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The struggle for belonging:
Forming and reforming identities among 1.5-generation asylum seekers and refugees

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Working Paper Series

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1   Introduction

Introducing and contextualising the research

"I *am not* a refugee; it is true that I have lived in a refugee camp and asked for refugee status and the protection that comes with it, but right now, I *am not* a refugee." This was my response to a friend of mine who recently referred to me as a refugee in one of our many discussions on identity. To my great surprise, I found an article published in the *Journal of Refugee Studies* called 'No, I am not a refugee' by Kumsa (2006). Kumsa's article is about this label and how people with similar experiences of 'refugeeism' view and define themselves. It starts in the following way:

> I am a refugee. Others look at me and see a refugee. I look at my Self through Others' eyes and become a refugee. The notorious cycle of Self is complete. The fact that I have been a Canadian citizen for over ten years matters little ... 'No, I am not a refugee,' Jalane [another participant] cried out (Kumsa 2006:230).

I was astonished by this introduction because I had been reflecting on my own conversation about how legal labels affect a person's sense of self and the way in which people view someone who presently holds refugee status or has held it in the past. Another viewpoint on the label refugee is as follows:

> Who am I? I am a refugee. I am ... a dirty woman, hopeless, a hungry person, an ignorant person, a troublesome person, yet again another burden for the world to feed, another burden for the world to care, that is who they say we are ...

BUT

> being a refugee is not by choice, if it is a choice I wouldn't be a refugee anywhere. Looking at myself, I believe I am not a victim, but I am a survivor, a very strong person, a refugee woman (Pittaway and Pittaway 2004, emphasis in original).

This was stated by a Sudanese woman who had been resettled in Australia. Again, this comment reflects upon the issues of institutionalised labels which not only create stereotypes but also cause ambiguities in self-identification. According to theories of social cognition, we categorise information because of the limitations of the human cognitive capacities (Howard 2000). Through systems of categorisation, we reduce information to a few 'key elements,' and not only is there a risk that valuable information will be lost in this process, but it is also a process used by the powerful to evaluate others (Howard 2000). In other words, the process of categorising and labelling social relationships and social identities is embedded in socio-political contexts (Howard 2000:368).

Thinking retrospectively about my own conversation above, I think that I was rather defensive and tried to explain that refugeehood may have been part of my past, but is now not the case. Thinking about my friend's perspective, however, it is interesting how it did not occur to her that the refugee label does not apply to me anymore. Perhaps, as Kumsa (2006) notes, the fact that a person who has been a refugee does not presently hold that status matters little. Once a label has been given to someone, it is as if one has been branded for life.

Issues of identity can be tricky for refugees, asylum seekers and other immigrants in general. From an essentialist perspective, finding oneself dislocated from the place where one was born and grew up, from the community where one's ancestors had deep connections and ties, and perhaps where one feels that one belongs, is difficult to deal with (Said 2000; Warner 1994; Walzer 1980). This process

becomes more difficult when the social perception in the countries of asylum reinforces this sentiment of belonging elsewhere. Thus, although many people of the 1.5-and second-generations (terms which are not free of contestation that will be discussed later), may integrate into the societies of the host countries with ease, at least in comparison to the generation of their parents (Rumbaut 1994; Ying and Han 2007), the way in which mainstream society perceives them may be as a refugee, an asylum seeker, an immigrant – or simply as an outsider who has another place of origin and another place of belonging. In short, the social perception could differ dramatically from the individual's sense of self and belonging. It is also when this happens, i.e. when self-identification fails to match the labels placed on a person by outsiders, that issues of identity occur (Du Bois 1994; Howard 2000; Kumsa 2006).

The research question that is being investigated is as follows: in what ways do people of the 1.5-generation (particularly given to the Ethiopian 1.5-generation) in the diaspora represent themselves, and what are the ways in which they negotiate and construct their identities? As the first part of the question indicates, by asking 'in what ways,' it is evident that there is no single response. Therefore, I stress the multiplicity and continuity of identities (Danico 2004; Howard 2000; Marcia 1980; Park 1999) rather than the stability and coherence of a person's identity. This view is in contrast to scholars who argue that identity is a coherent sense of self which depends on stable values (Wheelis 1958). The latter part of the research question points out that the research is meant to explore not only 'self' representation, but also the actual ways in which a person comes to identify him/herself. These actual ways include the transfer of cultural and ethnic identity from the parental generation, as well as social perceptions, including the use of labels as identity markers.

Studies on refugee populations tend to concentrate on the experiences of adults (the first-generation) or children born in the receiving countries (second-generation). The focus of my research is on the 1.5-generation, referring to children who migrated between the ages of eight and twelve (Rumbaut 2004). Although, there has been a burgeoning body of research on the 1.5-generation during recent years, I maintain that this group needs much more attention as a distinct group, differentiating it from both the first (parental) and the second-generations (Danico 2004; Park 1994). '1.5er' Korean Americans are usually referred to as those children who came to the US before the age of 13, have memories of their country of origin and who are consciously bicultural; identifying as a 1.5er[1] is a conscious processual decision based on a person's relationship to the different ethnic identities in varying situations (Danico 2004).

It is generally known that people form and reform their identities as they pass through different stages of their lives (Erikson 1995; Gee 2000). During childhood, a person's self-awareness grows and alters, while in adolescence this awareness of 'who I am' becomes more complex, beginning to take into account the physical, cognitive and social changes that occur (Erikson 1995).

I argue that while the process of identity formation may in general be difficult (Marcia 1980; Erikson 1995), this process is intensified and becomes more complex in the case of the 1.5-generation of forced migrants, often leading to a painful 'struggle for belonging.' There are several reasons why this is the case. Development of identity becomes particularly complicated for this group owing to imposed

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[1] I use the term '1.5er' to refer to the 1.5-generation, which is similar to the way it is used by authors like Park (1999), Danico (2004) and Abebe (2009).

labels (Zetter 1991, 2007) that will narrate who they are without them playing the primary role as owners of these labels and categorisations. Similarly, these people will, in latent or manifest ways and through institutional and public discourses, be notified that they belong with a certain kind of people and culture. How do these children define themselves? In what ways do these imposed labels affect their sense of 'self' and 'belonging'? What is the role of parents in the identity formation of their children? All of these questions are at the heart of this paper and they will be discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

Before going into these details, however, this chapter provides an explanation of the title as well as a description of the methodologies and the theoretical perspectives that have been utilised to analyse the literature and empirical data. A brief discussion on my positionality in this research, along with its limitations and gaps, is also provided. This chapter closes with a brief historical background to the Ethiopian diaspora and a section on the layout of the chapters that follow.

The first part of my title, *Struggle for Belonging,* indicates the struggle that many people in the Diasporas feel when they have made their host countries into their homes rather than a temporary place to stay. I argue that at some point in their lives, young people of the 1.5-generation will go through a period (or periods) of immense struggle to 'belong.' As mentioned, I should note that I am aware of the fact that young people in general will have similar experiences at some point in their lives (Benesch 2008; Danico 2004; Marcia 1980). However, the search for identity, and the need (along with the struggle) to belong is intensified in the case of individuals who emigrated at a young age (Danico 2004). This struggle for belonging for the 1.5-generation is unique because of the in-betweenness that can result from their group's early socialisation in the country of origin, followed by their formative adolescent years taking place in the country of asylum.

The 'sense of belonging' that the 1.5-generation might have felt before leaving their country of origin is irreversible because they cannot simply return to where they originally came from and feel that they belong in the way that those who never left can. These 'in-betweeners' are the ones who have experienced or continuously experience a feeling of "not belonging here, not belonging there … [but] belonging everywhere" (Abebe 2009:62).[2] Many find comfort in the idea of belonging 'everywhere' but this can also be a source of anguish, especially when facing exclusion by several groups that a person (wrongly) felt that he/she belonged to.

The second part of my title, *Forming and reforming identities among 1.5-generation asylum seekers and refugees,* refers to the different ways in which the 'struggle for belonging' is negotiated and identities are formed and reformed among asylum seeker and refugees of the 1.5-generation.[3]

Methodology and theoretical approaches

The research design is based on a review of interdisciplinary literature that deals with identity formation (Côté 1996; Hall 1990; Howard 2000; Kumsa 2006), the refugee label (Nagel 1996; Wood 1985; Zetter 1991) and intergenerational identities among asylum seekers and refugees (Chacko 2003;

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[2] Abebe is here referring to the broad diasporic identity.

