's like music, food and dance – but if you ask them, they'll say "I am an Eritrean".

Given that there seems to be an element of choice in being an Eritrean there remains a strong sense of pride. Thus, it seems being Eritrean is also rooted in a national identity. Participants continually indicated pride in being Eritrean while disregarding their ethnic affiliation. It is through the influence of parents, friends and the community, Eritrean second generation youth are able to understand what it means to be Eritrean.

A Racialized Identity

A clear re-emerging theme throughout the interviews, particularly in the focus groups is the impact of "race" on identity. As outlined in the literature review, "race" is frequently understood as socially constructed thus carrying various interpretations pending on the time period and geographical location. In the focus groups, participants openly acknowledged their "black" identity. This seems to be a generational shift, as parents for the most part, focus on their dissimilarity from other blacks.

Our parents try to make the distinction and say 'they're black, you're Eritrean' but I mean at the end of the day you're black I don't know what other way to explain it (Hana).

While participants indicated the first generation's inability to categorize themselves as a segment of the "black" identity, the generational shift arises with the participants who unanimously acknowledged Eritreans as members of the "black" community. Their rationale for acknowledging Eritreans as "black" arises from multiple factors including skin colour, lineage, and a connection to Africa as well as other disaporic countries. Most significantly through blackness and the "black" struggle participants feel they are legitimized in Canada.

> I find that I'm more black than anything else in terms of color...I find that's why we are considered black because we have the same struggles, we share the same experience of slavery or racism and that's why we can relate to Caribbean people or somebody who looks black and why we would say we are the same...I find that their struggle and being black and blackness and where black people get in terms of hierarchy or the black right to vote, that affects me....blackness does affect who I am. (Nardos)

In spite of the belief that an acceptance of "black" identity provides recognition in the Canadian society participants felt their blackness was being denied by other members of the "black" community. Adiam demonstrated the denial of her "black" identity began at an early age:

> Some black people don't see us as black though. I remember when I was a little younger I had a lot of black friends...some of them didn't really see me as black, they joke around and say you're not black.

Participants speculate this perception arises from their lighter skin tone, varying hair texture as well as cultural differences. Following on the experiences of a "black" identity, participants indicate a denial of their African status. These designations make it difficult for members of the Eritrean second generation to feel welcomed within the broader "black" identity thus lacking a sense of belonging.

Based on the above research findings, it seems Eritrean youths have a symbolic attachment to Eritrea. The participants attend large annual events while lacking tangible identity markers such as a large social network, active participation in the community, political engagement and language acquisition. As noted earlier, although important, participation in various cultural functions and traditional rituals, comprehension of one of the Eritrean languages and shared experience were not identified as essential aspects of an Eritrean identity. These findings suggest that choice is reserved primarily among tangible and observable cultural methods of measuring Eritrean identity. Moreover, the element of choice implies a post-structuralist form of identity in which participants develop an identity based on decisions and adaptations (Eid, 2007). Since observable markers of identity are not vital to expressing an Eritrean identity, national identity seems to be at the core of the identity.

The research findings also reveal that for the participants there does not seem to be a conflict between being "black" and Eritrean. While participants and key informants acknowledged that some youths in Toronto maintain the same perspective as first generation immigrants from Eritrea that they are not "black", most view themselves to be a part of the "black" community. Through blackness, the Eritrean youth are able to relate to slavery, racism and settling in a "white" colony. Similar to being occasionally denied a "black" identity, youth face struggles in retaining an Eritrean identity due to expectations by parents and the community as well as through existing political and religious divisions.

Struggles in Retaining Eritrean Identity: Role of Parents and the Community

Various organizations, discussion groups and community activities allow Eritrean youths in Toronto to retain their national identity. Nonetheless struggles in developing the identity may occur primarily through two methods. First, parents place high expectation on youth to maintain

a specific form of identity. Second, judgments made within the Eritrean community create difficulties for youth to develop their individual identity. Perhaps these difficulties arise due to culture conflict over practical issues such as living independently and dating. Nonetheless, parents and the community insist youth follow an identical path as they did in Eritrea regardless of their migration as illustrated by Zaineb:

> They [parents] expect you to be a certain way and their children to be a certain way. It's just, "okay we're going to migrate from here to here to here but our kids are going to grow up the just the way we did at their age."

Youth find it unrealistic that parents expect a similar upbringing and behaviour from them given that they are being raised in Canada. Zaineb continued to indicate that the Eritrean community can be critical of youth who do not follow an accepted path.

> The identity is beautiful but the community can be judgmental at times. Because of that some people might ruin themselves for the community. And than by default they are kind of loosing their ability to practice or be around Eritreans.

These judgments refer 'to just about everything' (Hana) including clothing attire, education as well as tone of voice when speaking to elders. Muna illustrated her personal example of dating:

> I think there's a conflict with what is expected from me as an Eritrean and what I want to do…For instance my boyfriend is not Eritrean…and that's not accepted within the Eritrean community as being okay.

Expanding from Muna's case, it seems parents insist youth marry an individual of Eritrean descent. Eritrean youth interpret this as an idealistic goal on the part of parents. Samrawit pointed to the different perspectives and expectations parents and the second generation have within the topic of dating and marriage:

> I think our parents want us to marry Eritrean and it sort of not realistic here. It would be nice but it's not the end all be all thing. And that's how they make it out to be sometimes.

It seems that regardless of the issue – whether it be clothing attire or dating choices - the community is constantly imposing their opinion, leading Faniel to refer to the community as 'the

third person in the room'. Perhaps based on these expectations Eritrean youth decide to remove themselves from the community and limit their Eritrean identification.

