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The Impact of Social Networks on the Immigration Experience of Ethiopian Women

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By

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The Impact of Social Networks on the Immigration Experience of Ethiopian Women

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ABSTRACT

Immigration to the United States from African nations is growing exponentially. Female African immigrant populations in the United States are growing faster than male African immigrant populations. Despite the growing population, there has been limited research examining the African immigrant population, with most of what does exist focusing on Black immigrant men. Washington, DC is an emerging gateway for African immigrants, and the majority of African immigrants to Washington, DC are from Ethiopia. This research study explored the immigration experience of Ethiopian women and how they used social and kinship networks as they immigrated to the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Data were collected through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with 14 participants. Questions in the interviews were based on an interview guide developed by the researcher and informed by social capital theory. The transcripts of these interviewed were then analyzed according to qualitative content analysis methodology to determine themes arising from the participants' experiences. The themes that emerged during the coding and analysis process included the important role family members who already lived in the U.S. played in connecting participants with housing, jobs, and educational opportunities; the importance of the church in providing a social home and sense of

community for the participants; and the way the participants' feeling of belonging grew over time with experiences that helped them feel comfortable in new surroundings. Findings suggest that social capital theory is an appropriate lens through which to view Ethiopian immigrant women. The findings of this study demonstrate the importance of both family and fictive kin relationships in the lives of the participants. Results also underscore the importance of religious communities among Ethiopian women immigrants. Social workers in refugee centers, health departments, and public schools would benefit from partnering with Ethiopian churches to better meet the needs of this underserved population.

This dissertation by Sarah Moore Oliphant fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Social Work approved by Linda Plitt Donaldson, PhD, as Director, and Susanne Bennett, PhD, and Michael Sheridan, PhD as Readers.

Linda Plitt Donaldson, PhD, Director

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	viii
I. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....	1
A. Statement of the Problem.....	1
B. Background of the Problem.....	2
C. Theoretical Approach to the Problem.....	3
D. Purpose of the Study.....	3
E. Methodology.....	4
F. Significance to Social Work.....	4
G. Researcher's Interest in the Problem.....	4
H. Summary.....	6
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
A. Ethiopian Immigration.....	8
B. Washington, DC as Ethiopian Enclave.....	10
C. Social and Political Ethiopian Context.....	12
D. Geography and Environment.....	13
E. Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity.....	13
F. Political History and Context.....	14

G. Social Indicators.....	17
1. Poverty.....	18
2. Health.....	18
3. Employment and Literacy.....	19
4. Legal Systems.....	20
5. Social and Communal Nature of Ethiopian Women's Lives.....	22
H. Social Capital Theory.....	25
1. Definition of Social Capital.....	25
2. Social Capital Concepts.....	27
3. Bonding, Bridging, and Linking Social Capital.....	31
4. Structural and Cognitive Aspects.....	34
5. Social Capital Theory and Immigration.....	36
F. Summary.....	41
III. METHODOLOGY.....	43
A. Research Design.....	43
1. Epistemology.....	43
2. Qualitative Content Analysis.....	44
B. Sample.....	45
1. Interview Guide.....	48
2. Data Collection.....	50
3. Data Analysis.....	53
4. Rigor and Trustworthiness.....	54

C. Ethical Considerations.....	55
1. Human Subject Concerns.....	55
2. Reflexivity.....	56
D. Summary.....	57
IV. FINDINGS.....	59
A. Participant Profile.....	61
B. The Phases of the Immigration Experience.....	66
1. Phase 1: Beginning a New Life: The Role of Family and Friends in the Lives of Ethiopian Immigrant Women.....	66
a. Airport Arrival.....	67
b. Living Arrangements.....	71
c. Finding Employment.....	74
d. Pursuing Education.....	80
e. Challenges of Adjustment Phase, Despite Assistance of Family and Friends.....	84
2. Phase 2: Finding a Place in a New Community: The Definitions of Community and Role of Community Organizations.....	88
a. The Role of Church in the Lives of the Women.....	90
b. Participant Definitions of Community.....	93
c. Community Responses and Projects.....	96
d. Receiving and Offering Help.....	99
3. Phase 3: Seeking Belonging and a Sense of Home: Navigating Trust, Communication, and Belonging in a New World.....	102

a. Trust and Communication.....	103
b. Generational and Gender Issues.....	105
c. Influence of Ethiopian Politics on Post-immigration Life.....	108
d. Belonging in a New Land.....	110
4. Findings from the Researcher’s Reflexivity Journal.....	115
5. Summary.....	118
V. Discussion and Conclusion.....	120
A. Interpretation of Findings.....	121
1. The Importance of Family Members Already in the U.S. and Social Capital Theory	121
2. The Church Community Provides a Social Home and Sense of Community and Social Capital Theory.....	128
3. The Development of a Sense of Belonging and Social Capital Theory.....	132
B. Strengths and Limitations of this Study.....	136
C. Implications of Findings for Social Work.....	138
1. Social Work Policy Recommendations.....,	138
2. Social Work Practice Recommendations.....	139
3. Social Work Education Recommendations.....	140
4. Call for Future Research.....	140
D. Conclusion.....	142
APPENDICES.....	144
REFERENCES	153

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Phases and Themes Emerging from Interview Data.....	60
2. Demographics of Participants at Time of Immigration to U.S.....	62
3. Personal Demographics of Participants at Time of the Interview.....	64
4. Religious Affiliation of Participants.....	65

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This qualitative research study is an exploratory examination of the immigration experience of 14 Ethiopian women and how they use social and kinship networks as they immigrate to the Washington, DC metropolitan area. The processes by which they decide to immigrate in the first place—involving lottery visas, asylum status, and human smuggling across borders. It explores how they find work, or enroll in local colleges and work their way up the proverbial ladder. This study also examines how they find a place to live and with whom they share their living spaces. All the messiness of living is amplified in the stories of these 14 women because all parts of their lives—from illness to death to poverty to heart ache-- are colored by the constancy of navigating cultural differences and language barriers. The hopes and dreams of the women interviewed—whether fulfilled or unrealized--continue to play out in a world far different from where they started. This study is a story of resilience and sacrifice and hard work; a story that is still not finished as each of these women continues on in her post-immigration life.

Statement of the Problem

Immigration to the United States from African nations is growing exponentially. Black African immigration grew by approximately 200% in the 1980s and 1990s and almost 100% during the 2000s (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2012). Female African immigrant populations in the United States are growing faster than male African immigrant populations (Djamba & Kimuna, 2011). Despite the growing population, there has been limited research examining the African immigrant population (Mott, 2006), with most of what does exist focusing on black immigrant men (Djamba & Kimuna, 2011; Wilson & Habecker, 2008), leaving a gap in the knowledge base about African women immigrants. Women's roles as wage laborers; family members; heads of

households; mothers; union members; and participants in community, school, and church organizations demonstrate the complexity in women's immigration and adaptation processes (Zentgraf, 2002). How these women are integrated into formal and informal systems in their communities has weighty consequences for women individually in terms of standard of living as well as social support and resiliency (Timberlake, Farber, Wall, Taylor, & Sabatino, 2003).

Washington, DC is an emerging gateway for African immigrants; 11.2 % of the metro area's immigrant population is African (Singer, 2004). Specifically, the majority of African immigrants to Washington, DC are from Ethiopia (Singer, Friedman, Cheung, & Price, 2001). Because of the lack of research on African women immigrants and the growth of Ethiopian immigrants to Washington DC, there is a compelling need to study the immigration experiences of Ethiopian women in the Washington metro area. In order for social workers and other policy makers to provide culturally competent community-based interventions to enable healthy transitions for this population, it is imperative to understand the lived experiences of Ethiopian immigrant women. Specifically, more research is needed on these women and how they use social relationships and networks to effectively transition post-immigration, given how important social networks are as a key factor in immigrant success.

Background of the Problem

Women in Ethiopia are influenced by a variety of factors in their decision to emigrate¹ from their home country. Ethiopia's political history traces a feudalistic society to a socialist regime to a newly formed and fledgling democracy (Terrazas, 2007). Further, war and

¹ Emigrate and immigrate are both used in this paper. Emigrate refers to one leaving her country; immigrate refers to moving to a new country. The distinction is the leaving vs. arriving. Emigration is leaving; immigration is arriving.

violent border disputes with Eritrea have also been a major part of Ethiopia's history (Terrazas, 2007). Political unrest is only one of the factors pushing women to leave Ethiopia. Crushing poverty, inadequate health care, lack of employment, and human rights violations in the nation are other parts of life in Ethiopia that serve as motivators for women to emigrate (Milkias, 2011).

Theoretical Approach to the Problem

Social capital theory has been used to understand immigrant communities including Asian and Hispanic groups (Garcia, 2005; Nee & Sanders, 2001; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993); however Ethiopian women have not been studied through the social capital theoretical lens. Social capital is the real or potential resources that are linked to membership in a group (Bourdieu, 1986), or "the degree of connectedness and the quality and quantity of social relations in a given population" (Harpham, Grant, & Thomas, 2002, p. 106). Social capital theory purports that social relationships, including formal and informal networks, are influential in the lives of human beings (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998). In this study, social capital theory has been used to inform the development of an interview guide that includes questions related to the social networks that support or hinder an Ethiopian woman's immigration experience.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the process of Ethiopian women immigrating to the United States and to understand the impact of social networks on this experience. The research question which guides the study is "*How do informal and formal social networks affect the lived experience of Ethiopian women who immigrate to the Washington, DC metropolitan area?*"

Methodology

This research is a qualitative study of women who, as adults, immigrated to the Washington, DC metro area from Ethiopia. Through face-to-face interviews, 14 participants shared their stories in relation to how they have used social and kinship networks in their immigration experience. The transcripts of these interviews are the data used to conduct a qualitative content analysis. This research is based on a constructivist and subjectivist framework (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). Therefore, a qualitative approach that utilizes open-ended questions and allows cognitive space for the participants to share their own reality is the most appropriate approach for this study.

Significance to Social Work

This qualitative study contributes to the knowledge base of the lived experiences of Ethiopian immigrant women; a perspective that has all too often remained invisible in the research. Findings provide social workers and policy makers with in-depth information regarding how Ethiopian women experience immigration, including how informal and formal networks impact the process. This study offers insights into how social workers can help structure communities through formal policies or facilitate the creation of informal networks that may assist in absorbing and integrating increasingly growing immigrant populations in a way that provides a healthy transition for these women.

Researcher's Interest in the Problem

This study is the convergence of my personal experiences with the Ethiopian members of my community as well as my professional and academic interests in women's and international issues. One of the things I love about my neighborhood in my Washington, DC inner suburb is

the vast array of people that I meet in my daily interactions. When at the neighborhood park, public library, or local elementary school, I meet people from all over the world with fascinatingly different experiences. When we first moved into this location, I was surprised and a little delighted to discover Ethiopian bread, called injera, sold at the gas station right alongside the cup-of-noodles and quarts of milk typically found at convenience stores all across America. Our public library hosted an Ethiopian coffee ceremony on a Saturday morning to provide insight into the culture of our many Ethiopian neighbors. As I walk my son to school in the morning, I have a chat with the crossing guard on my way home. It turns out that this 70-plus-year-old white man is married to an Ethiopian woman. Over the course of time, I have learned about his world travels, his wife and her children's migration to the U.S., the struggles of her children to adapt and earn an education, and the various jobs she has had here in the U.S., including her abandoned catering business. I have heard about wedding and holiday celebrations, holy days, and fasting seasons. I have learned about the network of Ethiopian friends and acquaintances that he and his wife associate with in the U.S., as well as the family and friends still back in Ethiopia. I wanted to learn more, especially when I went to the literature and found that there was an astounding lack of literature available--we do not have a record of these women's experiences.