[3] I have used literature that aims to explore the experiences of forced migrants such as refugees and asylum seekers. For this reason, I refrain from referring to other immigrants.

Getahun 2007; Kertzer 1983; Laufer 1971). The literature that is examined and analysed comes from migration and refugee studies, anthropology, geography, and social psychology, since all deal with issues of identity, ethnicity and race. However, it is mainly sociological theorising and analysis that dominate this paper. The approach I take is similar to that of scholars such as Howard (2000) who deal with issues of identities by making references to both social psychological and symbolic interactionist perspectives.

Looking at identity formation and all its complexities requires an approach that is flexible and that values the significance of the myriad individual, social and cultural interactions of people. Identity formation, according to this approach, is a social process rather than an individual one because it sees the 'self' as always being embedded in society (Stryker 1980). Taking this a bit further, according to the traditional symbolic interactionist perspective, society is always in the process of being created (Blumer 1969). Since I view identity formation as processual, there is an analogy to be made between individual identities and society in general; they are both created through processes of interpretation and meaning creation by actors in various situations (Blumer 1969).

The theoretical discourse around the fluid nature of identities and their social construction suggests that the essence of identity does not exist because it is something that is constantly in progress (Bhabha 1994; Hall 1990, 2006; Howard 2000; Park 1999). My position accords with this literature and theoretical underpinning, and thus I argue for the multiplicity and fluidity of identities which are constantly in the process of being formed and reformed by the personal and social interactions of individuals.

However, there are scholars who disagree with the principle of limitless and fluid identities. For example, Everett and Wagstaff argue that the denial of the essence of identity is a "dubious concealment of a fixed and assured identity that does not want to expose itself to critical scrutiny" (2004:38). This is a rather compelling argument (applicable to at least some cases) because it is conceivable to come across some people who prefer to juggle the in-betweenness of their identity or even create this space instead of having to commit to a single identity marker. That said, would this not be an indicator of their identities being in conflict, which is the reason they prefer the fluidity?

I suggest that the process of identity formation for the 1.5-generation is rather unique, and this has been further elaborated by Park (1999), who states that the 1.5-generation is not simply about children of immigrants born in the country of origin who emigrate between the ages of eight and twelve. He argues that what makes this group distinct has to do with being bi-lingual and bi-cultural and being able to operate (not without conflicts and difficulty) in two or more distinct cultures. At the heart of this uniqueness lies this group's understanding of the distinct "culturally-coded systems where logic and assumptions are different" (Park 1999:133).

 Although this paper remains mainly theoretical, I was able to supplement my theoretical arguments with primary source material derived from interviews with some young Ethiopian-Americans. I was able to recruit these individuals at an Ethiopian Student Association International (ESAI) weekend conference I attended in Toronto (24 – 28 March 2010). Since I wanted my focus to be on the 1.5-

generation, a random sample was not feasible,[4] and so purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used.[5] I will be using information from these interviews in this paper to illustrate some of the points I am making. However, it should be noted that all the ambiguous and complex theoretical discussions are not always exemplified or captured fully through the conducted interviews.

Interviewees were asked to reflect upon their ideas of home and sense of belonging and the roles they think that these notions play in a person's construction of identity.[6] Several of the participants who I wanted to interview lived in the United States, and because of the tight schedule between keynote speakers, I was able to conduct face-to-face interviews with only two 1.5-generation Ethiopian-Americans. Other members of this group agreed to a phone interview, which I conducted during the months of April and May 2010. Attending the conference not only helped me to recruit participants for interviews but also enabled me to gather useful information through participant-observation. It allowed me to take extensive notes on participants' ideas and feelings about their identity.

Positionality, limitations and gaps

I am myself part of the 1.5-generation of Ethiopians in the diaspora. I was born in Ethiopia where I spent the first eleven years of my life. Just before my eleventh birthday, my father was taken by the authorities for questioning and my mother started getting involved in local politics. That was the end of my childhood as I knew it because my father was to become a political prisoner for the next fifteen years and my mother and I were to seek asylum in Sweden. We lived in Karlskrona which is a town known for its New Nazi movement, but which accommodated a large number of newly-arrived refugees and asylum seekers at the time (1994). All of this happened about sixteen years ago, which means that I have now spent more than half of my life outside my native country. Sweden became my permanent home while Ethiopia belonged to the past. Several years have passed and despite the fact that I can speak Swedish without an accent, I am always being asked where I am from. This has made me question where my home really is and where I belong; this struggle to belong despite successfully integrating (at least linguistically, among other things) ignited my interest in the issue of identity and belonging. Although sociologically significant, these issues have for a long time been also at the heart of my life journey.

I am providing these parts of my life story here because there is no denying that my interest in the issue of identity formation among the 1.5-generation is a result of my own daily experiences and struggles. I am aware of the fact that exploring one's own experience has the potential to create some ambiguities, but this reflexive awareness combined with having lived the issues at hand will allow me to explore and analyse the issues involved from various perspectives.

Certain limitations of this study also need to be acknowledged; due to time constraints, there are a number of issues that have been left without adequate analysis. This includes insufficient

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[4] Not only did I want my sample to consist of the 1.5-generation Ethiopian-Americans, but also those people who immigrated as refugees and/or asylum seekers. It is the experiences of those who have been through the process of seeking asylum and refugee status on which I wanted to concentrate.

[5] Five 1.5-generation Ethiopian-Americans agreed to a face-to-face or telephone interviews. Consent forms were made available for the face-to-face interviews, while oral consent was obtained from those who were interviewed over the phone.

[6] Some wanted to remain anonymous. I have therefore decided to use pseudonyms for all of my informants.

consideration of the gender dimension of the issue that takes into account socio-economic similarities and/or differences. The section on race, 'blacker than I thought: the variable of race' is also neither extensively analysed nor dealt with, but is nevertheless a very significant part of the issue on identity.

Although the qualitative part of this research is only a small element of the whole study, it is still important to recognise that my sample is not representative and that the conclusions cannot be generalised due to these limitations. In academia, several terms such as 'generations of immigrants' and 'diasporas' are contested; while I question and critically examine the use of the concept of 'generations,' I use other terms, including diasporas, somewhat unquestioningly.

My main concern when embarking on this study has been the scarcity of research that concentrates primarily on the 1.5-generation without lumping this group together with the first- or the second-generation. By indicating the gaps in current research on Diasporas, and by presenting findings from my specific study on the 1.5-generation of the Ethiopian diaspora, I hope this paper will produce useful material for further research.

Situating the Ethiopian diaspora in North America

As a result of the 1965 Immigration Act, along with the 1980 Refugee Act and the Diversity Visa Program of the 1990 Immigration Act, the volume of non-European immigrants significantly increased in the United States (Chacko 2003; McKee 2000). Between 1980 and 2000, over 36,000 African refugees were accepted as permanent residents in the US and nearly half of these were from Ethiopia and Eritrea. Through family reunion and sponsorship programs, these refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants sponsored their families to start re-building their lives in the US "which resulted in chain migration over the following decades" (Chacko 2003: 495).

Getahun (2007) notes that there have been at least two waves of Ethiopian refugees, asylees and immigrants who came to America. The first group, pre-1980, consisted of diplomats, businessmen and students who were sent for higher education by Emperor Haile Selassie. They eventually overstayed their visit and asked for asylum in the US when the Emperor was killed as a result to the rise of the dictatorial leadership of Mengistu Haile-Mariam.