Simultaneously, key informant Dawit outlines the inability of the Eritrean community to engage youth through regular activities, besides sporting events. Several participants remarked on the existence of two community centers in Toronto which does not allow for a single platform in disseminating ideas or delivering solid successful activities such as Tigrinya classes. In other words, there does not seem to be a sufficient amount of effort put forth by the community to develop an identity. Despite this postulation, youth continue to feel a sense of being Eritrean.

To summarize, many second generation Eritrean youth indicated that parents and the community are the optimum vessels in acquiring Eritrean identity. Yet simultaneously, at times the rigid expectations of the aforementioned groups may have the capability of pushing youth away from further exploring their identity and participating in the community.

Struggles in Retaining Eritrean Identity: Political and Religious Divisions

Political divisions and to a limited extent religious division seem to implicitly affect the development of an Eritrean identity among participants. A number of events organized by community members in Toronto are often affiliated with either one of the two Eritrean political parties. The main political divisions include those who support the current ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ)[20] government (commonly referred to as Shabeia) or the main opposition grouped frequently referred to as Jebha.

While focus group participants did not indicate any direct involvement with either of the parties, the political divisions are clearly observable in the community and may have an unbeknownst impact on Eritrean identity among youth. A handful of participants described themselves as not involved in Eritrean political affairs yet they are critically aware of the divide

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[20] This is the name assumed by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) following independence.

in the community. Given their apolitical behaviour, the divisions do not play an obvious impact on their identity as illustrated by Rahwa:

> I am apolitical. I'm not indulged in the political issues in Eritrea I know what I hear, but I don't know if it's correct or not. I have my views on the government but... I don't think it affects my identity.

Although a few participants may feel the political divisions do not impact their identity, others such as Zanieb were vocal about the clear impact of those divisions:

> When I saw the divisions and when I saw people trying to pull you in different ways - if you go here you are this or if you don't attend than you're this. You try to work together and work with people but they are stuck in their mentality it kind of makes you think that maybe you shouldn't go to that event because the connotation is that you are member of this group or that.

The above quote highlights a possible reason for Eritrean youths to be reluctant in attending community functions. As key informant Yonas stated:

> I think there were more kids involved in the community before. In the nineties there was Eritrean soccer and all that and I don't see those same people there anymore. I try to talk to them about it and they are just like "don't talk to me about it, that's yesterday's news".

Nevertheless participants recognized the practical impact of political divisions in the future. For instance, if participants choose to contribute towards an initiative, whether in Eritrea or Toronto, there is an awareness of implicitly supporting a particular political identity.

> I don't feel right now it [political divisions] affects my identity but I think that if I was to start contributing to Eritreans back home the method that I would do so has a political undertone whether I'd like to think so or not (Nardos).

The focus group discussions further suggested that not only do parents play a role in shaping their children's overall perspective on Eritrean identity but they also play a role in the development of a political identity as noted by key informant Dawit:

> Youth do listen to their parents for the most part. They will defend what their parents believe. And at the end of the day even if their parents are misinformed they don't want to disobey or go against the teachings of their parents.

Political and religious divisions seem to be tied together as a result of the as a result of the historical division during the struggle for independence. As the political divisions continued post-independence, religious divisions, as argued by Faniel, remain prevalent and are experienced in the diaspora:

> If you look at the revolution it started by lowlander Muslim, non-Tigrinya at least or whatever ethnic groups. And because of all the political divisions and those hostility EPLF/ELF divisions with highlander Christian Tigrinya dominated, they've all been connected and politicized and when you come here those play out, I find.

Religious divisions between Christians and Muslims are obvious in the Eritrean diaspora. Muna indicated that she had the opportunity to interact with members of both faiths yet she acknowledges the existence of religious divisions:

> I've been around Eritrean Muslims who only stick to each other. I've been to Eritrean Muslim weddings where I've never seen them before because they don't go outside their group of Eritrean Muslims.

Initially Eritrean second generation youth stated that political or religious divisions do not impact their overall identity however after some deliberation Berhane conceded an impact on identity:

> As I sit here and think about it, it definitely would [impact your identity] because you don't see the collective group of Eritreans in Toronto. If you don't see them as a strong group but you see the division, than you are not going to have all the wanting or willingness to participate in Eritrean events because you see the division and you don't really want be a part of that.

Expectations from parents, the community as well as political and religious divisions seem to have created an atmosphere in which the second generation may find difficulty in maintaining and expressing an Eritrean identity. With these difficulties Eritrean youth face a denial of their Eritrean identity within the community. There are a multitude of factors which can

be used to deny the second generation of their identity; this is most succinctly illustrated by Nardos:

> [My Eritrean identity is denied] by people who speak better Tigrinya than me, people who've been there (I've never been there), people who are part of some group that have a strong connection to back home like Shabeia group or something, they might say I'm less Eritrean than them. I've been denied that way, but that has never shaken my internal identity.

These everyday struggles faced by youth impact the formation of their identity. In order to solidify their identities these struggles need to be acknowledged and amended by parents and the Eritrean community. Regardless, youth will continue (for the most part) to identify with being Eritrean based on their primordial roots and national pride.

Section 3: Being Canadian

Similar to the initial difficultly in defining an Eritrean identity, youths found it equally complex to grasp the Canadian identity. For many it is vague, elusive and lacks primordial uniqueness. Participants limit the Canadian identity as referring simply to a *de jure* understanding of identity.

> Anyone with a citizenship is Canadian. The thing about Canada is that it's a country of immigrants, basically there is not really one identity. (Samrawit)

As Samrawit indicated any individual carrying Canadian citizenship is capable of identifying as Canadian. With this broad definition there is a limited sense of shared experience or commonality among citizens. Popular thought assumes Canadian identity is based on a love of hockey, the emblematic maple leaf and enjoying winter. However participants repeatedly asserted the inability to partake in any tangible aspects of "being Canadian" thus making it a hollow identity as passionately stated by Faniel:

> It's a hollow fake ass identity propped up on land that doesn't belong to whatever the Canadians today say they are. It's cultural-less to me to almost. I have so much more respect and I think there's so much more richness in

legitimate historical culture to be Eritrean. To me it's simply political. I'll put on a hat when I need to and then take it off and eat *injera*.