From this background, I approached this research study from an etic, or outsider, perspective. I am not Ethiopian, nor have I even visited Ethiopia. I have not immigrated to another country nor had to build a life in a new culture. I have approached this subject not as an expert, but as a learner who was taught from the women who own these experiences.

This topic is an extension of my long professional and personal interest in international social work and women's empowerment issues which were first ignited when I learned of micro credit lending in a Master's degree social work course. Since then I have spent time in Central America, worked for a humanitarian organization serving South America, and researched and written about international women's empowerment issues. Hearing and sharing the voices of the participants in this study is a natural extension of my fifteen year professional passion.

Summary

African immigration is a growing phenomenon in the United States. Washington, DC is particularly emerging as an enclave for Ethiopian immigrants. Due to the growth of this population, yet the dearth of literature about Ethiopian women immigrants in the United States, this study offers exploratory research into the lived experience of women who emigrated from Ethiopia as adults. The important role these women play in society makes it vital that their stories find voice and contribute to the discussion of how immigration and resettlement occur.

The following chapter presents a review of the literature regarding African immigration, Ethiopian immigration, and Washington, DC as an African immigrant enclave. From the broad discussion of African immigration, it will then narrow to the limited data available about Ethiopian immigrants and the almost non-existent literature on Ethiopian women. An overview of the Ethiopian social and political context will offer more insight into the perspective and national background of the study participants. Lastly, social capital theory will be discussed in detail, offering both a theoretical overview as well as examples in the literature of social capital theory applied to immigrant issues in general. The lack of literature on social capital theory and

Ethiopian women underscores the importance of this study and future research to bring Ethiopian women immigrants from the background to center stage in the powerful stories of their lives.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter begins with a discussion of African immigration, including Ethiopian immigration, to the United States followed by a discussion of the Washington, DC metro area as an Ethiopian ethnic enclave. The chapter then offers an overview of the geographic, historical, political, and social context of Ethiopia as well as a description of the daily life of women in Ethiopia. Next, social capital theory is explored through a review of the seminal works in the literature, which define social capital and identify key concepts and constructs. Finally, social capital theory is addressed in relation to immigration issues, including a review of the research on immigration and Ethiopian women through the social capital lens.

Ethiopian Immigration

Black African immigrants are among the fastest growing immigrant groups in the United States (Capps et al., 2012). In fact, Black African immigration grew by approximately 200% in the 1980s and 1990s and almost 100% during the 2000s (Capps et al., 2012). Of African countries, Ethiopia sends the second highest number of immigrants to the United States. In 2008-2009, there were 143,000 Black immigrants from Ethiopia in the United States; this is second only to Black African immigrants from Nigeria who numbered 201,000 (Capps et al., 2012). Black African immigrants are less likely to enter the United States illegally (without a visa or over-staying a visa) and are more likely to have entered the country as a refugee or received asylum status after arriving than other immigrant groups (Capps et al., 2012). In FY 2010, there were 14,266 Ethiopians legally admitted to the United States; 47% were immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, 5% were family sponsored preferences, 19% were refugees and asylees, 28%

arrived on diversity visas², and one percent were admitted through employment or other categories (Capps et al., 2012).

Ethiopian immigrants are more likely to be men than women (Capps et al., 2012). However, this trend, at least among African immigrants as a whole, is changing. Djamba and Kimuna (2011) report that female African immigrant populations in the United States are currently growing even faster than male African immigrant populations.

As a whole, immigrants from Africa are more educated and skilled than the entirety of the immigrant population in the United States (Capps et al., 2012). Although Ethiopian immigrants do not top the list of the highest educated African immigrants, they still have significant education when compared to the immigration population as a whole in the United States. Of adults 25 and older in the United States, 12% of the native born, 32% of immigrants as a whole, and 13% of Ethiopian immigrants have less than a high school degree. Ethiopian immigrants are on par with native-born adults when it comes to having completed a college degree or more education (28% for both groups) and ahead of immigrants as a whole (27%) (Capps et al., 2012). Ethiopians often learn English before arriving in the United States; Ethiopian immigrants have a 57% English proficiency rate (Capps et al., 2012).

Capps et al. (2012) further explain that Ethiopian immigrant employment rates in the U.S. (76%) are higher than immigration employment rates as a whole (71%). Even starker is the difference between Ethiopian women immigrant's employment rate (70%) and immigrant women as a whole (60%). However, gender disparities persist with Ethiopian men having a

² The diversity program allots 50,000 visas each year to countries which had less than 50,000 admissions over the prior five-year time period (Capps et al., 2012).

higher employment rate (83%) than Ethiopian women (70%). In 2007, the median annual income for Ethiopian immigrant workers over age 16 was \$24,000, compared to \$33,000 for native born, and \$26,000 for all immigrants (Capps et al., 2012). Even though Ethiopian immigrants account for more higher-educated workers than other groups, the median income of Ethiopian immigrant groups remains lower. Capps and associates (2012) provide possible reasons for this discrepancy: “Black African immigrants may be disadvantaged by their recent date of arrival or because their degrees and credentials cannot be translated meaningfully into high-skilled jobs in the United States” (p. 18).

Washington, DC as Ethiopian Enclave

The Washington, DC metropolitan area is an emerging gateway city for immigration, which means it stands out for its fast growth of immigrants in the past 20 years (Singer, 2004). Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2009 American Community Survey (ACS), the 2000 Decennial Census and earlier censuses, and the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS), McCabe (2011) reports that 9.9% (147,336) of all African immigrants in the United States in 2009 lived in the Washington metro area.

In order to study why Africans have chosen to immigrate to the DC area, Wilson and Habecker (2008) conducted a study comprised of interviews with 17 participants from 11 African countries, using participant observation methods. Their findings revealed four themes of why Africans migrate to DC: (a) Washington is a cosmopolitan city with diversity and an international atmosphere; (b) Washington is viewed as a center for international work; (c) Washington is perceived as a more manageable city in terms of size, cost of living, and traffic as

opposed to cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago; and (d) Washington is the national capital, which carries status and importance for African immigrants.

Wilson and Habecker's (2008) research supports previous research, which found that once an immigrant community is established, the way is paved for future immigrants to join the community (Massey, 1990; Massey et al., 1993). These established communities act as a magnet for immigrants, drawing them to a place already established with familiar food, churches, ready-made mentors, and a hub of support networks awaiting their arrival. Wilson and Habecker (2008) note the importance of this for new immigrants: "Within these communities, African immigrants stay connected to their countries of origin through transnational activities organized around a variety of ethnic, national, political and religious affiliations and identifications that often overlap and intersect" (p. 444).

The Washington, DC metro area has become this type of magnet community for African immigrants, particularly immigrants from Ethiopia. Unofficial reports suggest that the Washington, DC area hosts approximately 250,000 Ethiopians, the largest community outside of the capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa (Farzaneh & McKenna, 2012). Lee (2011) reports the Shaw neighborhood of Washington, DC is sometimes called Little Ethiopia. Its streets are lined with Ethiopian restaurants, grocery stores, and specialty shops; throughout the city, Ethiopian immigrants have a strong presence in valet parking, parking lot, and taxicab businesses. A 20 year resident of DC, Ethiopian immigrant Yehunie Belay publishes a 1000 page Ethiopian phone book that categorizes Ethiopian businesses (Farzaneh & McKenna, 2012). The development of industries that provide Ethiopians a ready-made network of employers and suppliers of in-

demand goods and services suggests that social relationships are an important part of the Ethiopian immigration experience.

The DC city government has an Office of African Affairs, which offers a variety of services. It serves as a liaison for the African community and city agencies, providing capacity building support to entrepreneurs and African community organizations and encouraging community engagement through outreach and education (The District of Columbia, n.d.). Further, the entire Washington metro area has become a hub for Ethiopian immigrants, with high number of Ethiopian immigrants in the dense Maryland and Virginia suburbs. For example, the Ethiopian Community Development Council, an organization that empowers Ethiopian immigrants and refugees as they become part of their new communities, has its two DC metro offices in the inner suburbs of Silver Spring, Maryland and Arlington, Virginia. The increase in Ethiopian immigration in Washington offers opportunities for learning about the women who comprise this influx, including greater understanding of the context of their departure and the experience of their arrival and adjustment.

Social and Political Ethiopian Context

In order to absorb the layers of meaning in the immigration experiences of Ethiopian women in the United States, it is important to have a contextual understanding of the shared history and demographics of Ethiopia as a nation. Further, social indicators provide insight into the daily lives of Ethiopian women and how that might impact their immigration decisions and experiences.

Geography and Environment

Ethiopia is a land-locked country in eastern Africa that is approximately almost twice the size of the state of Texas, with an estimated population of almost 94 million (93,877,025).

Ethiopia is the most populated land-locked country in the world (CIA, 2013). Ethiopia and its bordering nations, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan, comprise what is called the Horn of Africa; a region that has been the site of crushing violent conflict during the past half century (CIA, 2013; Terrazas, 2007). Ethiopia is situated in the Great Rift Valley, which is geologically active and makes the country vulnerable to earthquakes, volcanoes, and frequent droughts (CIA, 2013).

Ethnic and Linguistic Diversity

The population of Ethiopia is ethnically and linguistically diverse with approximately 80 ethnic groups (Milkias, 2011). The CIA World Factbook (2013) uses Ethiopian 2007 census data to report the various ethnic groups. The largest 11 ethnic groups comprise 88.7% of the population, with the remaining 11.3% made up of small groupings of people (CIA, 2013). The Ethiopian 2007 census also identifies 12 languages (with an “other” category, which comprises 11.7% of speakers) including the official national languages of Amharic, Arabic, and English (CIA, 2013). The census reports the religious composition of the country to be 43.6% Ethiopian Orthodox, 33.9 % Muslim, 18.6% Protestant, 2.6% traditional, 0.7% Catholic, and 0.7% other (CIA, 2013). Although not one of the largest religious populations in Ethiopia, there is a pocket of Ethiopian Jews who call themselves “Beta Israel” and are primarily located in north Ethiopia in the province of Gondar. They have historically lived in peace with their Christian and Muslim neighbors (Terrazas, 2007).

Political History and Context

Another important contextual piece in understanding Ethiopian immigrants is the political history of their nation. Unlike much of Africa, Ethiopia is not the product of European colonization. In its 3000 year history dating back to the Axumite Empire, it was occupied for only five years (1936-1941) by Italy (CIA, 2013; Terrazas, 2007). Modern day Ethiopia is, instead, one country comprised of many ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups, which at times has been the source of ethnic conflict (Terrazas, 2007).

From 1930-1974, Ethiopia was ruled by Emperor Haile Salassie who brought westernization to Ethiopia in the form of secondary schools, airplanes, and radio stations, all the while claiming absolute power according to divine right (Milkias, 2011). During the Salassie empire, there was little emigration from Ethiopia, except for the few elites Selassie encouraged to study abroad to receive Western educations and return home (Milkias, 2011; Terazzas, 2007). During the feudalism of the Salassie regime, women were mostly rural subsistence farmers who married early and were of lower status than men. They worked hard at home and on the farm, but poverty and destitution were prevalent among the majority of the population (Milkias, 2011).