The end of Haile Selassie's rule "ushered in an era of refugeeism among Ethiopians" (Getahun 2007:44). It was in this period that the mass exile of Ethiopians into neighbouring and distant countries including the US and Canada began. This second group or wave of Ethiopian refugees arrived in their host countries fleeing persecution from the dictatorial rule of the Derg (the Provincial Military Administrative Council) which followed the Revolution (Barigaber 1997; Getahun 2007). These were in essence refugees with diverse social, cultural and economic backgrounds. Just a decade later in the early 1990s, they constituted the largest group among Ethiopians in America and elsewhere, including Canada and several countries in Europe. For many of these refugees, their dispersal was supposed to be temporary and they had every intention of returning back home as soon as things had settled down in Ethiopia (Getahun 2007; Lapchick et al. 1982). However, when the Derg's period ended, its successor was an ethno-centric rebel movement that agreed to the cessation of Eritrea from Ethiopia (Pool 1993), something deemed "unforgivable" by many (Getahun 2007). This government (EPRDF) was regarded as "anti-Ethiopian and undemocratic and [for many of the

Ethiopian immigrants] the hope and desire of going back to Ethiopia died with the coming to power of EPRDF" (Getahun 2007:186).

Consequently, during the last decade, family reunions and the winning of Diversity Visa lotteries have increased the number of Ethiopians living in the US. At the same time, the number of Ethiopians being granted refugee status has declined as a result of the perceived relative peace in Ethiopia. In terms of location, Ethiopian immigrants are found all over the United States, but a large proportion resides in cities such as Washington, D.C., New York City and Los Angeles (Getahun 2007). This clustering is both a result of the policy of US government, refugee resettlement agencies and the need of the refugees to be among other Ethiopians. It is well known that the presence of others with similar ethnic backgrounds and life experiences helps to lessen the alienation and adjustment problems that many face (Getahun 2007).

With regards to the children of immigrants, Zhou (1997) notes that since the 1980s, the child population in the United States has become extremely diverse. There is a proliferation of children of immigrants brought up in America by their immigrant parents. Unlike their parents, these children who are both born and bred (second-generation) or who grow up (1.5-generation) in the host countries do not have the same cultural attachment to their countries of origin. Chacko notes that:

> [t]he children of Ethiopians who emigrated to the United States during the immigration swells of the 1980s and 1990s have now come of age. They include teenagers and young adults who are navigating the rough road of identity formation in immigrant America. Adolescence can be a challenging time for any individual in any locale and is popularly portrayed as a period of turbulence accompanied by emotional conflict (2003:496–497).

The emotional conflict arises due to several issues associated with the identity formation of young adults which is exacerbated by the racial and ethnic identification of Ethiopian-Americans. As Neda (2010) observes with Iranian-Americans, children of the second-generation (the 1.5-generation is subsumed in the second in this particular study) have 'inherited nostalgia', where they try to manage their identity through an appreciation and active consumption of pre-Revolution Iranian music.

This paper is designed to put identity formation at the core of these conflicts. I explore the complex process of the formation of identities among 1.5-generation asylum seekers and refugees. In order to do this, I deal with literature from three different variables that all play a role and have the potential to affect a person's construction of identity. These parts include theoretical discourses around formation of identities, the intergenerational passing of identities (ethnic, racial etc.) and the use of labels as identity markers. Consequently, the next section lays the foundation of the issue of identity formation by critically reviewing concepts such as 'identities,' 'notion of home' and 'generations,' and their applicability to my own research.

In the third section, I look at the roles that a label such as 'refugee' plays in the continued process of identity formation of young people in the diaspora. This will be followed by a section on the examination of the kinds of identities parents pass on to their children. I also include a discussion on how young people draw both on their own as well as their parents' experiences when producing multiple meanings of identity for themselves.

The fourth section is dedicated specifically to the experiences of the 1.5-generation, how young people deal with the notions of 'home' and the 'struggle for belonging,' and how all of these factors contribute

to their formation of identity. The variables of race and language are incorporated into this chapter alongside analysis of hyphenated identities. Lastly, the section tries to draw parallels between the experiences of Third Culture Kids and the 1.5-generation. The last section is a concluding section, which includes an overall review and analysis of the discussed issues.

2   Discussing concepts

Deconstructing identities

The fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one with which we could identify ourselves – at least temporarily (Hall 2006:251).

Hall notes that identities are fixed to the space and social environment of a given time. Thus, a person could have multiple identities with each one having a particular dynamic of its own. On many occasions, these different identities intersect. Therefore, identities will always be fluid and change in accordance to the shifting relations a person has in temporary moments in time and place (Agnew 2005; Everett and Wagstaff 2004; Hall 2006; Howard 2000; Kumsa 2006; Park 1994). However, in order to make sense of the discourse around identities, we have to allow ourselves to occasionally solidify this fluidity (Kumsa 2006).

Since identity is a sociocultural marker, when a person identifies him/herself as belonging to a particular group, he/she is also pointing out that he/she does not belong to the other group. Identification with a group can thus function both as an inclusionary and exclusionary tool. In this respect, identity is political and a power dynamic is constantly present (Howard 2000; Said 2000; Zetter 1991). Accordingly, although individuals as well as groups want to define themselves, they also become defined by the powerful and dominant in society. There is a power struggle that occurs in defining the identity of the disenfranchised group. This struggle occurs between the powerful, who aim to define the other group's identity, while this group, i.e. the disenfranchised group, tries to exercise its own power and ability to define its identity for itself.

Erikson (1995) states that:

> …members of oppressed groups are more likely to confront "problems" of authenticity, being more often faced with dilemmas that require them to choose between acting in accord with their self values or in accord with the expectations of powerful others (cited in Howard 2000:382).

If one is forced to choose between one or the other, as opposed to having the option to choose, the identity that becomes constructed will inevitably be a forced one which does not necessarily reflect one's true or 'authentic' self. By stating that there is a true self, I risk contradicting my premises about the multiplicity and fluidity of identities; it is therefore important to explain briefly what I mean. Understanding notions of identities as being true and authentic are traditional conceptions of identity (Erikson 1995). However, my usage of these concepts is similar to the way they are used in contemporary research where being true and authentic to oneself is about "being true to self in context or self in relationship" (Howard 2000). This simply means that I am permitting the idea of

certain contents of an individual's identity to be prominent in certain situations and relationships than others.

While I agree with Erikson (1995) on the above discussion on confronting 'problems of authenticity,' I think that there is an argument to be made in regards to the "expectations of powerful others." I would suggest that it is not only the 'expectations of powerful others' but also more simply the expectations of 'others.' It is the everyday expectations of regular people in a person's everyday life that can affect his/her idea about traditions, morals and values rather than solely the powerful politician or other powerful figures with whom a person may only occasionally come into contact. One could counter my argument by stating that there is a power differential even with interactions involving regular people in one's community. However, while I agree that there is a power dynamic in all of our interactions, I am hesitant about viewing the formation of identities solely in terms of the expectations of powerful others.

Côté (1996) notes that social identity can be *ascribed, achieved and/or managed*. He claims that in a late-modern society, social identity is usually 'managed,' i.e. it is not the inherited or ascribed status, nor is it the achieved status that matters, but the status that one 'maintains' through a process of reflexive and strategic fitting of "oneself into a community of 'strangers' by meeting their approval through the creation of the right impressions" (Côté 1996:5). This remark is similar to Eriksson's but takes better account of the counter-argument that I have just discussed. For Côté (1996), managing an identity is at the heart of the matter, but he may be underplaying the role that ascribed and achieved statuses play. It may well be argued that achieved social identities are in fact just as important.

Along the same lines as Côté, Gee (2000) states that there are four ways to view identity: *Nature-Identity* as a state developed by nature (skin colour, for example); *Institution-Identity* as a position authorised by authorities (which I refer to as institutionalised identities, for example, 'refugee'); *Discourse-Identity,* which is an individual trait recognised in discourses ('the rational individual'); and finally *Affinity-Identity* which includes experiences shared in the practices of groups (2000:100). However, Gee would agree with the argument I made earlier that all of the above-mentioned building blocks can coexist. In addition, Erikson (1995) adds that post-modernism is concerned not so much about selves and identities, but about how they are constructed and the meanings of being female, black, disabled etc. What is interesting here is the discussion of the challenges that occur as a result of the multiple and intersecting identities.