This straight forward discussion of Canadian identity illustrates the high value participants place on culture and their perception that Canada lacks culture as well as distinctiveness.

In summation, participants stated that anyone residing in Canada can be considered Canadian without acquiring any of the Canadian values, culture or even language. This makes it difficult to clearly define a Canadian identity. In turn, Lemlem indicated this causes obstacles with the first generation as they perceive themselves as Canadian even though youth interpret their Canadian attributes as distinct from their parents' identity.

While any individual may become Canadian, participants stress that the conventional image of a Canadian does not reflect the diversity of the population. Eritrean second generation youth perceive a prototypical Canadian as a "white" Anglo-Saxon. Accordingly, participants express difficulty in being accepted as they do not carry the same image:

> I think ideally I would like to say that how you look doesn't reflect whether you're Canadian or not. It's your experience, where you live, your environment that makes you Canadian. If you've lived in Canada all your life I feel you're Canadian. But realistically I don't think that's what everybody's view is. (Muna)

Muna continued to illustrate the variance between internal and external identity. Internally, Eritrean youth focus on their experiences within Canada to identify as being Canadian. Yet the participants acknowledged the same experiences are not regularly recognized among the Canadian population as being Canadian. Rather it appears an emphasis is placed on their (external) racial features which are used to deny their Canadian identity.

Despite the assertions that a Canadian identity is indefinable, participants have developed a Canadian mindset based on an acceptance of freedoms and Canadian values. In addition to the differences established within a lived Canadian experience, participants acknowledged

recognizing their Canadian status when among Eritrean first generation immigrants as well as when traveling abroad. This observation is concisely summarized by Zaineb who stated:

> I identify with being Canadian but only in a context. I don't walk around thinking "I'm Canadian great!" but if you're in a different country then I'm Canadian or if you're in a roomful of Eritreans, like older people, then yeah I'm Canadian, you guys are different.

When travelling outside of Canada, being Canadian often arises. Through travels participants are truly able to decipher their Canadian attitude and acknowledge their difference from others. The sense of Canadian difference includes travels to Eritrea. As Lemlem explained, socialization in Canada leads to a sense of difference even when among country mates in Eritrea:

> Even when I was in Eritrea it was like I'm not Eritrean, I'm Canadian. I just could not identify myself with these people. It was so different.

During their travels if they are asked by locals about their origin participants indicated their residence as Canada but significantly did not identify as being Canadian.

Overall, identification with the Canadian identity seems to be situationally embraced. At times participants utilize their Canadian status strategically, particularly during their travels in order to gain security. This is poignantly illustrated by Faniel:

> I will be the first person to put their hand up and say 'I'm Canadian' when I've got a passport - when I get on a plane, for protection and diplomatic reasons. That is the extent of my attachment.

In summation, it seems Canada's history and slogan as being a nation founded on multiculturalism and diversity has not translated into the dominant representation of being Canadian. Only a handful of participants identify as being Canadian, while most use the identity for convenience purposes in instances such as travelling and gaining diplomatic protection. Moreover, due to a perceived lack of physical features encompassing a prototypical Canadian there is a sense that they are not true Canadians. Based on this, it may be understandable that participants have a weak attachment to the Canadian identity. Nonetheless, participants

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acknowledged that their mindset and viewpoint coincides with "Canadian" expectations, even though they are not characterized as the prototypical Canadian.

Eritrean-Canadian or Canadian-Eritrean?

Eritrean second generation youth have a dual exposure to the Eritrean and Canadian cultures and histories. It appears knowledge about Eritrea has been acquired through the transfer of culture by parents while Canadian values have been grasped formally through the education system as well as informally during their experience living in Canada. Based on their dual familiarities participants have established a hyphenated identity. The importance of placing one identity over the other is difficult for a few participants to select.

> I don't know if I would put one before the other but I would say I am both because both countries and both cultures have created who I am (Samrawit).

Meanwhile others recognize their multiple identities, including their Canadian, Eritrean, religious and gender identities as all playing an important role. Nonetheless, there is a clear emphasis of an Eritrean identity as the majority of participants identify precisely as Eritrean-Canadian. As Hana illustrated, an emphasis of the Eritrean identity may be rooted in their sense of self:

> I feel like Eritrea is the backbone to my identity. The first thing I think about is Eritrea; so Eritrean first and then Canadian.

While the majority of participants willingly carry a hyphenated identity, members of the second focus group as well as key informant Yonas acknowledged the external pressures in espousing that identity. Specifically, participants indicated that they do not express complete liberty in choosing their own identity. In other words, a hyphenated identity is bestowed on the second generation as a reminder of their difference and inability to be any more Canadian than they are Eritrean.

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"We are the Canadian, you are a visitor." So you can feel at home but not too at home and get too comfortable because you're Eritrean-Canadian. It's such a common story. It's usually people of colour and not just Eritreans but we fall within that group and that's why the hyphen is there and that's why Eritrean comes first (Faniel).

Faniel stated that racialized communities are not fully recognized as Canadian and thus a hyphenated identity is the best that can be offered to Eritreans and all other racialized groups. There is a perception of difference promoted by the general Canadian society has perhaps emphasized through a hyphenated identity. Conceivably multiculturalism policy creates an environment in which a hyphenated identity is expected.