In 1974, revolution erupted in Ethiopia and Salassie was overthrown by a military regime called the Derg, which instituted a socialist state (CIA, 2013; Terrazas, 2007). The Derg's brutal tactics included forming neighborhood associations whose job it was to execute dissidents (Milkias, 2011). Hundreds of thousands fled from Ethiopia during the Derg regime (1974-1991) due to the forced resettlement, ethnic violence, drought, and famine, as well as conflict between Ethiopia and neighboring Somalia (Terrazas, 2007). In addition, those who were relatively

secure were still suffering the oppressive poverty; World Bank estimates suggest that unemployment for men in 1978 was 12% and 31% for females (Terrazas, 2007).

It is impossible to distinguish those individuals who left for political reasons from those who left because of poverty and economic stagnation—often there was an element of both—but, overwhelmingly, the international community agreed that the outflow from Ethiopia was a refugee crisis. (Terrazas, 2007, para 5)

The Derg was overthrown by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991, a constitution was adopted in 1994, and the first multi-party elections were held in 1995 (CIA, 2013). However, there have been many barriers to the reality of free and fair elections including accusations of election rigging and intimidation, opposition parties boycotting elections, and even 193 protestors being shot by the government's riot squad following the 2005 elections (Milkias, 2011). Additionally, Eritrea's fight for independence from Ethiopia has been a source of violent conflict periodically in the decades since Emperor Selassie declared Eritrea to be a province of Ethiopia in 1961 (Terrazas, 2007). The ongoing war with Eritrea ended in December 2000 with a peace treaty. However, Ethiopia still has not withdrawn troops from all contested areas of Eritrea (CIA, 2013).

One major consequence of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea was the forcible expulsion of Ethiopians of Eritrean descent. According to Human Rights Watch (2001):

By early 2000, Ethiopian authorities, citing broad threats to national security, had forcibly expelled some 70,000 Ethiopians of Eritrean parentage to Eritrea. The government arbitrarily seized those of Eritrean descent, held them in harsh detention conditions and allowed no challenge to their expulsion... It divided families, forcibly

separating many from spouses and children whose Ethiopian nationality was not challenged, and expropriated their properties. (para. 3)

The status of Ethiopian and Eritrean citizenship is fraught with complexity because of the relationship between the two states over the course of the 20th century. This relationship has contributed to the refugee problem with thousands of forced relocations of individuals with disputed Eritrean/Ethiopian identity (Terrazas, 2007).

Ethiopia deals not only with the history of political governmental abuses, but the current situation in which international observers report many human rights abuses, some of which include:

arbitrary killings; allegations of torture, beating, abuse, and mistreatment of detainees by security forces; reports of harsh and at times life threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention... infringement on citizens privacy rights... restrictions on academic freedom; restrictions on freedom of assembly, association, and movement;... police, administrative, and judicial corruption; societal discrimination against persons with disabilities; clashes between ethnic minorities... (U.S. Department of State, 2013, pp. 1-2)

Ethiopia's history of political conflict and current human rights violations have had a particular impact on women. Milkias (2011) states that the armed conflicts cause women to leave rural areas and head to the urban centers in search of jobs. Often they bring their children with them to the cities. However, the women often do not have job skills or education and face limited job opportunities. There is a "...paucity of food, shelter, spiraling cost of living, and dire sanitary conditions. For survival, many [sic] have no choice but to go into prostitution" (Milkias, 2011, p.

223). Studies on sex workers in Ethiopia report that 7.1% of women in the capital engage in multiple partner sexual contact, with the majority of that involving prostitution. When women and girls leave their rural homes to make a living in the city, they are often initiated into sex work by brokers who literally wait at bus stops (Milkias, 2011). Further, the particular impact on women in Ethiopia include human rights violations: "...violence and societal discrimination against women and abuse of children; female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C); trafficking in persons..." (U.S. Department of State, 2013, pp. 1-2). Indeed, 80% of women in Ethiopia have undergone FGM, even though it is illegal and punishable by 5-10 years in prison. However, there have been no prosecutions of the practice, and most Ethiopians believe that girls will not be able to find husbands if they do not undergo this surgical procedure, which seams together the female genitalia (Milkias, 2011). Prostitution and human rights violations, including FGM, offer specific reasons women in particular might choose to emigrate from Ethiopia.

The political history and current situation offer insight into the experiences of the individuals who emigrate from Ethiopia. Indeed, "Caught in the crossfire, the region's population has shifted back and forth across international borders seeking refuge not only from violence, but also from poverty, famine, natural disasters, failed states, and repressive governments" (Terrazas, 2007, para. 2). This study examines the life of immigration to the United States that many Ethiopian women have chosen, and explores their experience in the U.S., specifically in the Washington, DC metro area, after their migration journey.

Social Indicators

The quality of life issues such as poverty, hunger, illness, and health risks profoundly influence the lives of women in Ethiopia. Combined with employment, education, and legal

systems, these issues provide an intimate look at the reality of daily life. These social indicators provide possible impetus for emigration.

Poverty

Crushing poverty is another aspect of life in Ethiopia that contributes to decisions about emigration. Ethiopia is a country of extreme poverty. An estimated 39% of the population lives below the poverty line (CIA, 2013). The per capita gross domestic product (GDP) is \$1200, ranking 211 out of 228 countries (CIA, 2013). Women bear a heavy brunt of the poverty in Ethiopia. Milkias (2011) explains that women grind corn, bear and raise children, cook meals, and carry heavy loads of firewood and jugs of water over long distances when indoor plumbing and modern kitchens are not available. More than 85% of women in Ethiopia live in rural areas where their peasant families are subsistence farmers, and where they provide hard labor but are rarely recognized or valued. In Ethiopia, women "...have fewer opportunities than men for personal advancement, education, and employment. Their worth is measured not in terms of their humanity but rather in terms of their roles as mothers and wives" (Milkias, 2011, p. 222).

Health

Especially important in understanding the context of Ethiopian immigrant women are several health indicators. Pregnancy and childbirth are a risk in the daily lives of Ethiopian women. Over 20,000 women die each year in childbirth (CARE-International, 2010). As of 2010, Ethiopia's maternal mortality rate ranks 31st worldwide, with 350 deaths per 100,000 live births (CIA, 2013). Ethiopia's fertility rate ranks 14th in the world, with an average of 5.31 children born per woman (CIA, 2013). The vast majority (93%) of women give birth at home, without a skilled birth attendant and without access to emergency obstetric care (CARE-

International, 2010). Further complicating the risks of pregnancy and childbirth is the young age of childbearing in Ethiopia. The mean age for an Ethiopian mother's first birth is 19.6 while the median age is 25-29 (CIA, 2013). As noted by CARE-International (2010): "In some parts of the country, over half the girls are married by age 15. They are expected to bear children the following year. Because their bodies are not fully developed, they run a high risk of experiencing complications, which often leads to maternal death" (p. 4). One of these major health risks for young girls giving birth is fistula, which is a severe condition when a tear develops between the vagina and rectum or bladder during child birth. Ethiopia has 100,000 women suffering from fistula and 9000 a year developing the condition (Milkias, 2011).

Employment and Literacy

Although overall Ethiopian unemployment rates are unavailable, youth unemployment rates (ages 15-24) in 2006 show that females have a 29.4% unemployment rate compared to males at 19.5% (CIA, 2013). From primary to tertiary education, females attend approximately 6 years in school compared to 8 years for males, and females have a literacy rate of 28.9% compared to 49.1% for males (CIA, 2013).

Many women in the rural areas seek to move to the capital, Addis Ababa, and work as nannies and housekeepers. Warner (2013) reports that one recent trend in Ethiopia is for women to seek construction jobs, making less than their predominantly male counterparts, but allowing them to live and work in the capital independently. One 19-year-old woman, Mekedes, described how most girls in her village dropped out of school in the 4th grade to prepare for an arranged marriage. Mekedes, however, wanted to receive an education so she moved to Addis Ababa to earn money so she could afford to finish her education. She first took a job as a live-in maid

when she was 11-years-old. Her duties included caring for three children ages 6, 8, and 12; doing laundry; and preparing food, including rising before dawn in the cold to make injera, the spongy flatbread staple of Ethiopian fare. After Mekedes got pneumonia, she lost her job and returned to her father's home where she worked in his shop. Historically, in Ethiopia she would have been destined at 13 to be a spinster for the rest of her life because she had been tainted by living in the city and because the age 13 is already considered an advanced age for marriage prospects. However, she returned to the city when she was 15 after hearing stories on the radio of girls being hired for construction jobs. Although she is still paid less than her male co-workers (\$1.50 to their \$2.00 per day), she is making significantly more money as a construction worker than the \$4 a month she earned as a live-in maid (Warner, 2013).

Women in Ethiopia seek ways to earn more money and lift themselves and their children out of poverty. Immigration is also one of the ways women seek to find other employment opportunities: "Migration of Ethiopian women to other countries has increased by leaps and bounds because of lack of job opportunities at home, lack of earnings, and lack of educational opportunities" (Milkias, 2011, p. 227). However, Milkias explains, this migration puts women at particular risk for human trafficking—both doing menial household and sex labor (Milkias, 2011).

Legal Systems

The realities of day-to-day life can sometimes be more clearly understood when looking at the official policies underlying the statistics regarding Ethiopian women. For example, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized agency of the United Nations, reports that the traditional practice regarding land ownership in Ethiopia is that only

men can own land. In effect, a woman who has never married or was previously married has no right to own land, including inheritance from a husband. Therefore, widows are left without property ownership status even if they have lived and worked on a piece of land for many years. IFAD explains, “Ethiopia’s law states otherwise, but traditional practices often prevail” (IFAD, 2012, para. 16).

In addition, IFAD (2012) reports that Ethiopian women are under-represented in decision-making about resource management (such as land and water) due to cultural barriers and logistical prohibitions, such as women’s time being subsumed with household tasks. Water is of particular importance to the livelihood of rural Ethiopians, and water management has been a focus of international aid organizations. Water.org is one such organization that focuses on water management and access. Water.org (2014) reports that in rural parts of Ethiopia, women walk up to six hours to collect water; their full water jugs weigh up to 40 pounds.

Another way that the legal system in Ethiopia has failed women is in regard to protecting them from violence. As described by Milkias (2011):

On the family level, there is domestic violence, including assault, forced labor, coerced prostitution, sexual harassment in the workplace, spousal murder, battering, incest, child marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), marital psychological abuse, and rape.

Community-wise, violence takes place in the form of rape and trafficking. On the state level, violence and abuse include beatings, custodial aggression, rape, sexual assault, and torture of women in situation of armed conflict. (p. 226)

Milkias (2011) reports that it was not until 1995 that the penal code changed to include equal treatment of women; however, practice lags far behind. Traditions, customs, and the

personal enforcement by police officers, judges, and even community shaming contribute to the continued acceptance of violence against women. Fear of violence against women is one reason why girls often do not attend school (Milkias, 2011).