Although one cannot exhaustively describe the conceptions of identities and the ways in which they are formed, one can argue, in general terms, that identities are formed and reformed through interrelated but different channels. These include the macro-social structures of the political and economic systems of society but also the micro-structures of the family, friends and schools. Naturally, identities are also formed through a person's own character and sense of self (Côté 1996). Similarly, it has been proposed that identity is not actually a simple narrative that an individual tells him/herself about who he/she is and that it is something much more than discovering our inner 'selves' (Hall 1995). Hall argues that identities "actually come from outside, they are the way in which we are recognized and then come to step into the place of the recognitions which others give us" (1995:8). In other words, social perceptions are at the core of issues of identity because there will not be a self-recognition without the cues that we are given by the outside world. This is similar to

Erikson's (1995) claim, but here the external force is a generalised outside world, rather than specifically a powerful other.

In many instances, researchers, even identity researchers, seem to claim that there is a fixed identity. At other times, these researchers contradict themselves, perhaps knowingly, when referring to things such as 'establishing a stable sense of self' on one hand and yet also noting on the other that there is no fixed identity (Côté 1996:9). I would argue for the latter – identity is very situational and that there cannot be a stable and fixed identity; it is always fluid and temporary in a sense that one could have a certain kind of identity in a given time and space but as soon as this changes, so does the 'temporarily' fixed identity.

The idea of home and place identities

Home is the place where a person feels at ease; it is a comfortable and familiar environment where individuals can be themselves (Relph 1976; Cuba and Hummond 1993). If identity gets detached from physical space, the idea of home with nostalgic sentiment loses its meaning. However, home is not merely about a place; it "is the association of an individual within a homogeneous group and the association of that group with a particular physical place" (Warner 1994:162). This point indicates that home refers to both place and community.

The connection between home and identity is complicated, especially in the case of forced migrants and/or their children. Thus, it is important to give special attention to place identities. Scholars who explore place identities, defined as "interpretation[s] of self that uses environmental meaning to symbolize or situate identity," state that people use their environment "to forge a sense of attachment or home" (Cuba and Hummond 1993:8). Identities are then formed, maintained and reformed through the cues that are gained from the socio-spatial surrounding. Howard (2000) argues that place identities are formed as a result of feeling at home in the geographic space in which one is situated. Lindstrom (1997) takes this a little further and suggests that a person's 'home address' is an indicator of his/her values and socioeconomic position; the latter part is conclusive, but the former which is used as an indicator or a 'marker' of values can be debatable. If we lived in a world where everybody had absolute choice and power in determining exactly where they resided, then this would have been a marker of their values. However, people do not always have this kind of choice available to them and it is as a result of accident (i.e. the place of one's birth) and other circumstances including one's socioeconomic status and presence of diasporic co-ethnics that people live in certain neighbourhoods and countries.

Essentialist theorists contend that national identities function as the main source of 'natural identity' (Kamal in Chatty 2010). This sort of 'natural identity' comes from "full belonging, the warm sensation that people understand not merely what you say but what you mean [and this] can only come when you are among your own people in your native land" (Ignatieff 1993:7). Accordingly, sense of belonging, along with sense of self, is claimed to come only from a person's native land and native people.

This is in contrast to constructionist theorists who view the construction of national identities as a human product of the imagination (Anderson 1983) and historical construction (Foucault 1980). As a result, it is 'becoming increasingly problematic for the individual [to establish] a stable and viable

identity based on commitments embedded in a community of others (Côté 1996:7). This process is exactly what makes identity concerns difficult and complicated for the forced migrant and his/her offspring. I agree with the constructionist position, because I would argue that identity is something that can transcend national boundaries and ties. That which we associate with Ethiopian identity is not something that can only be found within the borders of that country. It is true that the growing numbers of Ethiopian diasporans have created specific Ethiopian ethnic communities in their new homes, but they have also participated in community development with other ethnic communities with whom they share their daily experiences.

For Marx, the social world is based on "the dynamics of interpersonal relationships [which] are not territorial in nature" (cited in Warner 1994:165). Social associations do not merely and/or entirely depend on a single physical space; a social world is not confined to a particular place or limited to territorial boundaries (Warner 1994; Malkki 1995).

On the same note as the constructionist, Warner states that "it is the relations with other people that ground man in his existence [sic], and not the physical grounding of the individual and group with a given space" (Warner 1994:165). In other words, people try to create and maintain their identity by the interactions that they have with others, themselves and with symbolic artefacts that they find meaningful. It is the 'interaction' which lies in the midst of everything and not the physical place.

Such a position represents the common understanding of how identities are created from an interactionist point of view. Howard states that people construct their identities by showing the "right impressions" (Goffman 1959) or by controlling, to a varying degree, the "information that others have about them" (Howard 2000:371). The underlying principle of symbolic interaction is that "people attach symbolic meaning to objects, behaviours, themselves, and other people, and they develop and transmit these meanings through interaction" (Howard 2000). For the purposes of this research, I shall look into identity through the classic sociological conception which views identity formation as an interaction between the self and 'significant others.'

The concept of 'generations'

The concept of 'generations' has existed for a very long time and numerous authors have used it in various ways. Kertzer (1983) notes that there are different understandings of the term 'generations' which he places in four categories: "generation as a principle of kinship descent; generation as cohort; generation as life stage; and generation as historical period" (1983:126). He explains that these various concepts are usually used simultaneously. Some researchers such as Ryder (1965) reject this multiple usage of the term, and urge that it should be restricted to its kinship-related meaning. Furthermore, others have proposed 'generational cohort' as a more precise concept for generational studies (Elder cited in Kertzer 1983).

Broadly speaking, the idea behind the concept of 'generations' is "that people born at about the same time grow up sharing an historical period that shapes their views" (Kertzer 1983:128). Similarly, researchers such as Marshall also state that "a generation is a sociological reality, consisting of a cohort, significant proportions of whose members have experienced profound historical events ..." (1980:125). Both of these definitions refer to generations in the sense that Elder intended. In fact, much of the literature which refers to 'generations,' seems to use the term 'generation' as a synonym

for 'cohort,' and this can discomfort the reader, especially as writers shift from the one meaning of the concept to another without any clear description of the shift.

For this particular paper, the analysis will be based on the meaning of 'generation' as a genealogical concept referring to 'intergenerational identities' (i.e. of parents and their children). Writers such as Laufer (1971) choose to refer to the "present generation of … youth" and of the "parental generation." This allows the writer to move freely from the descent-based generational concept to one based on age cohort. For this reason, and because of the lack of other existing terms which can depict the population to which I refer, I have chosen to use the migration concepts of first-generation, one-and-a-half-generation (1.5-generation) and second-generation.

The first-generation refers to persons who immigrate into a host country as adults (or young adults), and the second-generation refers to the children of immigrants born in the receiving countries (Hirschman 1994; James 2005; Kertzer 1983; Park 1999; Rumbaut 1994, 2004). The 1.5-generation is the hardest to define, again because of the varying definitions from different users of this term. Rumbaut (2004) coined this term to refer to children who immigrated in their early childhood, below the ages of twelve. He later further categorised this group into the 1.75-generation referring to those who arrived at pre-school age (between zero and five), and what he called the 'classic 1.5-generation', referred to those in middle childhood (between the ages of six and twelve) (2004: 167). As Rumbaut notes, none of the "conventional usages accurately captures the experience of youths who fall in the interstices between these groupings nor, among those born abroad, [do the terms take] into account their different ages and life stages at the time of migration" (2004:166). It is for this same reason that I want this study to carve the unique experiences of those who immigrate between "the ages of eight and twelve," also defined as the 1.5-generation (James 2005).

A problem that arises with the concept of 'generations,' especially with the 1.5-generation, is that researchers define this group differently. Park notes that in the Korean American community, "a person who immigrated to the U.S from Korea as an adult" could be classified as a '1.5er' (1999:124). Other times, 'generation-and-a-half' or '1.5-generation' could be used to refer to children between the ages of six and thirteen as one cohort, and children aged thirteen to seventeen as another (Zhou 1997). Such varying usages make it difficult to grasp what is really meant by 'intergenerational' identities or anything that has the concept of generations in it. I use the inter-generational terminology to refer both to the parents' and their children's generations. In the same way as Laufer (1971), I refer to the parents who emigrated as adults as the parental generation (despite cohort differences within their group) and their children's generation consists of both the 1.5-generation born in the country of origin and the second-generation born in the host countries. I realise the difficulties that arise when lumping together people whose age could range from early teens to 40s and above as belonging to the first generation, because the 'cultural imprint of foreign birth' on the 50-year-old undoubtedly will be different from the imprint on the teenager, but some stratification is necessary.