The practice of these identities seems to be rooted in relation to whiteness. A few participants remarked that "white" individuals are not required to develop a hyphenated identity. Those community members can easily blend into being Canadian without being further probed for their "real" ancestry. Since a hyphenated identity is a reminder of difference there is a desire for nearly all participants to place their Eritrean identity ahead of their Canadian identity. There may be a number of explanations for this postulation which are outside the scope of this paper, however due to the large parental influence and Canada's encouragement of individuals retaining their cultural, ethnic and national identities, it is not surprising that youth select an Eritrean-Canadian identity over an African-Canadian identity, despite identifying with being "black" and African.

External groups continue to play a role in the designation of a hyphenated identity not only within the society but also among Eritreans. The fact that the Eritrean community did not accept them as "Full Eritreans" - as they were perceived as "Canadians" during their travels to Eritrea, as well as in Canada by those who were born in Eritrea - may be a further reason as to why participants ascribe to a hyphenated identity to acknowledge their dual experiences. Participants assume the external designation of hyphenated identity is based on their "race" as

they do not physically represent the typical Canadian. As Lemlem indicated, "I don't look Canadian and all that but I still consider myself Canadian". Remarkably, the perceived inability to be described as a prototypical Canadian has not shaken their internal identity, as some participants continue to classify themselves, at least partially, as Canadian.

Multiculturalism: An Ineffective Policy for Eritrean Youth

The aim of multiculturalism is to allow individuals and communities to retain their ethnic identity, to take pride in their ancestry and to have an open sense of belonging (Canadian Heritage, 2008). In popular culture, multiculturalism is often described as Canada's identity. It is associated with equality, acceptance of diversity, ethnic understanding, harmony and a facilitation of the overall integration process.

A plurality of focus group participants are aware of Canada's multiculturalism policy and are able to define it as a policy which seeks to accept all cultures while simultaneously celebrating its diversity. As most clearly outlined by key informant Dawit, multiculturalism entails a value and welcoming of different cultures in Canada. Perhaps following popular conceptions, multiculturalism for focus group participants and key informant Yonas, is the basis for Canadian history and is utilized as a unifying mythology to be embraced by all Canadians. Since Canadian history generally lacks a bloody revolution, a common ancestry or any other basis of a primordial identity, participants acknowledged the ability of multiculturalism policy to unite Canadians based on their commonality within their ethno-racial difference.

Overall, a handful of participants recognized the positive aspects of multiculturalism while the majority is critical of how it is enacted on a daily basis. The migration of Eritreans through several transitional countries prior to arriving in Canada, led many to suppress their identity and quickly assimilate to the dominant culture. Conceding the difficulties faced in those

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countries leads participants to be grateful for Canada in being able to truly demonstrate its democratic and inclusive values. This is particularly indicated by key informant Yonas:

> Those policies [multiculturalism] that they set up are good principles to work from so people know that they don't have to suppress their identity. When Eritrean people go to different countries like Saudi Arabia you're not necessarily able to practice your religious sentiments openly in public or even cultural celebrations. So they're coming from places where they're unable to do that. For Canada to be able to do that they are most definitely showing that they are a democratic country open to other people's cultures. So it most definitely enables people to retain that sense of Eritreanness.

Perhaps since multiculturalism policy facilitates an integrationist objective, participants interpret it as being most effective for newcomers. Regardless of a formal written policy, Eritreans will continue to hold events and express the culture as outlined by Hana:

> With or without that act we're still going to have our events, we're still going to see each other, we're still going to express our culture and do everything that we normally would do.

Given key informant Dawit's emphasis on the importance of the community in fostering an identity, establishing a policy such as multiculturalism is presumed to be irrelevant so long as the community is organized.

Nearly all participants stated that multiculturalism does not contribute in the retention of their Eritrean identity. Rather expressing a sense of 'Eritreanness' is understood as innate and not dictated by Canadian policies. Instead, it is a policy which facilitates the commodification of Eritrean culture. This occurs through various mechanisms including the current proliferation of the shemagh scarf and the popular trend in consuming 'ethnic' food such as sushi or burritos. Commodification most commonly occurs through the celebration of multiculturalism week established in several institutions such as schools. As Nardos simplistically illustrated individuals are encouraged to publicly celebrate their difference through clothing, food and dance during one

particular week. Upon the completion of the 'spectacle' (Bramadat, 2001) individuals are expected to revert to the 'Canadian' norms in clothing and dietary practices.

> You have a week to wear your colourful clothes and then anytime after that if you wore your *zuria* to school every day being multicultural you would kind of be questioned…But on multicultural day if you came in your normal clothes and you were clearly not Canadian, as in not Caucasian, they would say: 'how come you're not wearing your country clothes?" That is what multiculturalism is - wearing your multicultural clothes on the one day and every other day there is an expectation of assimilation. (Nardos)

While it appears multiculturalism does not facilitate the development and retention of an Eritrean identity it does however provide an opportunity for the general (Anglo-Saxon) Canadian population to demonstrate their tolerance and approval of different cultures. The ability of "whites" to legitimize cultures is outlined by Nardos:

> You're different from Canadians and you have a different culture but that culture is kind of seen as low. But when white people go to an Eritrean restaurant or Indian restaurant they are cultured…But if you're actually from that culture eating with your hands its not high culture.

irony/ paradox

Expanding from the cultural spectacles and commodified aspects of multiculturalism in Canada, participants outlined the policy's shortcoming in its inability to be evident in a consistent daily approach. While the goal of multiculturalism may include a fostering of inclusiveness it does not lead to the elimination of perceived racism and discrimination among participants as stated by Samrawit:

> To be honest I don't really think that act means anything because even though Canada is multicultural and pretty accepting there are still issues with racism. You still do feel different, and there are still stigmatizations in institutions.

Participants outlined that multiculturalism provides an opportunity to conceal and promote racism which exists in various areas including educational institutions and the workplace.