Social and Communal Nature of Ethiopian Women's Lives

Daily life for women in Ethiopia is very much determined by their gender. In rural areas, where 85% of women still live, traditional roles for women and men still prevail (Burgess, 2013; Milkias, 2011). Women defer to men and are responsible for cooking food, caring for the home and children, and serving the males in the home. Although these traditional roles are in some ways limiting for women in terms of employment, legal rights, and access to health care, there are also some aspects of them that support a strong bond between women in a community who are sharing the burdensome tasks such as water carrying. Women work together in carrying water, carrying for children, grinding corn, and cooking food. As they work together they forge strong social bonds that tie them to one another and create a natural network of support. This is the case in modern Ethiopia and has been true in historic, traditional Ethiopia as well.

Traditional social systems in Ethiopia are the mechanism for poor communities to deal with economic and social challenges; they rely on neighbors, friends, and family members (Kebede & Butterfield, 2009). Several of these traditional social systems have roots in rural areas, but have taken hold in urban areas as people migrate. These systems demonstrate the strength of a social and communal emphasis in Ethiopian culture (Kebede & Butterfield, 2009). *Iddir* is a self-help voluntary association which serves as economic and social insurance at times of death and other crises. *Mahber* and *senbete* are socio-religious associations which hold gatherings, with spiritual and social functions named after saints. Through *debo* (a festive labor

exchange grouping) and *wonfel* (work parties), individuals come together and contribute labor and skills during tilling and harvesting. *Iqqub* is a circular saving system in which relatives, neighbors or friends collect money to build each member's financial capacity. (Kebede & Butterfield, 2009, pp.357-358)

Another way the social and communal nature of life for women in Ethiopia is illustrated is through the coffee ceremony, called the *bunna* (Chan, 2011; Palmer, 2010). The Ethiopian coffee ceremony is performed once a day (sometimes more often) and is typically performed by a woman. The *bunna* can take two hours—starting with washing green coffee beans, roasting them and allowing guests to inhale the fragrance. Then the beans are ground and set to boil. All throughout the experience, guests visit and snack. “The *bunna* becomes a place for family and friends to catch up, solve problems and debate politics” (Chan, 2011, para. 9). This ritual demonstrates the traditional importance of family and community in the daily lives of Ethiopian women and gives an example of the manifestation of that sense of community and women's role in it.

In more recent years, and in more urban areas, women have used their social nature to advocate for other women and organize to improve women's conditions. In 1995 the Ethiopian Women's Lawyer Association was founded by a group of women lawyers. This organization has grown in scope and size in its efforts to work toward defending women's legal rights, educating the public about women's plight, and pushing reforms for gender equality in Ethiopia (Burgess, 2013). Another grassroots group of women organizers in Ethiopia is the International Ethiopian Women's Organization (IEWD), which was formed in 2007 to network for women.

The IEWD stresses that currently Ethiopian women have very little access to training, except in activities traditionally slated for them. Women, they say, are discriminated against both at the workplace and in their own homes. They suffer from domestic violence and sexual abuse and all forms of harmful traditional practices. The IEWD makes it abundantly clear that women in Ethiopia, who constitute half the population, make up the bulk of the poor, the downtrodden, the sick, and HIV/AIDS victims. (Milkias, 2011, p. 231)

The historical and political context of the Ethiopian nation in this chapter provides insight into reasons why Ethiopian women might want to leave their country and further how seeking to settle in Washington, DC might include desires for both physical and food security as well as political freedoms and stability. The picture portrayed of health and safety risks, expectation of young marriage and childbearing, subsistence rural farming, and low-paying urban jobs all contribute to an environment that might make emigration attractive. The importance of the community and social network in Ethiopia is also addressed in this section. Self-help groups like the iddir, work parties called wonfel, and the bunna coffee ceremony are manifestations of the role of strong social networks in Ethiopia. This study will examine the personal experiences of women leaving Ethiopia, but will also address their integration into a community in the United States. This study will explore the way that social networks have impacted the experience Ethiopian women have as they arrive and remain in the DC area. The strong social networks in the Washington, DC metro area suggest that social capital theory is an appropriate theoretical lens for this study to understand the experience of Ethiopian women immigrants.

Social Capital Theory

Definition of Social Capital

Social capital is the real or potential resources that are linked to membership in a group (Bourdieu, 1986), or “the degree of connectedness and the quality and quantity of social relations in a given population” (Harpham, Grant, & Thomas, 2002, p. 106). Similar to traditional economic capital, social capital requires an initial investment and continued contributions. These inputs are social in nature (e.g., social interactions, trustworthy behavior) and take time to build or accumulate (Bourdieu, 1986; Grootaert & van Bastelaer, 2002). Social capital theory purports that social relationships, including formal and informal networks, are influential in the lives of human beings. Furthermore, certain products or results can be reached that would be impossible without social capital (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998). Indeed, Bourdieu (1986) likened the forms of capital, including social capital, to power. This power in social capital lies within the context of social relationships: “To possess social capital, a person must be related to others, and it is those others, not himself, who are the actual sources of his or her advantage” (Portes, 1998, p. 7). Although social capital is intangible because of its existence within relationships, its products can be concrete and converted into tangible economic benefits (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). For example, when a business executive offers her neighbor’s daughter a summer internship, this is an example of how the relationship—time invested in terms of years of backyard barbeques, trustworthy behavior in terms of picking up the mail when neighbors are out of town, and other social interactions such as block parties and holiday gatherings—yields concrete outcomes. The product here—a coveted internship—is tangible and can be converted into a tangible economic

benefit that would not have been produced if the daughter's parents had not invested in a relationship with the neighbor.

The literature reflects an abundance of discussion and theoretical debate where various scholars have emphasized differing aspects of social capital. For example, Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) emphasize the economic implications of social capital and define social capital as “collective expectations affecting individual economic behavior” (p. 1326). Putnam (1993; 2000) focuses on social capital as civic engagement, defining social capital as “features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (1993, para 5). Woolcock and Narayan (2000) pose yet another related definition: “social capital refers to the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively” (p. 226). This definition designates the community as the primary unit of analysis, but it still recognizes the role of individuals, households, and the state. And finally, Schneider (2010) defines social capital as “the social relationships and patterns of reciprocal, enforceable trust that enable people and institutions to access resources...” (p. 5), and she includes both individuals and institutions in her definition.

In this study, social capital will refer to a broader definition suggested by Harpham and associates: “the degree of connectedness and the quality and quantity of social relations in a given population” (2002, p. 106). This definition is ideal for this study because of its broadness. This definition allows social capital to include economic behaviors in the Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) definition, the social organization aspects that Putnam (1993; 2000) discusses, as well as the actions of both people and institutions (Schneider, 2010). As this study looks at the experiences of immigrant women, this definition of social capital will not limit the

focus to one economic, institutional, or community facet; instead, all areas in which social relationships and human connectedness interact with access to all types of resources will be examined.

Social Capital Concepts

In order to address the specific nature of human relationships in the form of social capital, there are several specific concepts that must be delineated. Specifically important to this study are the concepts of social norms and sanctions, reciprocity, enforceable trust, and bounded solidarity.

Social capital relies on the concept of social norms (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998). Norms are rules or expected behaviors that people comply with because they feel an obligation to do so. Viewed through a social capital lens, these norms can be used by others as a resource (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998). For example, a norm that prescribes that family members should sacrifice personal interests in favor of the needs of the family, can be a powerful form of social capital, regardless of whether the norm is internalized or enforced through rewards and sanctions (Coleman, 1988). Norms and sanctions enable certain actions while simultaneously constraining others. For example, a community norm that says that an athletic boy should play on the football team may at the same time keep the boy from using his afterschool time in other pursuits (Coleman, 1988). The concepts of social norms and sanctions are key when examining the experiences of immigrant women because it is vital to understand what the decisions the women are making. For example, how do social norms and sanctions affect the women's decisions to emigrate, or what work or education to pursue? Does the woman face sanctions if she chooses not to marry? Does she feel compelled by a social norm to cook dinner for other people every

night? The norm that she should cook every night can be used as a resource by her family or others who might eat at her table. She might lose opportunities to work a higher paying job because she feels obligated to be home in the afternoon to cook.

Another concept in social capital that is vital to this study is reciprocity or, in other words, obligations that are expected to be repaid within the relationship. This concept moves beyond a purely economic transaction because obligations may be repaid in a different currency than they were incurred and there is not a specific repayment time frame (Portes, 1998). The currency might be, for example, the transmission of information. Coleman (1988) explains that there is a cost associated with acquiring information and that using social relationships to gather information is an example of social capital. For example, a person who wants to be informed about current events without spending the time to read the newspaper can depend on a spouse or friend who is diligent in keeping up with the news (Coleman, 1988). In this way, the social relationship provides an avenue for the person to gain valuable information, such as an immigrant who comes to a new city and needs information on housing that is affordable, safe, and near public transportation. If the immigrant can find someone to share this information without having to “pound the pavement,” this social relationship and the information transmitted is valuable in many ways to the immigrant. The type of currency that is exchanged is the transmission of information. An important aspect in this obligations-based concept of social capital is the trustworthiness of the social environment, which refers to the idea that people have confidence that obligations will be repaid (Coleman, 1988). There is an expectation that the relationship is reciprocal and that obligations must be repaid, even if in a different currency (Portes, 1998). For example, the person who provided information to the new immigrant on

housing might be able to reciprocate by sharing updates on their common country of origin or sharing special cooking spices brought in the immigrant's personal belongings.

Enforceable trust is a concept in social capital theory that is based on individual members complying with group expectations, not because of internal values or commitments, but instead motivated by the anticipation of future benefits of being in favor with the group (Portes, 1998; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). It is similar to the reciprocity concept of social capital theory in that there is an expectation for repayment (Portes, 1998). However, what distinguishes enforceable trust from reciprocity is the reliance on the group as a collective body to enforce through rewards and sanctions (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). For example, someone might fund a scholarship for a young person of her ethnic group. The donor would not expect repayment from the scholarship recipient, but instead approval and status from the ethnic group as a collective. Further, the scholarship recipient's social capital does not come from a relationship of trust with the scholarship sponsor, but from her membership in the group (Portes, 1998). This does not eliminate the expectation that the recipient would contribute to the scholarship fund in the future if her economic circumstances permitted such a gesture. It means that the trust that allows the bestowal of the scholarship comes simply from membership in the group. This enforceable trust is particularly important to this study because membership in an immigrant group from a specific country is valuable membership to have. It is important to examine whether a woman is making her choices based on complying with group expectations in order to find favor in the group. Social capital and the concept of enforceable trust might help explain why a woman would participate in a holy day celebration, even if she does not believe in

the faith. She may be participating as a way of demonstrating and solidifying her membership in the community.

Social capital theory also includes the concept of bounded solidarity, which refers to behaviors of group members who are affected by common events in a specific time and place and who, therefore, learn to identify with each other and support one another (Portes, 1998; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). Bounded solidarity relies on "...an emergent sentiment of 'we-ness' among those confronting a similar difficult situation" (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993, p. 1328). The benefits of the altruistic behaviors of members of the group are not universal, but are limited to the other members of the group who are facing the similar life challenge; these benefits become the source of social capital (Portes, 1998). For example, an altruistic behavior characteristic of immigrant groups might be taking on the financial and time burden of legally sponsoring immigrants to come to the United States. Further, the altruistic behaviors are not enforceable, but instead are fueled by a moral imperative of the individual group members (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). An important distinction is that the motivation is dependent on a specific challenging situation that individuals experience and which bonds them together (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). An example of bounded solidarity is when a member of a persecuted nationality volunteers for a potentially life-threatening military mission in defense of his nationality (Portes, 1998). In this study, women who have faced the similar life challenge of leaving their home country and coming to Washington, DC and trying to create a whole new life can be bound together because they have faced and are facing this difficulty. As they feel united by their common struggle, they may be motivated to help one another by offering job advice, a free place to stay, or child care assistance.