Clearly, then, the concept of generations has been approached in many different ways. Kertzer argues that "generational processes will remain of great importance to sociology, for they are at the heart of the social metabolism" (Kertzer 1983:143). They are one of the crucial conceptual tools that sociologists use in identity and migration studies. The usage of the first-, second- and third-generation of immigrants in the literature is common despite the lack of consensus on the definition. As Kertzer

(1983) notes, I think that for the survival of the term 'generations of immigrants' as a meaningful concept, its usage needs to be put into clear context of cohort and historical period. As long as one clearly defines these generational conceptual tools, as to not create confusion, they can become very useful to specifically and precisely explore the different experiences of people who immigrate at varying ages.

This section has presented the core concepts used in this research and explored their definitions and usage. I began with 'deconstructing identities' where I questioned the stability and coherence of identities. I have argued, along the same theoretical lines as the symbolic interactionist perspective and its situational identities approach, stating that there is no fixed identity and that identity formation is rather a process of becoming than a destination to be reached (Blumer 1969; Park 1999; Stryker 1980).

This section has also critically engaged with the notion of home, where my argument is similar to the constructionist's perspective stating that home is more than a territorially-defined place of residence (Warner 1994). Home is a construction that does not need to be defined territorially, and similar to the idea of the multitudinous of identities, 'home' does not merely depend on a single physical place.

Lastly, the concept of generations has been presented in a rather problematised manner. This section has called for rethinking and problematising the usage of this concept, in particular, the 1.5-generation and its multitude definitions. The following section deals with the process of labelling and its consequences for those being labelled. Following this discussion, there is a section on the ways in which mainly the Ethiopian parental generation passes on identities, whether cultural, ethnic, social and/or religious identities.

3 Labels as identity markers and the passing of intergenerational identities

Labels as identity markers

"Labelling is a way of referring to the process by which policy agendas are established and more particularly the way in which people, conceived as objects of policy, are defined in convenient images" (Wood 1985:1). Zetter adds that 'labeling is a process of stereotyping' (1991:44) and institutionalized labels are powerful in a way that these labels prescribe needs to those being labeled. Nagel (1996), on a similar note, states that there is a 'dialectic' between the internal identification of people and the way in which identities are externally ascribed to them. I contend that the labels ascribed to forced migrants (including refugees and asylum seekers) carry various stereotypes and other negative connotations embedded in the language which may hinder them from recognising their true self. These labels are then used by the mainstream society, even by those being labelled, as an identity marker. I want to be cautious when making this claim though, because I do not mean to undermine the agency that people have in shaping their own identities. Individuals use their "intellectual, social and political resources to construct identities that transcend physical and social boundaries, and they are rarely, particularly today, mere victims who are acted upon by the larger society" (Agnew 2005:5). Thus, while acknowledging that people in general are architects of their own identities, I argue that

certain labels affect the way people perceive themselves, and that being identified as belonging to a certain category such as a 'refugee' may hinder their authentic and unbiased view of themselves.

I also stress the relevance of the latent and manifest meanings that labels carry since they may restrain a person's development of identity. It has been argued that:

> [w]ithin the repertoire of humanitarian concern, refugee now constitutes one of the most powerful labels. From the first procedure of status determination – who is a refugee? – to the structural determinants of life chances which this identity then engenders, labels infuse the world of refugees (Zetter 1991:39).

Labelling and categorising people is a powerful process, with far-reaching consequences for those being labelled (Zetter 1991, 2007). The term 'refugee' not only signifies a person's lack of legal-political status which entitles him/her to international protection but also, that he/she is "signified as stupid, misfits, ignorant, poor, and uncivilized FOB [fresh off the boat]" (Kumsa 2006:242).

The consequence of being an object of this label may lead others to view a person as vulnerable and helpless in his/her life situation. I suggest that institutionalised labels such as 'refugee' have a beginning and an end because this label refers to a legal status which comes into existence under certain conditions, and which also can come to an end when the conditions change for the better (or worse). The ways in which identities become associated with these labels may have a beginning, however, they do not necessarily have an end. This is what I referred to in the beginning of this paper when I said *I am not a refugee*. Even though I have not been considered a refugee legally for years, it is apparent that in the eyes of many, I still remain one.

Outsiders use certain labels to identify people and these labels become determinants of who a person is regardless of how they identify themselves. As the 'criminal' is categorised in the 'bad people' box (or branded as a bad person) regardless of whether or not he/she has acted badly, the refugee is branded as a helpless and homeless victim. Refugees and others who are objects of these types of labels may consequently internalise these attributes that they themselves may not have identified with before. Du Bois (1994) notes that it is "a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (1994:4). Generally speaking, this is an amazing ability where a person can reflect upon who he/she is from the perspective of an outsider. However, the danger of this 'double consciousness' occurs when a person starts internalising the way others view him/her while losing the ability to step back and view things from his/her own perspective. At times, the internal identification of the 'self' conflicts with the ways others perceive one to be; the purely subjective process of formulating 'who I am' struggles with the perception others have of oneself.

What follows from this is that even the most subjective definition of ethnicity (for example, who is an Ethiopian) is not formulated in isolation, but in interaction with perceptions of others (Kumsa 2006). A purely subjective definition of a person's identity, therefore, cannot be sustained without some form of external validation. Social perceptions – along with the attitudes of outsiders – play a critical role in the formation of one's identity. This is where the power of an institutionalised label lies. As Kumsa notes, "refugee becomes a label of exclusion" and it suggests that a naturalised citizen, for instance, does not really belong where he/she is at right now and points him/her to "another place of belonging" (2006:241). By contrast, it is important to note that labels can sometimes function as a 'cure' for an individual's and a group's uncertainty about itself. What this means is that labels can also function as an essential part of an individual's and group's awareness of its objective existence.

The passing of intergenerational identities

This section aims to demonstrate some of the ways in which intergenerational identities are passed along and how these result at times in intergenerational struggles. Young diasporic Ethiopians in have ethnic pride in their Ethiopian-ness and attribute this pride to their parents (Chacko 2003; Getahun 2007). Through institutions such as the Orthodox Church and Ethiopian cultural communities, parents attempt to instil a cultural respect and pride in their children. The shaping of Ethiopian immigrant identity is also transmitted through events such as the Ethiopian Sport Federation in North America where Ethiopians from all over North America come together to be part of this annual event. This is an occasion, among many others, where close relationships are built with fellow Ethiopians and where parents are proud to present and display their rich heritage and pass it on to their children and other Ethiopian-Americans (Getahun 2007). One of my informants, Johnny, spoke highly of these events and considered them to be one of the most exciting events to which he and his friends look forward.[7]

Key speakers are also invited from Ethiopia to these events so that they can inspire and become role models to the young generation of Ethiopian-Americans who can then "emulate and be proud of their Ethiopian heritage" (Getahun 2007:206). Parents use different strategies to actively shape the identities that they themselves and their progenies construct but "generally speaking, the Ethiopian parental belief is similar with that of other immigrant groups, who have values that reflect an emphasis on family, group identity rather than independence and individual autonomy" (Getahun 2007).

Ethnic identity and "culture [are] transmitted within societies collectively by maintaining and upholding cultural mores of behaviour, belief, dress, and other traits from generation to generation" (Chacko 2003:501). Ethiopians try to be active agents in reinforcing the traditional culture of the home country among their children with different degrees of success. History, memories and myths about life in Ethiopia and about the values that represent Ethiopia are repeatedly told as a mantra and 'often become parts of family lore' (Chacko 2003:501). These stories are usually reaffirmed by the ethnic communities where conscious efforts are made to reinforce the symbols that are meaningful to the Ethiopian cultural system. Nevertheless, the parents also want their children to assimilate into mainstream society and the situations in which they find themselves because they want their children to succeed in that particular society.[8]

Parents fear that their children will become too westernised and forget about their roots; "this fear, however, has originated not from the process of acculturation but from the migration process itself [which]... disrupts normal parent-child relationships" (Zhou 1997:83). This is one major factor that distinguishes the 1.5-generation from the second. Those who are born in the host countries may have a less stressful relationship with their parents because of fewer cultural expectations on their capacity to move effortlessly between the 'home' and the 'host' cultures. For the 1.5-generation children, in contrast, there is a higher expectation that they will be able to juggle both cultures and this becomes

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[7] Johnny, pseudonym, 1.5-generation, 30 years old.
[8] Johnny, pseudonym, 1.5-generation, 30 years old; Lily, pseudonym, 1.5-generation, 23 years old.

central in their life, since it is often a question of a real necessity for the survival of their relationship with their parents (Park 1999).