In order for Eritrean youth to be less critical of multiculturalism they requested tangible methods in which the policy can be utilized to benefit both newcomers and the Canadian-born

population. Without this anchoring, multiculturalism becomes a far fetched aspiration remaining in an idealistic world. The sentiments of Faniel succinctly and bluntly summarize the viewpoints of several participants by stating:

> If you want to aspire towards that [multiculturalism] and be realistic in the sense that we haven't achieved it that's one thing. But in saying this is how the nation will operate from this day onward when you have racism, you dispose the First Nations, you can't acknowledge slavery, you deport the Japanese and all of a sudden you write stuff on paper and from that day onward we're going to treat people differently? Nah man, you guys are kidding yourself.

Multiculturalism is a positive strategy as it indicates (and potentially facilitates) the acceptance of all individuals. In theory the policy enables acceptance and belonging within the broader Canadian culture however participants are critical of multiculturalism and do not recognize its existence as essential in retaining an Eritrean identity nor facilitating a Canadian identity. Alluding to assimiliationist policies in parts of Europe, participants indicated the ability of Eritreans to maintain their cultural identity regardless of the receiving country's policies. Therefore, if the Eritrean identity can continue to manifest itself in Europe then surely similar steps can be taken in Canada.

Perceptively, participants are attentive to the acceptance of commodified cultures by the dominant 'white' society. Yet the dominant group lacks that acceptance when cultural rituals are conducted by members of the cultural community. Perhaps this illustrates the existence of white privilege in legitimizing cultural behaviours. In short, it seems that without a concrete procedure in acknowledging the history and struggles of Canadians, multiculturalism- while good on paper – is incapable of positively impacting the identity of Eritrean youth.

Section 4: Discussion

The findings outlined in this chapter illustrate elements of primordial, symbolic, situational and national forms of identity both in the sense of being Eritrean and Canadian. This

final section of the chapter will explicitly discuss the various elements of these identities in conjunction with the existing literature.

The participants' Eritrean identity is mainly ascribed and taught by their parents. In turn, these primordial ties enable a sense of belonging to the broader Eritrean community. Simultaneously, the lack of clear Canadian primordial markers makes it difficult for youth to feel part of the Canadian community. Interestingly, the primordial identification of Eritrean youth does not lead to an active engagement in the various aspects of being Eritrean. In the clearest sense, the limited number of participants who have the capability in speaking one of the Eritrean languages illustrates the symbolic nature of their identity. Language is a critical benchmark in measuring ethnic identity retention and is a medium of identity performance (Giampapa, 2001). The lack of language comprehension coupled with the participants' limited community involvement leaves few avenues in actively showcasing an Eritrean identity. As youth lack these performative aspects of identity it may widen the generational gap between parents and the community; which may explain some of the difficulties expressed by youth when interacting with parents or the community.

The inability to perform identity is also evident in the Canadian identity. While they all spoke fluent English, one of Canada's official languages, only one participant outlined involvement in Canadian community activities. Few participants were able to define what being Canadian means. All participants, however, acknowledge having a Canadian perspective and mindset in attaining goals and carrying certain expectations. On the surface, it does not seem that acquiring a symbolic Canadian identity impacts their interactions with other Canadians.

The Canadian and particularly Eritrean identities seem to be a symbolic attachment. As stated in the literature review a symbolic ethnic identity is frequently observed when individuals

become acculturated or assimilated into the dominant culture (Isajiw, 1993). Conversely, this research indicates that individuals may equally carry a symbolic identity towards the dominate culture, in addition to their ancestral identity. Therefore, the identity among second generation youth should not simply be understood as accepting the dominant culture in favor of the individual's original culture or vice versa. Rather, it is conceivable that individuals, particularly members of the second generation, do not sense full incorporation into either group.

The situational element of both identities is evident in a number of areas. The most pertinent example is apparent in the development of hyphenated identities. While most participants demonstrated an Eritrean-Canadian identity, the decision to place one particular identity over the other is frequently determined on place or audience. In this situational approach participants may strategically utilize their identity in instances that they are less likely to be 'othered'. The interchangeable element of identity is most prominent within the Canadian identity. Despite its perceived faults as lacking a tangible definition, a few participants choose to identify as being from Canada for the positive political opportunities they stand to gain.

The multiple types of identities including primordial, symbolic and situational elements question the primacy of form of identity. In the case of being Eritrean, there seems to be an emphasis on its primordial nature without actively engaging in traditional rituals distinctive to their ethnic group. Instead there is an emphasis on being from Eritrea. In this respect, the true sense of Eritrean identity seems to rest with nationalism and a national identity. It seems participants have embraced Eriksen's (2005) concept of supra-ethnic community in which there is an emphasis on distinct Eritrean rituals rather than the ethnic customs within the country. This emphasis may be grounded in Eritrea's revolutionary history which led to independence as well as the repeated rejection of an Eritrean identity. All of these events are critical to the foundation

of Eritrea as an independent country and are a recent occurrence in the lives of the participants. Thus, the conception of national identity explains the participants' frequent attendance of Eritrean events based on nationalist gatherings such as Independence Day celebrations as well as Martyr's Day remembrance and less involvement in non-patriotic activities.

The influence of parents is critical given that participants have no direct link to build upon their Eritrean identity. Youth have been socialized in an environment in which a number of parents have vivid memories of Eritrea and were most likely actively engaged in supporting the independence struggle. This atmosphere may have facilitated youth to develop an Eritrean identity, not based on the internal divisions, but on the unifying aspects. Thus, youth define the Eritrean identity in juxtaposition to the values they receive primarily from their parents. Meanwhile, peers are an important pathway towards identity formation, as they provide valuable support and feedback (Tyyskä, 2001). Finally, the community provides a platform to gain awareness of, and perform elements of identity.