Portes (1998) argues that it is important to view social capital's community networks, social norms, and bounded solidarity through a realistic lens. Limits on individual freedom and a "gigantic free-riding problem" (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993, p. 1339) are two potential negative aspects. For example, the solidarity and trust in a community that allow the creation of social capital can also create the situation in which successful members of the community are weighted down by other members of the group who focus on benefitting instead of contributing. Additionally, a powerful community with strong norms not only enables opportunities and provides resources, but also can exert power in terms of limiting access to the world outside of the community and restricting the range of choices of community members (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). Putnam (2000) argues that negative outcomes of social capital include the use of norms and reciprocity toward antisocial means such as the social capital of urban gangs or the social network of the Ku Klux Klan.

Bonding, Bridging, and Linking Social Capital

A way to distinguish the functions of social capital is the bifurcation of bonding and bridging capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Schneider, 2010; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Bonding capital "brings closer together people who already know each other" (Gittell & Vidal, 1998, p. 15). Schneider (2010) explains that bonding social capital includes "networks among similar groups or individuals or institutions" (p. 6). This would include networks among immigrant groups or racial groups or groups based on socio-economic status and are the easiest to form (Schneider, 2010). The concept of bounded solidarity and reciprocity would be utilized in bonding capital, because they both require the people to know each other and share experiences and interactions.

Bridging capital refers to connections or relationships that are outside the community, or which serve as a “bridge” to the outside. Schneider (2010) defines bridging social capital as “established trusting relationships that cross boundaries of race, class, culture, or philosophy, regardless of power relations” (p. 6). Both bonding and bridging social capital include long-term relationships of trust, but bridging social capital is more difficult to cultivate because it requires crossing boundaries (of race, religion, or class, etc.) (Schneider, 2010). Especially in community development or international development, there is an emphasis on an appropriate balance of both bonding and bridging capital (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). An example of bridging capital might be when an immigrant becomes a college professor and uses her status to educate her colleagues, students, and community about the plight of less privileged immigrants. The professor might even work with a non-profit in her field to raise money and resources to recruit more immigrants to that department.

Further, bonding and bridging social capital are intertwined with the notion of horizontal and vertical views of social capital, which suggest that in addition to the need for strong ties within a group, there need to be weak ties to outside groups and organizations. In his seminal work, Granovetter (1973) argues, “Weak ties are more likely to link members of *different* small groups than are strong ones, which tend to be concentrated within particular groups” (p. 1376). Ethiopian immigrant women may have strong ties among themselves with a great deal of cognitive social capital, or emotional support, trust, and solidarity, and cooperation, but bridging capital would suggest that their weak ties to a coalition of immigrant groups that can work together to lobby for English as Second Language (ESL) classes are also very valuable.

Understanding the importance of such ties, Harpham, Grant, and Thomas (2002) explain

that “...without vertical social capital connecting communities to local government or groups with resources, social networks, norms and trust may not be able to actually improve any aspect of wellbeing of a community” (p. 107). Without the capacity to enact change, the importance of the social network is lost. Indeed, if norms and sanctions and even bounded solidarity shape choices of immigrant women, social capital can be a way that dictates behavior or a mechanism for reciprocity that does not provide an improvement in quality of life or increase in overall resources.

Schneider addresses the importance of the notion of vertical social capital by creating a third category, that of linking social capital. Schneider (2010) defines linking social capital as “established, trusting relationships among people or institutions where one person or organization has power over the other” (p. 6). This might include personal relationships like a mentor and student or institutional relationships such as a foundation providing resources to a community organization (Schneider, 2010). An example of linking social capital might be the formation of a chapter of an ethnic community development center, which receives local, state, and federal grant funding. The relationship between the executive director of the community center and the county board member demonstrates the importance of the relationship between the political figure with funding power and the executive director who can harness the resources for members of her community through the agency.

A key aspect of social capital theory is that the social ties, relationships, networks, and connections can be accumulated in various forms to produce a form of capital as power (Bourdieu, 1986). The ultimate function of social capital is power, in any form. This includes economic power and decision-making power, as well as the power to change one's

circumstances, the power to join with others, and the power to influence other people individually, or one's community or institutions. The overlap in personal, community, and institutional realms is addressed by Grootaert and van Bastelaer (2002). They highlight the importance of examining both the structural and cognitive aspects of capital. Combined, these aspects present a fuller picture that incorporates the importance of the internal individual and the collective institution, and the power of both.

Structural and Cognitive Aspects

Structural aspects of social capital not only refer to observable social structures, such as institutions, organizations, associations, and committees, but also to the rules governing such structures (Krishna & Uphoff, 2002). Structural aspects of social capital include: 1) participation in social groups, 2) family and friend networks (Grootaert & van Bastelaer, 2002), and 3) collective action and cooperation (Harpham et al., 2002). Individuals or families may participate in social groups, such as teams, school clubs, church congregations, or even a book club. These groups provide the structure of meeting places and scheduled times. During these events relationships are formed and individuals have opportunities for leadership experience. Individuals and families get to know one another and increase the level of their interaction. These groups literally provide the physical meeting structure in which relationships can develop. Communities may participate in sponsoring a recreational sports league or community center. Participation in social groups and membership and family and kin networks become powerful generators of social capital when those groups and networks mobilize for collective action. For example, if a local school district wants to construct a school on a community's valued green space, active social groups such as school parent teacher associations (PTA) or neighborhood

associations are poised to respond quickly and powerfully because they are already organized. Further, even a book club or sports team might provide the venue to share information about the school district plans and a way to pass along the mobilization message.

Cognitive social capital “comprises more subjective and intangible elements such as generally accepted attitudes and norms of behavior, shared values, reciprocity, and trust” (Grootaert & van Bastelaer, 2002, p. 3). Cognitive social capital functions by providing: 1) emotional support and sense of belonging, 2) trust and solidarity (Grootaert & van Bastelaer, 2002), and 3) information and communication (Harpham et al., 2002). In cognitive social capital, the internal belief that one belongs to a group is a motivator for external behavior; the trust and solidarity that one feels is the product of the social interactions and networking. These are internal thoughts and beliefs and perceptions, but are motivators for behavior. The concepts of social norms and bounded solidarity both fall in the realm of cognitive social capital.

Both structural and cognitive social capital are important in understanding the reality of how social networks and aggregate relationships facilitate the development of social capital. For example, if someone’s home burns down in a neighborhood and the next morning neighbors gather to provide various services, one might argue that social capital theory explains why neighbors gathered to help. The structural and cognitive aspects, however, give a much clearer picture of the motivating factors in this situation. It is possible that neighborhood leadership exists through a neighborhood association. Maybe leaders contacted other neighbors, instructing them to bring tools to help with cleaning and food and clothing for the displaced family. This would be an example of structural social capital. Alternately, neighbors might gather at the site bearing tools, food, and blankets based on the norm of appropriate behavior of how to help in a

crisis. This would be an example of cognitive social capital (Krishna & Shrader, 2002). Another is the way the death of a member of an immigrant group is handled. Structural capital illuminates how the decision is made for which church the funeral is held and the patriarchal leader of the family in whose home the wake is held. The way that every member of the family follows the social group norm to sit at the family's home three days to support and grieve is an example of cognitive capital.

The cognitive and structural elements might explain different motivations as in the previous example, but they can also work in tandem. Cognitive elements of social capital incline individuals to seek mutually beneficial collective action, and structural elements of social capital enable that collective action (Krishna & Uphoff, 2002). When structural capital such as organizations and leadership exist hand in hand with cognitive capital in the form of motivations and trust, the value of the network and its ability to create change are increased. For example, a community with an active PTA, neighborhood association, and, vibrant church congregations is poised to act collectively on behalf of the community. Additionally, if that community also has members with cognitive capital, such as high degrees of trust and a sense of belonging as well as effective ways of sharing information and communicating with each other, the ability of the individuals and community is enhanced to provide the resources needed for its members.

Social Capital Theory and Immigration

Social capital theory has been used extensively to discuss immigration and immigrant enclave communities. Li (2004) argues that social capital should not be considered universally virtuous, but that it does enable “a better understanding of immigrant and minority communities in terms of how individuals and groups take advantage of social relations and bear differential

costs in achieving their economic goals” (p. 187). Specifically, social capital has been used to explain why immigrants gather to become a ‘magnet community’ with others from their same ethnic heritage and specifically how social capital has influenced immigrant employment (Garcia, 2005; Massey, 1990; Nee & Sanders, 2001; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) state that the solidarity of immigrant groups develops in response to the difficult experience of immigration, including ongoing confrontations with the host country. One example of the confrontations immigrants face is the recent political movement to make English the official language. Solidarity among immigrant groups can help immigrants recognize that they are not alone in facing the challenge of learning English and feeling persecuted because their host country is trying to make laws prohibiting them from accessing services in their native languages. Palmer (2010) discusses other challenges, such as isolation and disadvantage faced by immigrants, and argues that the *bunna* coffee ceremony among Ethiopian immigrants is a way to use relationships and ritual to overcome these challenges.

Social capital theory has been used to understand various types of social networks and their impact on immigrants. Nee and Sanders (2001) posit that the strongest social networks for immigrants are the extended family ties, which are not dependent on a continued sense of tension with a receiving/host community. The solidarity of a nuclear and extended family offers the basis needed for the sacrifices, trust, and cooperation that comprise the essence of a social capital network. Immigrants rely on family members to garner information about job openings, make introductions to employers, or provide housing during an initial transition period (Nee & Sanders, 2001). Ebaugh and Curry (2000) argue that fictive-kin also serve as a powerful form of

social capital among immigrants. Fictive-kin refers to a non-familial relationship based on religious rituals or close friendships, which function similarly to a family relationship, especially in terms of expected obligations and benefits. Their exploratory research on immigrants in Brooklyn, New York and Houston, Texas suggests that family units are often disrupted during the immigration process and that fictive kin can provide an alternative social capital network through functions of financial support, social support, spiritual development, maintenance of cultural values, and normative social controls.

Social capital explains social networks that play roles in various aspects of daily life—economic, social, spiritual, and cultural. A study by Mbanaso and Crewe (2011) that specifically addresses elderly immigrants from all over Africa finds that two major sources of social support are an affiliation with an ethnic-oriented association, which often organizes cultural activities and holiday celebration from the home country, and a religious affiliation with a church that has formed to meet the needs of new African immigrants. Garcia (2005) posits that immigrant networks are multi-dimensional. Based on his study of Mexican immigrants to rural Oklahoma, he reports on the process and extent of immigrant social networks: a traditional network based on family and friend relationships, a church network based on local church membership, and a contract network that relied on a local industry which recruited people from U.S.-Mexico border towns and provided opportunities in the form of jobs and resources, such as food and housing to new immigrants/employees. These networks overlap as individuals play roles in more than one of the distinct networks.