Zhou (1997) also notes that the clash between the parental and the children's generation is partly a result of the speed in which immigrant children become 'Americanised.' The process of acculturation among the different generations of immigrant families happens at a different pace and can often cause intergenerational conflicts among the foreign-born parents and their children born and/or raised in the host countries. At times, this has been referred to as the 'intergeneration discrepancy' in acculturation (Ying and Han 2007), while Portes and Rumbaut (1996) have called it 'generational dissonance.' This conflict has resulted in many children and young people of ethnic origin coming to "look forward to college as an opportunity to escape from the demands of their parents' cultural expectations" (Min and Kim 2006:182). However, whilst one would perhaps think that these children would want to identify as Americans or Canadians once they get into college, what happens is in fact the exact opposite: they start identifying increasingly with their ethnic identities as a result of their "coming to terms with their ethnic and racial identities" (Min and Kim 2006) as they mature both psychologically and socially.

Before ending this section, it is important to reiterate the powerful meanings that imposed labels have on those being labelled. Labels such as 'refugees' and 'asylum seeker' are used as identity markers not only by mainstream society but also by those who wear these labels. This chapter has also dealt with how parents pass identities on to their children. It has been noted that despite parents' efforts, children of all kinds of immigrants can resist at times their ethnic marker while identifying themselves as being unhyphenated Americans (Min and Kim 2006). What is even more interesting is when this resistance to be labelled goes so far that these children and young adults of refugee and asylum seeker background prefer to identify themselves merely as individuals or human beings, without any ethnic or other identifier being attached to describing who they are (Cheng, interviewee in Park 1999). Such matters will be addressed in the following chapter.

4   The 'uniqueness' of the 1.5-generation

In academic discourse, the 1.5-generation is usually merged with the second-generation (Abebe 2009; Levitt and Waters 2002; Park 1999). I find this problematic. It is true that people in these two categories share similar characteristics and experiences, but there are significant differences that need to be explored if one wants to capture the real experiences of each group. The lumping together of the 1.5-generation with the second (or the first-generation as it is done at times) homogenises experiences and obscures the distinctiveness of each group. I contend that the 1.5-generation has a unique experience that deserves special attention. In particular, when discourse on identity is presented, it becomes apparent that the 1.5-generation may experience greater confusion and ambiguities in their process of identity formation.

Through the experience of having their early formative years in the country of origin, children and young people of the 1.5-generation have a direct though limited experience of their country of origin, while the second-generation may or may not have had any direct contact at all. As a result of this, the

early childhood memories of the 1.5-generation are significantly different to those of the second-generation (Rumbaut 2004; Zhou 1997). Nevertheless, the experiences of both of these groups may appear quite similar starting from their early adolescence.

I suggest that it only 'appears' similar because if one looks closer to compare and contrast, it will become clear that the experiences of being born and bred in the host country (second-generation) versus being born in the country of ethnic origin and then growing up in the country of residence shapes the personalities and identities of these groups rather differently. There is cultural transmission (although incomplete because of their emigration) which takes place during the early childhood of the 1.5-generation which may have instilled morals and values that may be very different than those in the receiving countries (Heitlinger, pers. com. 5April 2010).

In the sections that follow, I will discuss some of the different variables that make the experiences of the 1.5-generation distinct. I begin with a discussion on the variable of race and how this is understood by the 1.5-generation Ethiopian-Americans, followed by the role that language plays in the process of their identity formation. In the subsequent sections, I will discuss the 'struggle for belonging' continued from the introduction of this paper where the title was explained. Lastly, in this section, there is an analogical discussion on the experiences of the 1.5-generation with those of Third Culture Kids.

'Blacker than I thought': the variable of race

'Where are you from? … But where are you really from? … Where are your parents from then?'[9]

Many 1.5-and second-generation Ethiopians living in North America and Europe who have integrated successfully into mainstream society and the cultures of their host countries find it rather frustrating when they are persistently asked where they are from. They argue that this insistence on trying to find out exactly where a person is from has to do with the colour of his/her skin:

> *While not fitting in indicates not be-longing, it also has racializing connotations in that white refugees can fit in 'as soon as they get their acts straight' … But this is not possible for racialized Oromo [largest ethnic group in Ethiopia] refugees who will remain misfits because of the colour of their skin* (Kumsa 2006:243).

Kumsa notes that this differential treatment of refugees based on their colour has been affirmed in other studies (Kumsa 2006). On a similar note, Waters argues that White Americans of European ancestry are not asked this question and have more leeway in setting their own ethnic identities because a white person (having integrated in language and other aspects) can simply 'pass' as a White American (Waters 2006).

Second-generation Ethiopians experience their formative years in the host country and grow up alongside notions of race; the 1.5-generation, on the other hand, grapples with issues of colour and race as a new experience (at least at the beginning of their integration process). Moges, a 1.5-generation young man living in the US noted the following; "this country made me more aware of my race. I was Blacker than I thought I was!" (Moges, 1.5-generation cited in Chacko 2003:498). Similarly, Hall shares his realisation of his own Blackness once it was hailed on him:

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[9] Multiple informants, March-May 2010.

again, the word 'black' had never been uttered in my household or anywhere in Jamaica in my hearing, in my entire youth and adolescence— though there were all kinds of other ways of naming, and large numbers of people were very black indeed (Hall 1995:8).

As these quotes indicate, Moges was made aware of his Blackness but also his race after arriving to the United States and Hall after coming to Britain. Getahun (2007) notes that Ethiopians are aware of colour, but due to their history with no colonial past, the notion of race does not have a particular meaning in their value system. Being identified as 'Black' is also something that many Ethiopians have difficulty accepting because of the need to differentiate themselves from other Blacks, and as a way of rejecting an undifferentiated Black-Identity. For Moges and many 1.5-generation Ethiopians in the diaspora, their chosen nomenclature is actually Ethiopian, not Black. However, with longer stays in the US, perceptions of Blackness tend to develop (Chacko 2003).

As Chacko (2003) and Getahun (2007) note, one of the very first things that Ethiopians encounter when they arrive to the US is the racial boundaries. Coming from a country where racial groupings do not exist (although ethnic ones do), Ethiopians become confused with these categories of black, African-American, etc. (Getahun 2007). This seems to be a unique experience among the 1.5-generation Ethiopian-Americans. Many of my interviewees mentioned this in similar ways: "there I was being lumped into Black American... [I kept thinking] did not they know that I had a country?"[10] Hence, for Lily, being identified as a Black American had more content than the mere fact of being Black; it was also about having another place of belonging that one could return to. For Gideon, it was again the knowledge about the historical differences between himself as Ethiopian and the African-American population that made him rethink the categorisation as simply Black.[11] He seemed rather positive at times when he stated things like "moving to America has united us – people of colour" and other times, he kept reiterating that this is the case "even if we do not have anything in common with the African-Americans."

The role that the idea of race plays in the formation of identity is immense. Due to brevity, however, I have only used the variable of race to make a point of its importance without going into a detailed analysis. Clearly, this does not do a great deal of justice to the complexity of the issue but leaving it out of the research would also be unthinkable just like the variable of language in the following section.

The variable of language

First-generation Ethiopian parents try to teach their 1.5-and second-generation children their ethnic language, whether it is Amharic, Oromo, or Tigrinya, by insisting on speaking one of these languages at home. Usually, the children's generation prefers to converse in English. This has proven to be the case mostly for the second-generation. However, as the 1.5-generation children spend more time in the receiving countries and they become increasingly comfortable and proficient in the local language, they also tend to chose the latter "as their medium of communication, both at home and in public spaces" (Chacko 2003:502).