Participants, however, do not adhere to their parents' identity in all respects particularly in the formation of a "black" identity. While members of the first generation tend to define themselves based on their common history, members of the second generation have grasped onto blackness and view their Eritrean identity as a component of a much larger "black" identity and community. The participants follow Brown and Rong's (2002) postulation by sympathizing with the experiences of "blacks" and admiring the persistence of civil rights leaders. Through blackness Eritrean youth are emphasizing their hpercollective identity by referring to the "black" diaspora according to Wright's (2004) form of racialized identity. Given that Eritrean youth are raised in Canada and are influenced by an American atmosphere in which there is an existence of the binary "black/white" classification it is perhaps easier for youth to develop a racialized

identity; whilst their parents developed an identity in which "race" is not integral in defining one's social identity (Ibrahim, 2004).

According to Thompson and Carter (1997) Eritrean youth may be in the 'encounter phase' of their racial identity in which there is recognition of the inability to gain full status within the "white" society while seeking to develop a black identity where they can immerse within blackness. Despite carrying a strong attachment and belief in being part of the "black" identity, participants did not select an African-Canadian or "Black-Canadian" identity. Instead there is an explicit focus on their national (Eritrean) identity.

When examining the integration of Eritrean youth into Canadian society it seems they have relinquished a number of the performative aspects of the Eritrean identity and have integrated into the Canadian values and mindset. Yet there continues to be minimal public identification in being Canadian. This may be due to perceived racism in which although it was not explicitly experienced, it frequently arose during interviews. Due to the existence of perceived discrimination its elimination or reduction is important in order to gain a greater sense of cohesion and inclusion among Canadians. The struggle immigrants face with inequality emphasizes the importance of Canadian diversity policies and highlights the limits of current initiatives (Sykes, 2008).

When examining assimilation and acculturation, it seems too early in the lives of the participants to fully determine their level of integration into Canada. Participants can be considered Canadian as they admit to carrying a mindset and aspiring to "Canadian" goals such as pursing education and delaying marriage. Based on the participants' behaviour it is difficult to distinguish them from their Canadian peers. In this respect, they may begin Gordon's (1964) first stage of assimilation (cultural/behaviour assimilation). It is important to note that participants do

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not neglect aspects of Eritrean culture. Therefore, it is difficult to determine if they have fully embraced this first stage of assimilation. Moreover, this study can not speculate on the remaining six steps towards assimilation as participants are in the early stages of their adulthood.

Overall, it is difficult to determine the incorporation level of participants as they seem to lack active and regular participation in both the Canadian and Eritrean communities. Nevertheless, using Berry et al.'s (2006) acculturation postulation, participants can most closely be associated with following the integration strategy. Eritrean youth maintain national pride in their primordial culture while simultaneously espousing a Canadian mindset. None of the participants rejected the influence of being Eritrean and Canadian. In this respect, the two identities are intertwined and meshed.

Policy Interpretation: Multiculturalism

In popular conversations, multiculturalism is often described as Canada's identity. It is associated with equality, acceptance of diversity, ethnic understanding and a facilitation of the integration process. One of its goals is to allow individuals to retain their ethno-racial identity, while simultaneously fostering a Canadian sense of belonging. It seems Eritrean youth have been able to retain patriotic zeal for being Eritrean and have developed a Canadian mindset without fully acknowledging the role of multiculturalism policy. As indicated in the findings, participants are critical of multicultural policy and its reduction of culture to food, fantasy and theatre without an emphasis on history and incorporation of various individuals into the Canadian mosaic through avenues such as history in schools and diversity in the labour market. Thus, echoing the words of several critics of multiculturalism policy including Bissoondath (2002). Multiculturalism presents immigrants and their descendants as exotic without acknowledging the richness which may exist in Canadian culture.

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Multiculturalism is identified as a symbolic policy among Eritrean youth. This may be further illustrated through an examination of the Annual Report on Multiculturalism Act 2006-2007 (Canadian Heritage, 2008), there is little discussion of direct funding towards ethno-racial communities or its impact on the formation of identity among the second generation. Given the acculturation process of second generation youth, it is important for government to support ethno-racial communities to ensure that cultural loss is limited or prevented. As acknowleged by Berry et al, (2006) there are psychological and sociocultural benefits of integration as a opposed to marginalization and exclusion. If cultural retention and identification is shifted towards the private sphere, Canada will not be able to foster a truly multicultural society (Woods, 2008). The tendency for government officials to simply focus on educational and labour market integration is not sufficient in outlining a comprehensive form of integration. Given the shift away from overt discrimination and towards subtle negative stereotypes (Gill, 2007) it is important to focus on cohesion indicators outside of the education and labour market stream. Increasing social integration, promotes the development of inter-ethno-racial relationships which in turn has a positive psychological factor and plays a role in the creation of identity (Kymlicka, 1998). Without strengthening cohesion among Eritrean second generation youth they may continue to identify as outsiders.

Through the two focus groups and two key informant interviews a wide range of topics were discussed including outlining the Eritrean identity and what it means to be Eritrean in Canada. Second generation Eritrean youth have developed a national identity instilled mainly by parents. Simultaneously, they have established a Canadian mindset but only strategically identify as being Canadian.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This paper has outlined a number of relevant points in the discussion of identity and belonging among second generation Eritrean youth. Following the work of a variety of theorists, identity can be understood as fluid as it encompasses several forms of identity including, ethnic, national and racialized identities. For the twelve key informant and focus group participants their identity is fluid and includes various elements of their Eritrean and Canadian perspectives. Examining identity through an ethnic, national and racialized framework brings forth various results. Participants are aware of the ethnic groups and the richness in the Eritrean various cultures, however, it is not their forefront identity. Rather national and racial identities play larger roles and are intertwined. Overall, Eritrean identity seems to be based on patriotism for their ancestral homeland and thus develop a strong attachment to being Eritrean.