Negative consequences of social capital and immigration have also been explored in the research. Livingston's (2006) study of Mexican immigrants addresses social capital networks in

job searching and employment outcomes and reports that Mexican immigrant women who used social networks (whether family or friends) had reduced likelihood of securing jobs in the formal economic sector. Because men using social networks to obtain jobs had an increase in likelihood of finding a job in the formal economy, Livingston (2006) suggests that when women use immigrant social networks to find employment, it is possible that they engage in work in the informal economy, which perpetuates the gender gap in occupation and earnings. Li (2004) also describes potential negative consequences of social capital among immigrant groups. He says that in U.S. society, there are rewards for conforming and assimilating, but immigrants who instead preserve strong ethnic ties and native languages can suffer because they are more distinct, less assimilated, and less mainstream.

Social capital theory explains how employment and earnings can be affected by social networks. In a study of South Asian women's experiences in Canada, George and Chaze (2009) report that pre-existing social capital, or networks that existed when women arrived in country and which were easily accessible right away, was beneficial to the women's job search. However, such benefit was limited to the resources available to those networks. For example, members of the social network might pressure a recent immigrant to take any available job, instead of one in her area of specialization (George & Chaze, 2009). Another study that addresses how social networks affect employment issues used the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality data set to study how social networks affect earnings when comparing racial and ethnic groups (Flores-Yeffal & Zhang, 2012). They report that the earning differentials across racial and ethnic groups are attributed to the quality of an individual's social networks. Specifically, "For non-Hispanic Whites, the better the quality of social networks, the higher the

earnings. For other racial and ethnic groups, having better quality of social networks does not necessarily lead to higher wages” (p. 243). Indeed, social networks are not a panacea to solve all the challenges faced by any group, but can provide a lens through which to examine specific populations.

There is limited research on the particular population of African women immigrants (Djamba & Kimuna, 2011) and even more limited research examining Ethiopian women immigrants and social capital theory. McMichael and Manderson (2004) present findings of a qualitative study of Somali immigrants and social capital in Australia. Because Somalia is a neighboring country to Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa, their study offers some insight into social capital and immigrant women from the Horn of Africa. McMichael and Manderson (2004) report that the Somali immigrants felt isolated, depressed, and anxious; further they felt that their social networks had been damaged. Their social capital has suffered because the war has caused much mistrust among Somalis as well as much family separation. When they arrive, they often are resettled with strangers and therefore feel isolated. The traditions and culture of daily life in Somalia—reciprocating making food and caring for children and gossiping with friends—are not carried with them to Melbourne. Therefore, they feel alienated from their present situation as well as nostalgic for and alienated from their past life in their home country. McMichael and Manderson (2004) conclude that social capital is not easily transferable from one location to another, nor is it easy to build once one migrates.

One study that specifically addresses Ethiopian immigrant women to the United States and social capital is a 2001 sociology dissertation (Bhave, 2001). Bhave (2001) conducted 20 in-depth interviews with Ethiopian immigrant women in Chicago in the late 1990s to learn about

their social and economic experiences. The participants in Bhave's (2001) study all came from educated, middle class backgrounds in Ethiopia; three of them were from aristocratic backgrounds. Bhave (2001) reported that the women relied on social networks (family and friends), both in accessing opportunities to leave Ethiopia, as well as once they arrived in the United States. These networks provided financial supports in the forms of plane tickets, visas, places to stay, and spending money. More importantly, social capital provided avenues for the women to ask for help in a variety of situations—both material and non-material (Bhave, 2001). Further, the information supplied by friends or family to the women influenced the choices the women made, for example, about jobs. In other words, the limited knowledge of friends or family members heavily influenced the women's lives in the United States (Bhave, 2001). This finding relates to George and Chaze's (2009) discussion of how an Asian immigrant woman's social network pressures her to take a certain kind of job, and both of these studies highlight the influence an immigrant woman's social network has on the trajectory of her life choices.

The limited literature on Ethiopian immigrant women underscores the need for further research. The present study of Ethiopian immigrant women uses social capital as a theoretical framework from which to begin asking questions about social networks, relationships, and community. The broad brush of social capital theory and its ability to address a spectrum of relationships – from the interpersonal trust among neighbors to the structures in a community – make it a useful framework for this study.

Summary

This chapter has described the status of African and Ethiopian immigration in the United States and in Washington, DC, as well as the development of an Ethiopian enclave in the metro

area. This chapter has also surveyed the history of Ethiopia, the demographics of Ethiopian women, and the daily life of women in Ethiopia to provide a contextual understanding of the participants' pre-immigration experiences. Finally, this chapter examined social capital theory to lay the foundation from which to listen to the experiences of Ethiopian immigrant women. The concepts of social norms, bounded reciprocity, and enforceable trust were defined so that they could be identified within the responses of the study participants. Further, the functions of social capital were explained through bonding, bridging, and linking capital; and structural and cognitive capital were delineated in order to add a potential framework for understanding the impact of social networks on the study participants.

As a qualitative study, the importance of this literature review chapter lies in giving background data and a theoretical lens from which to view the participants' experiences. The findings are viewed through the lens of social capital theory, but the specific aspects of how social networks affect the immigration experience emerge from the data as the participants' experience unfolds in the process of sharing. This qualitative methodology, its epistemological framework, and specific data gathering and analysis techniques will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the epistemological framework, research design, and specific qualitative methodology used in this study will be explained. The sampling strategies will be discussed and the development of the interview guide will be explained. Both the data collection plan and the data analysis plan will be set forth. Finally, ethical considerations will be reviewed, including the specific methods used to increase rigor and trustworthiness, as well as a discussion of human subjects concerns specific to the population sample.

Research Design

Epistemology

The ontology—or nature of the knowable—for this study is constructivism (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). Corbin and Strauss (2008) explain that the basis of constructivism is that “concepts and theories are constructed by researchers out of stories that are constructed by research participants who are trying to explain and make sense out of their experiences and/or lives, both to the researcher and themselves” (p. 10). Knowledge, then, is a construction based out of the understandings of the researcher and the participant (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This particular study seeks to capture the “lived experience” and to develop a deep understanding from the insider point of view (Padgett, 2008) of Ethiopian immigrant women.

The epistemology—or nature of the relationship between the knower and the known—for this study is subjectivist (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). The biases of an individual cannot be separated from what he or she knows; indeed, there is a fusion between the knower and the known where the knower’s biases are incorporated into the known. Schwandt (2003) explains, “We do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared

understandings, practices, language, and so forth” (p. 305). Such understandings, practices, and language all are part of the subjectivist epistemology.

The constructivist and subjectivist inquiry paradigms are the most appropriate for this study’s research question about the lived experience of Ethiopian women immigrants in Washington, DC. Only the participant can share her perspective and give voice to her inner thoughts and how she made sense of her immigration experience. It is through rich, emic data that the personally constructed meanings of social networks, kinship networks, and other formal and informal networks can be understood by the outsider. As each participant told of her experience as an immigrant, the aspects she emphasized and the questions she answered were also influenced by the perspective of the researcher, thus creating a co-constructed reality. The knowledge that is created from this qualitative study is a construction of the participant and her effort to make sense of what she has experienced—within the context of her shared understanding, her biases, her previous experience, and her language. Additionally, the actual interview experience created an opportunity for co-construction of knowledge. The biases of the researcher inevitably shaped the lens from which the meaning of the participants’ words were received and the themes which were extracted for analysis.

Qualitative Content Analysis

The methodological approach for this study is qualitative content analysis, which Hsieh and Shannon (2005) define as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p. 1278). Specifically, the approach is conventional content analysis, which treats the interview transcript as a text to be analyzed through open coding of transcript texts, theme

identification, and analysis of themes compared to existing theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999; Teater, 2011). Because the participant is making her own sense of experiences in her life, this methodology clearly fits with the constructivist and subjectivist stances that emphasize the construction of knowledge as well as the importance of the co-construction interaction between researcher and participant. Social capital theory was used to inform the interview guide and the direction of the interviews and then bracketed for the coding and analysis portion to allow themes to emerge. Further, conventional content analysis is used when a study's purpose is descriptive and when literature and theory on the subject are limited (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Therefore, this approach is appropriate for this study because there are limited data on Ethiopian immigrant women and no published literature on Ethiopian women immigrants to the United States, as explored in this study.

Sample

An important aspect of the methodology for a qualitative study is the selection of the sampling frame. The substantive frame is a compromise between the desire for clarity of focus, which is possible with a narrower substantive frame, and a broader substantive frame that allows for more to be included in the study (Weiss, 1994). The focus of this study is quite narrow as is reflected in the sample size of 14 participants. The focus on interviewing women is designed to address the gap in the literature on African women's immigration experiences.

As a qualitative study with a small sample, its purpose is not to provide generalizable results, but instead to provide rich data about the lived experience of the participants. Wide variability in the sample is acceptable. Therefore, there was no inclusion criterion (such as age of

immigration, legal or refugee status, or ability status) beyond women emigrating as adults (18 and over) from Ethiopia who can participate in an interview in English.

A non-random, purposive sample was recruited through snowball sampling. Padgett (2008) explains that purposive sampling is “a deliberate process of selecting respondents based on their ability to provide the needed information” (p. 53). The researcher wanted to know about the experience of Ethiopian immigrant women in Washington, DC so she employed a variety of recruiting methods including the following:

- Posted and distributed copies of a recruitment flyer (Appendix A) to a wide variety of individuals, businesses, churches, organizations, and on-line list serves.
- Visited Ethiopian restaurants including Meaza Restaurant and Dama Bakery and Restaurant.
- Visited Ethiopian community centers, including the Ethiopian Economic and Community Development Council in Arlington, VA and the Ethiopian Community Services and Development Council in Washington, DC.
- Visited several churches to distribute flyers, including International Ethiopian Evangelical Church in Washington, DC, Kidane Meheret Ge'ez Catholic parish in Washington, DC, and the Arlington Ethiopian Church in Ballston. The researcher stopped in at other congregations that had signs for Amharic services or had women dressed in traditional Ethiopian dress coming out of the building.

- Drew on personal networks. The researcher asked her friends if their children were in classes with Ethiopian children to see if they could reach out to the mothers. She also gave recruitment flyers to her own children's Ethiopian pediatrician to distribute.
- Utilized technology and social media. The researcher sent an email, including attaching the recruitment flyer, to her church's congregation to see if anyone had connections with Ethiopian women. She also put a post on her personal Facebook page and a private feminist Facebook group of which she is a part, asking if anyone could connect her with potential participants.
- Distributed recruitment flyers at Columbia Pike Public Library in Arlington, VA and posted flyers at Silver Spring Public Library in Silver Spring, MD.
- Talked with the coordinator of the intensive Adult ESL Arlington Education and Employment Program (REEP) through Arlington Public Schools in VA.
- Reached out to the Catholic Refugee Migrant program in Arlington, VA and emailed the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington DC.
- Sent recruitment flyers to professional Ethiopian contacts including academic professors in African studies programs at Howard University and professors with Ethiopian heritage at Howard University and a retired professor at Norfolk State University.

The recruitment and interviewing process took well over a year, with most outreach resulting in no willing participants. However, the researcher did eventually recruit 14 participants. The original plan was to interview 13 participants, with the first interview serving as a pilot interview. In the end, the study included 14 participants and included one person who was

actually born in Eritrea. The researcher included her in the study because she spent the majority of her adult life in Ethiopia and self-identified as Ethiopian. Furthermore, she did indeed emigrate from Ethiopia to the United States, the researcher included her in the study sample as an additional participant. The participants who were interviewed in this study were 14 women who emigrated from Ethiopia to Washington DC as adults; 13 were born in Ethiopia, and one was born in neighboring Eritrea.