The territory of language plays an important role in a person's sense of self and be-longing; Meklit Hadero, an Ethiopian-born artist living in the US stated that "language is a great cultural connector"

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[10] Lily, Interview, 29 April 2010.
[11] Gideon, pseudonym, 1.5-generation, 43 years old, Interview, 18 April 2010.

and added that being able to express oneself in a language lets a person know a way of thinking that is different from the mainstream society that one lives in (2009). She is referring to the linguistic loss which unfortunately happens as cultural assimilation in the receiving country accelerates.

Similarly, Lily, who emigrated at the age of eight also had strong feelings about the language loss of her fellow 1.5-generation young Ethiopians (also referring to the first generation young adults).[12] Her parents insisted on speaking Amharic with her at home in the US, and attending Ethiopian Orthodox Church was an essential part of her upbringing. She is happy that she can speak Amharic as fluently as she does because, as she stressed during the interview, "it is part of who I am." She noticed that other young people who immigrated at around eight years of age and above try to assimilate into the culture of the host country to the extent that they either forget or resist speaking their mother tongue. Lily added, "I feel like I do not have anything in common with them because there is a whole value system which is lost when you express yourself in English rather than Amharic to another *Habesha* [a term that Ethiopians use to identify with each other, including Eritreans]." She found this saddening because of the loss of 'being' and the way of 'thinking' that comes with a certain language. At times, she said that she even felt alienated from the people with whom she should have a lot in common.

Although both the 1.5- and second-generation may be exposed to their parents' language and practice of religious and cultural ceremonies at home, there seems to be a stronger retention of bilingualism among the 1.5-generation (Park 1999). It could be that the lived memories and experiences of the latter group have given them a sense of belonging to that culture. According to the parental generation, however, their 1.5-generation children are perceived as not having adequate knowledge about their cultures, and their language skills are viewed as being relatively simple and only basically conversational (Park 1999). What this entails, then, is that the 1.5ers are not accepted as fully Ethiopian by the parental generation (Abebe 2009). In many instances, however the second-generation Ethiopian-Americans, view the 1.5ers as more Ethiopian than themselves.[13] This leaves the 1.5-generation young people in a limbo state of not really belonging anywhere. They are less than full Ethiopians and less than full Americans. They simply do not belong to either group; perhaps they sit on a fence between the two worlds. This state of sitting on a fence is elaborated on a later section about hyphenated identities.

The 'struggle for belonging' for the 1.5-generation

The human need to belong is more than one for protection or for the means of individual development: it is also a need to be among one's own. Although this latter need varies in strength according to individual circumstances and to such factors as age (it seems to become stronger as a person grows older), it is normally a strong human need, the satisfaction of which is conducive to individual and social well-being and the denial of which is conducive to suffering and to social disorder (Warner 1994:163).

Warner refers to the idea of belonging as a 'human need'; this need is not merely for the sake of protection but also a longing 'to be among one's own' and thus to be-long. While elaborating on how important it is for the personal development and well-being of the individual to be able to belong, he does not deal directly with the meaning of what it is to be among one's own. Who are the people that are one's own? Is it defined by the ethnic, racial or national origin of one's parents? Is it the people

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[12] Lily, Interview, 29 April 2010.
[13] Lily, interview, 29 April 2010.

that one interacts with on a daily basis that are 'one's own'? Or is it perhaps a combination of both? This is a crucial matter to investigate because a person's sense of belonging, which is central to the formation of identity, may develop from being amongst one's own. This was my observation at the ESAI conference where hundreds of young people with Ethiopian origins residing in the United States and Canada gathered, having this one thing in common: their Ethiopian descent. It was remarkable how smoothly conversations were created with 'strangers' sitting next to each other and how easy it seemed to connect. This is not peculiar to the 1.5-generation but Chacko notes that:

> [t]he physical and mental recognition of a community of co-ethnics and the invisible bonds that this identification engendered help create a strong and pervading sense of ethnic unity among the Ethiopian immigrants. Ethiopian identity, buttressed by cultural heritage, informed the young people's sense of self and their lives. The distinctive features of people from Ethiopia made it easy for community members to identify each other as co-ethnics. When Ethiopians meet each other, it is common practice to exchange greetings, even if the parties involved are strangers. One of my respondents said," That's the part that I like. We always acknowledge other Ethiopians' presence. You know, meet and greet. Even if you don't stop to say hello, we say hello with our eyes and smile. Anywhere in the world! (Chacko 2003:501).

So, the Ethiopian identity is, in a way, being enforced as a result of distinctive features of the people and this seems to lead to automatic connectedness and a sense of belongingness. However, I would argue that this happens at a rather superficial level, i.e. prior to people's engagement with any meaningful discussion. It is at a deep conversational level that the 'struggle for belonging' takes place. As the informant states, in the excerpt above, the sense of belonging is a subjective response which can be based on several things, including an individual's personal experience and response to social surroundings or, personal relationships.

The struggle for belonging can take different forms where the obvious one is perhaps between retention and/or rejection of the distinctive identities of the country of origin and the extent to which one accepts the relatively new identity that can develop in the host country. Kumsa notes that it is about "intense longings to be-long" (Kumsa 2006: 236). This is clearly not exclusively the issue of the 1.5-generation because the second generation goes through similar struggles. However, this struggle is quite ambiguous for the 1.5-generation because of their aforementioned sense of belonging existing everywhere. One thing that needs to be noted here is that the 1.5-generation is not homogenous and there is a huge variety of experiences within the group. For example, Selam notes that it is a 'luxury' to be bi-cultural and also discusses the benefits of being bilingual and how it allows her to think in two languages.[14] In this case then, it is actually not a struggle but a comfort and luxury to be part of the 1.5-generation. Johnny and Lily,[15] on the other hand, both spoke of how exhausting it could be to continuously have to "jump back and forth."

Sitting in the space within the hyphen: hyphenated identity

This section explores the meaning of and discourse around hyphenated identities in relation to the way in which the 1.5-generation utilises the idea behind this term to make sense of their daily lives. In multi-cultural societies such as Canada, the hyphen is used to "articulate the marriage of ethnic and national identity" of individuals (Hier and Bolaria 2006). Hyphenated identities (Afro-American, Ethiopian-Canadian, etc.) emphasise ethnic identity followed by citizenship of the place of residence.

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[14] Selam, pseudonym, 1.5-generation, 27 years old, Interview, 25 April 2010.
[15] Interviews, 3 April 2010 and 29 April 2010.

The ethnic identity that is being emphasised in hyphenated identities functions both as a tool of inclusion and exclusion (Min and Kim 2006; Hier and Bolaria 2006). When one is comfortable with being identified as a person with an ethnic origin and citizenship of a country of residence, there are advantages to the usage of hyphenated identities.

When the hyphenated-identity allows for a certain level of 'be-longingness' to both worlds instead of being confined to one, there are indeed advantages to having the opportunity to identity with a hyphen. Scholars such as Rushdie, however, stress the struggle and pain of having to occupy a middle ground. He describes this as follows:

> [b]ut I too, have ropes around my neck, I have them to this day, pulling me this way and that, East and West, the nooses tightening, commanding, choose, choose...Ropes, I do not choose between you. Lassoes, lariats, I choose neither of you, and both. Do you hear? I refuse to choose (Rushdie 1996:211).

For Rushdie, it seems like a difficult struggle, but he is also confident and firm in his decision in not having to make a clear-cut choice. This is akin to the hyphenated identity where a person does not have to choose between the one or the other because it allows the individual to sit comfortably in the in-between space of the ethnic and the national identity that he/she holds, i.e. the space within the hyphen itself.

These hyphens create an apparent distance between the ethnic origin and the nationality (Mahtani 2006). An African-American is not just American because of his/her African appearance is also an identifier. In this manner, it can become exclusionary since it restrains the person from referring to him/herself as American with a single American identity. As a result, critics of hyphenated identities argue that hyphens create more distance and emphasise differences (Mahtani 2006:168). I would take this argument further and suggest that the 'hyphens' may not merely emphasise differences between people but also create them based on perceived physical appearances rather than real ones. As a result, the foreigner and his/her children can never become full citizens of their receiving country. Instead of just being 'American,' one has to identify as an Ethiopian-American, Japanese-American etc. In addition, it is argued that the burden of hyphenation is that it produces an identity with a "union of contradictions, each word symbolising the inversion of the 'other'" (Hanchard 1990 as cited in Hier and Bolaria 2006:163). This is a rather extreme statement but the point is that it raises questions regarding the extent to which there can be a 'unity in diversity' and how a person can find an unambiguous identity in the midst of this.