For the participants, an Eritrean identity is based on roots to back home, the diasporic community and national pride. When developing this identity parents are the key players as they set the benchmark in determining what it means to be Eritrean. Moreover, friends and members of the community also play an active role. Each party has been able to bring forth a new element in terms of what it means to be Eritrean. These groups are important given that youth have a limited regular interaction with Eritrea.

When examining the Canadian identity, youth are not able to provide a clear definition. It is mostly through travels abroad that participants recognize their Canadian mindset. Acknowledging this mindset illustrates the existence of some form of Canadian identity despite its difficulty in forming a clear definition. Perhaps, greater public attention should be placed on

outlining as well as reinforcing the unity which binds all Canadians. Nonetheless, the main critique of Canadian identity is its lack of cultural richness.

Through each facet of their identity, including their Eritrean, Canadian, and "black" identities, participants expressed a lack of acceptance from members within each community. Specifically, youth are not viewed as "full" Eritreans by their parents, the community and those residing in Eritrea. This is mainly due to their Canadian mindset. Meanwhile, participants feel their Canadian identity is not entirely accepted due to their "race". Lastly, certain members of the "black" community do not perceive Eritreans as "black" as a result of their unique features. Remarkably, despite these occasional rejections of their identities, participants continue to embrace and associate with each of those identities. Nevertheless, youth need to bear in mind that they are members of all these communities. In this respect, they have influence in determining what may be deemed as acceptable. Eritrean youth can use this power to shift any community to incorporate their perceptions, particularly within the Eritrean community. Given this possibility, it is important to recognize that any form of identity, whether it is ethnic, national or racial is not static but rather is constantly shifting.

When residing in Canada, multiculturalism is frequently presented as a policy developed for immigrants. While multiculturalism may help build cohesion it may weaken the Canadian identity. The recurrent criticism of multiculturalism policy from the participants and writers (Bissoondath, 2002; Bramadat, 2001) brings into question whether or not the state should be involved in identities and culture. In other words should sense of belonging and other social integration factors be considered a private responsibility and not incorporated into Canadian policies? This requires further discussion and interpretation in determining the role of the state in multiculturalism and identity formation.

Future Studies

This major research paper has outlined various forms of identity and how they interact with Eritrean youth in Toronto. While this fills a gap in existing literature there continues a number of research avenues which require further examination. The remainder of this paper will outline five major opportunities for research.

First, conducting a study which incorporates a wider variety of participants and a larger sample size will lead to greater diversity and possibly distinctive responses; for instance, involving an increased number of males and/or Muslim participants. Given this study's reliance on females and Christians, it would be valuable to gain the insight of other members of the community in order to provide a broader understanding of Eritrean identity in Canada.

Second, conducting this study in smaller Canadian cities may provide distinct conclusions. While Toronto is home to nearly half of all Eritreans and their descendants, other cities have smaller a community which may reduce opportunities to express an Eritrean identity. Moreover, given the diasporic nature of the discussion, it would be beneficial to determine the forms of Eritrean identity throughout the diaspora. This allows for a comparison of how second generation youth express their Eritrean identity. It may also illuminate various policies which are incorporated by receiving countries which attempt to stimulate positive identity growth.

Third, it is important to track how identity is practiced through adulthood. Since all participants are in their twenties a number of issues such as education, career choices, investment selections and dating/marriages are increasingly playing a prominent role in their identity. These decisions can be life-changing and may be measurable aspects of Eritrean identity retention and integration. For instance, according to Gordon's (1964) postulation of assimilation if Eritrean youth begin to enter mixed marriages they will be further along the assimilation path. An

awareness of integration into the dominant society will bring insight to the possible shifts in identity and the acceptance of the dominant society.

Fourth, several participants referred to carrying a "double life". Presumably this refers to one life among Eritreans (the community and possible peers) while living a separate lifestyle among non-Eritreans. Undoubtedly, juggling these two 'lives' plays an impact on identity. Further research needs to capture the role of "double life" in identity formation.

Lastly, research on both Eritrean youth and members of the first generation are needed. As recent arriving African migrants continued research and awareness of their social as well as economic and political integration is needed particularly as the number of immigrants continue to grow.

This additional research will assist in further determining the elements of identity and how they evolve through the process of migration. This form of research is relevant to Canada as it continues to accept a large number of immigrants annually; thus impacting the sense of who is a Canadian.

Appendix 1
Key Informant Questions

Ice breaker question: Tell me a little about yourself and your connection to the Eritrean community. Tell me about your immigration journey (if you immigrated here).

1. Who is an Eritrean?
    a. What elements comprise of an Eritrean identity?
2. What does it mean to be Eritrean?
3. Do you consider yourself Eritrean?
    a. How do you consider yourself Eritrean?
4. What does being an Eritrean mean to you?
5. Do you feel you belong in the Eritrean community?
    a. How?
6. Can you become Eritrean?
    a. How do you become Eritrean?
7. What does it mean to be Eritrean in Canada?
    a. How do you become Eritrean while in Canada?
    b. Can you be Eritrean and Canadian?
8. Do you feel that being Eritrean is accepted in Canada?
    a. If yes, how?
    b. If no, what should be done?
9. Does Canada's multiculturalism policy assist Eritrean youth in their identity?
    a. How?
10. What allows Eritrean youth in Toronto to be Eritrean?
11. What are some of the difficulties youth face in developing an Eritrean identity?

Appendix 2
Focus Group Questions

In terms of our discussion topic, I'd like to first ask you a few general questions about Eritrean identity.

1. When I use the word 'identity' what first comes to mind?
   a. Can it comprise of person's job status, ethnicity, gender, race?
   b. Is it important to have an identity?