Interview Guide

The interview guide “consists of open-ended questions structured around the study’s domains or categories of informational needs” (Padgett, 2008, p. 106). Each interview for this study was guided by a set of interview questions that focused on the participant’s experiences with social capital networks during the immigration experience (Appendix B). The interview guide was developed by the researcher specifically for this study and is informed by social capital theory. The interview guide draws heavily from the household section of the Social Capital Assessment Tool (SOCAT), which is used by the World Bank to measure social capital, specifically its structural and cognitive aspects (Grootaert & van Bastelaer, 2002). Some questions were cited directly from the SOCAT; others were constructed by the researcher based on the literature as well as the purpose of the study. The interview guide and recruitment flyer were evaluated by an expert reviewer for their relevance and beta tested by a panel of three native Ethiopian speakers in order to ensure their language appropriateness for the sample population. The feedback from the native speakers was informative and used to make several changes. First, the flyer originally had an image of the current flag of Ethiopia. One of the reviewers suggested removing the flag because it has political ramifications—some immigrants

have fled the oppressive regime that is symbolized in that flag. Also, the use of the word community in the interview guide was confusing. Based on this feedback, the researcher replaced the flag with an image of a map of Africa and approached the discussion of “community” by allowing the participant to first define it for herself.

Another part of the interview guide included probes—or follow-up questions based on previous answers—which were used to clarify answers the participants gave, steered the interview in a different direction, or deepened particular issues (Padgett, 2008). The researcher utilized probes to different degrees in each interview. Padgett (2008) explains, “for some interviewees, one question will release the floodgates...” (p.111). However, at times probes were helpful to return to an issue that was embedded in a longer answer. Additionally, other participants were more reluctant to share and probes were needed to draw out deeper responses.

The interview guide covered five domains: 1) the immigration process, 2) structural aspects of social capital, 3) cognitive aspects of social capital, 4) perceptions and expectations, and 5) conclusion. In the section on the immigration process the researcher asked several questions, including “Please tell me about your first job in the U.S.? How did you feel about that job?” The domain addressing structural aspects of social capital included many questions that were adapted from the SOCAT (2002), such as “What if someone in your community or neighborhood had something bad happen to them, such as a father’s sudden death. Who would help in this situation?” To examine cognitive aspects of social capital, a variety of questions were asked, including “What have been the most meaningful relationships you have had in the United States? How have those relationships been important to you?” For the perceptions and expectations domain, the researcher asked, “I imagine you had some hopes about what it would

be like to come to the United States. How has what has really happened compared to what you hoped for when you were leaving Ethiopia?” The final concluding category was an open-ended question that allowed the participant to share anything she would like: “Before we finish, is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience coming to the United States and creating your new life here?” The questions were based on social capital theory in order to focus the interview, but the questions were open-ended and broad enough to allow the participant to take her story in many directions.

Data Collection

The researcher collected data by conducting individual, face-to-face interviews with 14 participants. The researcher conducted and recorded each interview with a hand-held digital recorder, then submitted the recording to a professional transcription service whose employee had signed a confidentiality agreement (Appendix C).

Interviews were conducted in English. The decision to write the interview guide in English and conduct the interviews in English, not in Amharic with the assistance of an interpreter, was a deliberate choice the researcher made after considering the underlying meanings and implications. The researcher concluded that she wanted to conduct the interviews in English—without an interpreter—in order to engage on a more personal level with the participants. Further, the risk that the participant might feel that the interpreter was judging (and using cultural judgments the researcher could not understand, coming from an outside perspective) could limit the openness of the participant. The researcher made this decision after weighing the understanding that restricting interviews to English limited the sample. It could also possibly skew the sample in favor of women who had more schooling before they arrived (and

thus a chance to learn English in school in Ethiopia), those who have been in the United States longer (and thus a better chance to learn English), or younger and more educated. In sum, conducting the interviews in English allowed direct communication between the researcher and participant without the problem of filtering that would be faced if an interpreter were utilized. The presence of only the participant and the researcher also strengthened the confidentiality of the interview process. This is especially important for women who may be refugees, or have other traumatic experiences to share (Dass-Brailsford, 2007). Limitations to the use of English include language barriers in capturing the richness of the data as well as possible class bias in the sample if women of higher socio-economic status are more likely to participate because of greater English language skills. However, although English may not be the first language of the participants, it is the major foreign language taught in schools in Ethiopia (CIA, 2013) and is widely spoken—arguably across the socio-economic spectrum.

The interviews were conducted at a variety of locations based on the preference of the participant. Locations throughout the Washington, DC metro area (District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland) ranged from public libraries (both in meeting rooms and in chairs in the open library), to restaurants, to sitting in the researcher's car.

The first interview served as a pilot interview. This pilot interview helped clarify that the interview would not always take a full hour and a half, as expected, but that it could be conducted in about one hour. The pilot interview also gave the researcher an opportunity to recognize that the interview guide questions sometimes needed to be simplified or re-explained in a less formal manner for the participant to understand. In general, however, there were no major changes needed to the interview guide based on the pilot interview.

Padgett (2008) discusses the importance of attending to one's presentation of self during the data collection phase, including dress and demeanor. The researcher tried to dress in a manner that would not enhance the power dynamic of the researcher and participant, for example simple clothing, not expensive or highly professional attire. She also tried to offer meeting places that would have a quiet, confidential, yet publicly safe space to talk. Each of these decisions was made with an effort to help the participant feel comfortable and respected as she shared her experiences.

Padgett (2008) explains, "Optimally, the researcher is empathic and understanding without sacrificing professionalism" (p. 85). The researcher employed skills in empathic listening during the interviews and tried to retain professional composure. At several points in the interviews, some the participants became emotional and cried while sharing personal experiences. The researcher found herself working hard to walk the line between empathy and professionalism; in fact, she cried too at points in the interviews, but was able to ground herself with the interview guide and move forward with the interview.

Finally, Padgett (2008) explains that nonverbal communication is essential in qualitative research interviews. The researcher attempted to capture the importance of the nonverbal communication, such as crying or facial expressions, by writing a journal entry after each interview and noting nonverbal communication expressed during the interview.

Finally, additional data collected for this study included the researcher's field notes and journal entries about the interviews, as well as other observations and learning about the population during the recruitment phase (meetings with Ethiopian community service directors, visits to Ethiopian churches, etc.).

Data Analysis

The transcript data from 14 interviews were analyzed by coding with Atlas.ti scientific software. The data transcripts were analyzed through qualitative content analysis, which requires immersion in the data as a whole, followed by deriving codes in the text that capture key concepts. The researcher derived a total of 315 codes including “remittances,” “language barrier,” “second shift,” and “share food.” Then, initial codes were sorted into categories with themes arising from related codes and categories (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Teater, 2011). The researcher worked on grouping the codes into relevant “code families” including “immigration type,” “entry level jobs,” “student organizations.” Conventional content analysis was used to identify data themes derived not from outside theories, but from the interview data itself (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). As Hsieh and Shannon (2005) explain: “The advantage of the conventional approach to content analysis is gaining direct information from study participants without imposing preconceived categories or theoretical perspectives” (p. 1280). The researcher identified codes that were repeated 10 or more times in the transcripts as important to look into deeper. Some codes and code families such as “family in the U.S.” (50 references) and “comparison between U.S. and Ethiopia” (39 references) emerged as important themes.

In this study, social capital theory was used in developing the interview guide to direct the interview general topics (for example, to determine that the study would focus on how social networks were utilized instead of what modes of transportation were used to immigrate). Consequently, codes were derived and themes emerged that were directly related to the interview guide including themes surrounding belonging, trustworthiness, and communication. In this sense, the theory contributed to the questions that were asked, but in

terms of data analysis, the codes and themes went in many directions based on the responses of the participants. For example, the idea of an adjustment period after immigration was not a question on the interview guide, yet this concept was repeatedly discussed by the participants.

Rigor and Trustworthiness

A final aspect of methodology that must be addressed is the study's rigor and trustworthiness. Deciding whom has the authority to judge what is rigorous and "good" qualitative research has been controversial, because it does not fit into the traditional quantitative evaluations of validity and reliability and is subjective rather than objective (Padgett, 2008).

Riessman (1993) explains that trustworthiness and truth are not the same; indeed, truth assumes an objective reality. The present study, in contrast, is built on the assumption of a constructed reality. In the final analysis, others determine whether or not they trust the study. A researcher can provide information that lets others decide the trustworthiness of the study by "describing how the interpretations were produced, making visible what we did, specifying how we accomplished successive transformations, and making primary data available to other researchers" (Riessman, 1993, p. 68).

In this study, the process of describing the research methodology and content analysis, keeping a reflexivity journal, and peer debriefing were ways that the researcher worked to increase trustworthiness. In addition, it would be ideal to share a copy of the transcript and/or final write-up with the participants to ensure that the message conveyed is true to the message each intended. However, with the intense focus on confidentiality, member checking was not feasible in this study. Many participants did not give full names or contact information. They

were also promised that identifying information would not be kept, thus making re-connecting to review transcripts or analysis difficult.

One way to increase the trustworthiness of a study is through the use of reflexivity—or “systematic self-awareness” (Padgett, 2008, p. 180), which manages the subjectivity of the researcher in qualitative research. In the present study, the researcher used the tool of a reflexivity journal to identify bias as well as record the process of recruiting and interviewing. She wrote about each aspect of the research process—writing and beta testing the interview guide, recruiting participants, conducting her pilot interview and deciding which changes needed to be made, continuing her interviews, finding a transcriptionist, and coding and analyzing the data. This process keeps a clear record for the researcher to consult in her own process as well as a detailed record to share in her peer debriefing process. In this study, the researcher also sought to increase trustworthiness and rigor through engage in peer debriefing with her research advisor—through personal conversations, email correspondence, and sharing her journal entries. The researcher engaged in peer debriefing throughout the research process—research design, recruiting and data collection, coding and analysis, and writing up the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Human Subject Concerns

Before participating in the interview, each participant was given an IRB-approved consent form (Appendix D). Prior to the first interview, the consent form was reviewed by a panel of three native Ethiopian speakers to ensure its appropriateness for the sample population; additionally, grade level analysis was conducted on the consent form and recruitment flyer to ensure the materials were at an 8th grade reading level. Participation in the study was completely

voluntary and each participant was advised that she could withdraw at any time or not answer any question she did not want to answer. Each participant received both written and oral explanation of the informed consent issues including confidentiality. Questions regarding immigration status were not asked, but there still was the potential of disclosure of such information during the interview. Because this is such a sensitive issues with the potential of serious repercussions for the Ethiopian immigrant women in the sample population, this issue was addressed directly in the consent form and in the verbal explanation to the participants prior to the interview. Transcripts and coding documents were de-identified. The consent forms, the only form of identification, were stored in a locked file separate from any interview data. Both the digital recordings and consent forms will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

Reflexivity

The reflexivity journal also was an important tool in addressing ethical considerations of this study. The reflexivity journal helped the researcher become more aware of her sensitivities to sexism—noting that at times she was not able to get direct access to women participants without going through a male gatekeeper, such as a pastor or community agency director. The journal also helped highlight some of the concerns the researcher faced in keeping boundaries professional. For example, the researcher faced feelings of guilt for having enough money and privilege when some participants were struggling to secure the basic necessities of life or going for years without being able to see loved ones. Noting these issues in the journal and discussing with research advisors are ways that the systematic self-awareness of reflexivity was used to bolster the ethical trustworthiness of this qualitative study.