Lily feels comfortable with her Ethiopian-Americanness.[16] However, she recalled the moment she formally became an American citizen and said that she was crying during the ceremony while taking the oath of allegiance. From that moment on, she has only held an American passport and her Ethiopian-ness can no longer be referred to as her institution-identity, to use Gee's (2000) concept. Lily stated that she felt like her Ethiopian-ness was being deleted and replaced with an American identity, and that she was betraying her country of origin and her Ethiopian identity. On another note, when discussing the notion of belonging, Lily mentioned that she does not know sometimes how to react in certain situations (not knowing or feeling where her allegiance is supposed to be). She was not referring to the citizenship ceremony per se, but I could not help but wonder if she was thinking about possible expectations from fellow Ethiopians during the ceremony. Was she 'expected' to be overjoyed

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[16] Interview, 29 April 2010.

that she was finally becoming an American citizen? Or was she supposed to feel sad for ending her citizenship ties with Ethiopia? This deep feeling of allegiance to Ethiopia that Lily felt, whether real, symbolic, or both, is one of the unique features of the 1.5-generation. The major difference with the second-generation Ethiopians is that they become Americans by virtue of being born on the territory (*jus soli*) (Bauböck 2008). They do not go through this process of being naturalised and thus may not relate to Lily's story.

Third culture kids and the 1.5-generation

The experiences of the so called Third Culture Kids (TCKs) have a striking resemblance to those of the 1.5-generation. I suggest that one could even make the argument that they are 'almost' synonymous – 'almost' because I do not think that any one group's experiences can be exactly the same as the other. A TCK is defined as:

> *…an individual who, having spent a significant part of the developmental years in a culture other than the parents' culture, develops a sense of relationship to all of the cultures while not having full ownership in any. Elements from each culture are incorporated into the life experience, but the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar experience* (Pollock and Van Reken 2001:19).

While these people are usually very self-confident and flexible in many situations because of their exposure to regular changes in their lives, their sense of belonging tends to be rather tenuous (Pollock 2001). Pollock states that one of the most difficult questions that one could ask a TCK is: "[w]here is home?" (2001:124). TCKs usually refer to several locations as home and they feel like they "are at home everywhere and nowhere" (Fail et al. 2004:321). When it comes to nationality, TCKs tend to identify themselves as coming from their passport countries when outside of that country and they feel like they belong elsewhere when they are in the passport country (Fail et al. 2004).

This is something that the 1.5-generation can relate to. From my own experience (and from several of my interviewees), I know that this happens quite often. Many of my interviewees expressed it in the following way: when travelling to Ethiopia, except for the fact that you look like everyone else, you do not feel like you have much (if anything) in common with the people once you start engaging in a conversation. On the other hand, when you are abroad, wherever that may be, your passport identity is usually not enough as an identifier, thus, you always have to refer to your birthplace and/or ethnic origin. The other side of this is that at times, you try to reinforce your passport identity when you are in the passport country because you want people to accept that you are who your passport states that that you are, as Addis explained.[17]

Similar to the experience of a TCK, when I asked Gideon[18] where he thought or felt that his home was, he replied:

> *I am not the right person to be asked that question because I do not have a definite answer. I have lived in over 60 different places in my life, and most of these places I have called home [at least temporarily] ... I had drawn a map for myself to locate my home but soon realised that this does not exist on a geographical map* (Interview, 18 April 2010).

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[17] Addis, pseudonym, 1.5-generation, 27 years old, Interview, 26 March 2010.
[18] Interview, 18 April 2010.

Gideon left Ethiopia at the age of eleven. He has lived in several countries, all of which have been his home and he still revisits several of these places on a regular basis, i.e. literal and physical visit, and as he put it "in memory by creating and re-creating what was through art – I try to make memory a reality." He eventually said that his current home is in New York City because this is where he does his work and this is also where his son lives. However, he kept reiterating that it can be very inhibiting to identify oneself fully and completely to a single place.

As mentioned above, TCKs develop "a sense of relationship to all of the cultures while not having full ownership in any" (Pollock 2001:19). The same could be argued for those belonging to the 1.5-generation. Both Lily (Interview, 29 April 2010) and Johnny (Interview, 3 April 2010) stated that they have difficulties feeling a total sense of belonging (and/or relationship) to either of their cultures, i.e. Ethiopian and American. Johnny notes that it can be easier to bond with other immigrant-Americans who also grew up in the US. This is an interesting observation because one could argue that the reason behind this is that there is no point of reference for the 'other immigrant-American' by which to judge an Ethiopian-American. Thus, the comfort level increases since there are no (perhaps just a few) cultural expectations regarding how this person ought to be.

5   Conclusion

The purpose of this research has been to bring together literature that deals with issues of identity formation and then put this into a general framework that can contribute to a better understanding of the experiences of the 1.5-generation (hyphenated) Ethiopian-Americans in their struggle for belonging and identity formation. The theoretical underpinnings that have guided my research and analysis have been embedded in sociological symbolic interactionist perspectives with a situational approach. As the title of this paper indicates, I have argued accordingly for a multiplicity and fluidity of identities, especially for the 1.5-generation as they form and reform their lives due to life-changing circumstances of refugeehood and exile. As Howard states, "identities are relational, defined by their difference from something, processual, and multiple" (2000:386). Also, as Park notes, identity is not a thing out there to be discovered and reserved, and it is not an end in itself but rather is located in the lifelong process of becoming ourselves (Park 1999).

In the process of identity formation, people usually consider who they are 'allowed' to be by wider society and the other communities in which they have a presence (Hawley 1997). 'Who I am' is thus determined by the powerful and those 'others' around me; it is a permanently fleeting state (Howard 2000; Said 2000). This refers to one's social identity and it is only when 'others' have recognised and confirmed a certain claimed identity that its existence can fully be acknowledged.

From this it follows that there are institutionalised labels which have the power to affect a person's 'sense of self,' and that labels such as 'refugee' can be markers of exploitability (Zetter 1991, 2007). Labels bearing negative stereotypes diminish people's ability to express and self-construct their own identities as they see fit. As Agnew (2005) suggests, our social environments (including the institutions that are entitled to construct labels such as refugee) play immense roles, not only in influencing the reality of those being labelled, but within their imagination. On a similar note, Hall

mentions, "...the funny thing is, I'd never called myself, or thought of myself as an immigrant before. But having once been hailed or interpolated, I owned up at once: that is what I am" (1995:8). What this means then is that the person who carries such a label cannot help but employ the ascribed identities into his/her sense of self.

Although the connection between home and identity is not straightforward, I have made the argument that the process of identity formation is further complicated for the 1.5-generation because of the multiplicity of places that they could call home. Similarly, for many, identifying themselves as just Ethiopians or Americans is problematic.

I came out with the assumption that there is a struggle for belonging and while I stand by this argument, I am inclined to think that members of the 1.5-generation (referring to those I interviewed and the people that they referred to) have created for themselves a transnational identity (although not always with ease), enabling them to move practically from their Ethiopian-ness to their American or Canadian-ness. I would say that the 1.5-generation Ethiopian-Americans, as the 1.5ers elsewhere, belong in multiple places: "not belonging here, not belonging there ... [but] belonging everywhere" (Abebe 2009:62). Of course, in response to such assertion one could ask: if a person belongs 'everywhere', does it mean that he/she does not belong 'anywhere'? Even the concept of the '1.5-generation' could be understood as being a half of something (first-generation and second-generation). It makes one wonder how a person can be 'a half' of anything, and not a full of something. These statements and questions are likely to be mere philosophical queries that are intended to ignite interest in further analysis and research on the struggle for belonging of the 1.5-generation. I close this paper with a quote that, to me, encompasses a sentiment felt by many people belonging to the 1.5-generation.

'Each day is a journey, the journey itself home.'

(Matsuo Basho)

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