Now I will ask you some questions about being Eritrean

2. Could you please suggest some specific/particular characteristics that make a person Eritrean?
3. Based on these criteria, would you consider yourself an Eritrean?
   a. What makes you say that?
4. Are you proud to be an Eritrean in Toronto?
   a. What makes you say that?
5. Is someone born an Eritrean?
6. Can you 'become' an Eritrean?
   a. If yes: how does an Eritrean who has not been to Eritrea become Eritrean?
7. What role does a person's regional location in Eritrea have on him/her being an Eritrean?
8. As an individual do you 'practice' an Eritrean identity in Canada?
9. What about communication? How important is it to communicate in an Eritrean language in order to 'be' Eritrean?
   a. What language do you communicate with your parents?
   b. What language do you communicate with your friends?

Now I will ask you some questions about how you retain and express Eritrean identity in Canada

10. Could you please tell me some of the ways in which you 'practice' your Eritrean identity?
11. Do you attend Eritrean festivals, recreational activities and/or associations?
    a. What made you say that?
    b. If yes: How frequently do you attend these events?
12. Do you go to Eritrean restaurants? Why or why not?
13. Do you attend religious activities held by Eritreans?
    a. Why?
    b. If yes: How frequently do you attend these activities?
14. Is it important to retain and express an Eritrean identity in Canada?
15. What are some of the difficulties youth face in retaining their identity?

Now I will ask you some questions regarding the role of your family and friends in creating your identity.

16. Do you think your parents had anything to do with the creation of your Eritrean identity?

   a. Could you please explain in detail what they specifically did—if you could recall some incidents from your childhood that would be great!!
17. Did your friends have a role in creating your Eritrean identity?
    a. Could you please explain what they specifically did that—if you could recall some incidents that would be great!!
18. Do you have Eritrean friends?
    a. If yes: Is your relationship with your Eritrean friends the same or different from your non-Eritreans? (i.e., do you feel closer to them)
    b. If yes: Do you have more Eritrean or non-Eritrean friends?
    c. If no: Why?
19. Does the nationality of your friend impact your own Eritrean identity?
    a. How?

Now I will ask you some questions about being Canadian and about having an Eritrean identity in Canada.

20. Who is a Canadian?
    a. Do you see yourself as Canadian? / Are you Canadian? Why?
21. Have you heard of Canada's Multiculturalism policy?
    a. Do you feel this policy helps you retain your Eritrean identity? Why?
22. How do you describe your identity?
    a. Do you feel you are Eritrean? Why?
    b. Do you feel you are Canadian? Why?
    c. Do you feel you are Eritrean-Canadian? Why?
    d. Does your identity shift depending on who you are with (i.e., Eritrean with Eritreans, Canadian with Canadians…)?
23. Is there a conflict with being Eritrean in Canada?
24. How do you feel others judge you?
    a. Are you "black"? Why/How?
    b. Do you think non-Eritreans view you as black, foreigner or Eritrean?
    c. Are Eritreans "black"?
       i. How does this affect your identity?
25. Is there a difference between being Eritrean and being black?
26. Is there a difference between being Eritrean and being Canadian?

Are there any other issues about being Eritrean in Canada that is important to you that we have not mentioned?

We're almost finished but before we end I'd like each one of you to make one final comment about what it means to be Eritrean in Canada. Let's just go around the table.

Survey

1. Where were you born?
   1. Canada
   2. Eritrea
   3. Other (please specify): _____

2. If born outside of Canada, how old were you when you arrived in Canada?
   1. Less than 1 years old
   2. 1-5
   3. 6-10
   4. 11-15
   5. 16 or older

3. If born outside of Canada, please specify the country or countries which you resided in before coming to Canada?

   _____

4. Were any of your parents born in Eritrea?
   1. Yes
   2. No

5. Do you have an Eritrean Identity card (citizenship)?
   1. Yes
   2. No

6. To which age group do you belong?
   1. 17 or less
   2. 18-24
   3. 25-30
   4. 31+

7. To which Eritrean ethnic group do you belong?
   1. Afar
   2. Bilen
   3. Beja/Hiderab
   4. Kunama
   5. Nara
   6. Rashida
   7. Saho
   8. Tigre
   9. Tigrinya
   10. Jeberti

8. Do you *speak* in any of the Eritrean languages?
   1. Yes
   2. No

9. Do *read* in any of the Eritrean languages?
   1. Yes
   2. No

10. Do *write* in any of the Eritrean languages?
    1. Yes
    2. No

11. If applicable, please use a check mark to indicate which of the Eritrean languages you can speak, read and/or write.

	Speak	Read	Write
Afar			
Arabic			
Bilen			
Hiderab			
Kunama			
Nara			
Saho			
Tigre			
Tigrinya			

12. How frequently do you communicate in one of the Eritrean languages?
    1. Always
    2. Almost always
    3. Sometimes
    4. Almost never
    5. Never

13. Please indicate one of the religions that you practice or identify with:
    1. Christianity
       a. Catholic
       b. Lutheran Protestant
       c. Orthodox
       d. Other (please specify): _____
    2. Islam
       a. Shi'ite
       b. Sunni
       c. Other (please specify): _____
    3. Other (please specify): _____
    4. Do not identify with any religion.

14. What is your current employment status?
    1. Employed Full-Time
    2. Employed Part-Time
    3. Full-Time Student
    4. Part- Time Student
    5. On social assistance looking for a job
    6. On social assistance not looking for a job

15. In 2008, what was your personal income before taxes?
    1. Less than $20,000
    2. $20, 001 to $40,000
    3. $40,001 to $50,000
    4. $50,001 to 75,000
    5. $75,000 to $100,000
    6. $100,000 and above

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