The researcher recognized the need to be aware of language and cultural barriers and nuances. Although English is taught beginning in primary school in Ethiopia, there were language barriers, including accent or dialect usage issues. Also, there were power differentials because the researcher is a natural born citizen of the United States with white skin and many advantages of class and education. This was further compounded in power dichotomy of “researcher” and research “subject.” The researcher used self-awareness to be conscientious about leveling that power differential with the participants in as many ways as possible—meeting in a location of the choosing of the participant, clearly explaining the voluntary nature of the research, listening with respect, honoring confidentiality, and incorporating what she learned about Ethiopian culture as she progressed in the research process. Most importantly, the researcher recognized she must not make assumptions that “all Ethiopian immigrant women” think, act, or feel the same. Although the research sought to identify themes and commonalities, there was a need to respect and appreciate the individual reality and experience of each participant. The researcher used peer debriefing and her self-reflexivity journal to guide her process of learning from the experiences the participants shared with her and honoring their trust. The next chapter on findings will include more details about the researcher’s self-reflexivity journal.

Summary

This chapter included a discussion of the research design, methodology, and analysis of this study. In sum, this study was based on a constructivist and subjectivist epistemological framework, recognizing the constructed reality of the participant as well as the subjective role of the researcher in interpreting the words of the interview. The researcher outlined the year-long

recruitment of participants and the data collection phase, including the process of keeping a self-reflexivity journal to increase rigor and trustworthiness. The researcher further discussed the process of identifying themes through qualitative content analysis of transcript data gathered from 14 face-to-face interviews. The findings of this analysis will be examined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter provides a demographic description of the participants as well as an explanation of the findings about the women's lived experiences leaving their homeland and immigrating to the U.S. The data gathered from the 14 participants during the personal interviews offer a description of life, relationships, and inner thoughts and feelings of women immigrating to Washington, DC from Ethiopia. They discuss arriving in the United States, finding a job, living arrangements, making friends, joining clubs and churches, earning degrees, overcoming language barriers, and feeling homesick for family still in Ethiopia. Their stories provide rich experiential data regarding the post-immigration life of Ethiopian women in the Washington, DC area.

The key findings are organized in this chapter according to three major phases in the immigration and acculturation journey: beginning a new life in a new land, finding a place in a new community, and seeking belonging and sense of home. Each of these phases and the themes that emerged within each phase will be discussed in further detail in this chapter. Table 1 illustrates the phases into which the researcher has organized the findings and the themes that emerged from the interview data.

Table 1

Phases and Themes Emerging from Interview Data

Phase	Theme
Phase 1	Theme 1
Beginning a New Life: The Role of Family and Friends in the Lives of Ethiopian Immigrant Women	Family members who already lived in the U.S. were essential in connecting participants with housing, jobs, and educational opportunities.
Phase 2	Theme 2
Finding a Place in a New Community: The Definitions of Community and Role of Community Organizations	The church community provides a social home and sense of community as women learn to adjust to a new land.
Phase 3	Theme 3
Seeking Belonging and a Sense of Home: Navigating Trust, Communication, and Belonging in a New World	The feeling of belonging grows over time and with experiences that help one feel comfortable in new surroundings.

Overall, this chapter will address the demographic findings, the responses to interview guide questions based on social capital theory, and the themes that emerged from the data transcripts. There will also be a discussion of the findings from the researcher's reflexivity journal.

Participant Profile

This study included 14 Ethiopian women who immigrated to the U.S. There were a range of ages included in the study sample. The oldest participant was 64 and the youngest was 23. There were six participants in their 20s, three participants in their 30s, three participants in their 40s, one in her 50s, and one in her 60s. There also was a wide variety in number of years living in the U.S. The participant who had immigrated most recently arrived only a little over a year ago; the participant who had been in the U.S. the longest immigrated 27 years ago. Table 2 describes the participants at the time of their immigration to the U.S.

Table 2

Demographics of Participants at Time of Immigration to U.S.

Descriptor	Frequency
Age of Immigration to U.S.	
18-19	5
20-25	5
26-30	2
31-39	0
40-49	1
50-59	1
Marital Status at Time of Immigration	
Never Married	10
Married	4
Divorced	0
Parental Status at Time of Immigration	
Children	5
No Children	9
Immigration Type	
Family or Personal Asylum/Refugee	4
Diversity Visa	5
Student Visa	1
Visitor Visa	2
Not disclosed	2
Participants with Family in U.S. Prior to Arrival	
Yes	11
No	3

The study included both married and single women. No women identified as divorced, though not all who were married were currently living with their spouse. Four of the participants were married at the time of their immigration; 10 were not. An additional five married after they arrived in the U.S., and five were never married at the time of the interview. Half of the participants identified as mothers. Five of the women had children when they immigrated; two more had become mothers by the time of the interview. Seven of the participants had no children at the time of the interview.

The immigration status of the participants was not asked; however, through the course of discussion of the participants' immigration stories, they often shared their method of entry as part of their experience. Participants came to the United States through visitor visas, student visas, diversity visas, and refugee and asylum status. Several did not disclose their method of entry.

The majority of the participants already had family in the U.S. awaiting them when they arrived. These family members included aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings, and daughters. Only three of the 14 participants had no family members in the U.S. prior to their immigration. Table 3 describes the participants at the time of the interview as some descriptors had changed since their initial immigration.

Table 3

Personal Demographics of Participants at Time of the Interview

Descriptor	Frequency
Current Age at Time of Interview	
20-29	6
30-39	3
40-49	3
50-59	1
60-69	1
Years Lived in U.S.	
5 or less	4
6-10	3
11-20	5
More than 20	2
Marital Status at Time of Interview	
Never Married	5
Married	9
Divorced	0
Parental Status at Time of Interview	
Children	7
No Children	7

Religious affiliation was another important demographic. Two participants stated religious affiliation as Evangelical Christian; four stated Ethiopian Orthodox Church; three gave

no indication they attended religious services and stated no specific religious denomination; two stated they attended church occasionally, but did not specify denomination; and one identified the Ethiopian Catholic Church as her denomination. Two participants stated their affiliation with a more generalized term of “Ethiopian Church” and one of these reported that she also attended “American Church.” Table 4 describes the participants’ religious affiliations.

Table 4

Religious Affiliation of Participants

Religious Denomination	Frequency
“American Church”	1
Ethiopian Catholic Church	1
Evangelical Christian Church	2
Ethiopian Orthodox Church	4
“Ethiopian Church”	2
Muslim	0
Religious participation, but no affiliation specified	2
No Religious Affiliation Mentioned	3

Of note was the absence of Muslim participants in this study. Despite the range of recruiting methods, no Muslim women volunteered to participate. This is important because 34% of the population of Ethiopia is Muslim based on CIA information from 2007 (CIA, 2013). In recruiting participants, the researcher was told by an Ethiopian community organization leader

that getting Muslim women to participate in the study would be very difficult. The Ethiopian Muslim culture, especially in the U.S. in the post 9-11 era, made women hesitant to talk to American strangers. This proved to be true with no Ethiopian immigrant women identifying as Muslim in the study sample.

The Phases of the Immigration Experience

The researcher organized the interview data into three distinct phases that capture the chronological aspects of the immigration experiences. During phase one, *beginning a new life*, the events of arrival, finding a place to live, securing a job, and enrolling in school are discussed. During this phase, what emerged as a theme was the importance of family members in assisting with the events and challenges of the adjustment to a new life. The second phase, *finding a place in a new community*, highlights the ways participants define community and how their communities respond in certain situations. A major theme of this phase is how church congregations aided participants in dealing with the personal and familial challenges of daily living in a new country. During the final phase, *seeking belonging and a sense of home*, the findings focus on navigating trust, communication, and belonging in a new land. In this section, each phase will be explored in depth.

Phase I: Beginning a New Life: The Role of Family and Friends in the Lives of Ethiopian Immigrant Women

The women in this study arrived in the United States with a range of backgrounds and types of immigration status. Their ages, religions, and previous travel experiences were varied. However, for each woman, her arrival started the beginning of a new life. Participants expressed a range of emotions when they first arrived at the airport including fear, hope, and

disappointment. They also had a variety of first living arrangements including staying with family members in private rooms for the first time in their lives to staying with complete strangers after being abandoned at the airport. Finding employment for the first time, and subsequent jobs, was a challenge faced by the participants but was largely aided by the connections of family and friends and members of the Ethiopian community already in the U.S.

Airport arrival. The moment of arrival in the United States was a vivid memory for many of the participants. It was the end of a previous life and a beginning of a whole new one. Only two participants [P2, P3⁴] arrived traveling with family members; one [P5] arrived with a hired smuggler to help her get into the country. The remaining travelled alone to the U.S., but most were greeted by family or friends at the airport. The range of family members that were waiting at the airport included cousins [P4], uncle and grandmother [P8], aunt [P11], sister and brother [P12], uncle and aunts [P14], and sister [P10]. Two of the participants had visited the U.S. prior to their immigration, so they had past experience to draw upon. One participant who had visited family in the U.S. for vacation during high school said it was different arriving when she knew she was immigrating; however the previous visit had given her some foresight and she “...kind of knew what to expect” [P9]. However, for the majority of the participants, the day they immigrated was their first time they stepped foot in the U.S. For one participant [P8], not only was it her first time in the U.S., but it was her first time to leave the town in which she had grown up. Both Participants 8 and 10 mentioned it was a first time on an airplane. Participant 10

⁴ Participants in the study will not be identified by name. Rather they will be identified by participant number which will either be written out or bracketed following the reference to the participant. For example Participant 1 would be bracketed [P1].

remembered; “When I got on the plane, because that was my first time on a plane, I almost felt like it’s surreal, honestly. It’s like: ‘Oh my God, I’m going to – this is going to be my first flight.’”

Fear was a strong emotion that was captured as the women shared their first impressions of arriving in the U.S. Participant 14 said “I was shocked...and scared. Because I didn’t know what’s going to happen, you know. It was completely different. I’ve never travelled alone before, so I was scared.” Traveling alone across the world and walking into an airport filled with people can be frightening and overwhelming. One participant shared what she was thinking when she stepped off the plane. She was going to be met by her brother’s wife’s sister’s husband, whom she had never met. She was being picked up by this man who she would later love so much she called her cousin. But that first day, she did not even know what he looked like. She recalled: “I feel like I’m lost because it was crowded in the airport...So I feel like, oh, am I going to find that person? If I don’t find, what am I going to do? I don’t even know much English...” [P13]. These women were fearful, but also hopeful as they embarked on an entirely new life.

Participant 10 described the experience: “There was something...hinging...on my throat. It’s bittersweet... You know you have a future ahead of you, that future is uncertain, and yet, you have to get away from that place because you need that change in your life, right?”

Another emotion that several of the women felt when they first arrived was disappointment. Given her high, maybe impossibly high, expectations, one participant shared that she had imagined that nothing could be better than America and thought she would see that “the road is full of flower and the houses, fence and flowers and garden... I have imagined it. I was so disappointed when I’m driving from the airport to my house. ‘This is America?’” [P12].

She went on to acknowledge that what she saw in the U.S. was better than what she had left in Ethiopia, but still she was disappointed. She recollected: “I know I see better things than back home, but it still is not enough because I have expectations. I was so disappointed the first time” [P12]. Another participant also held high expectations based on Hollywood portrayals of American life. She recalled: “And, and I was completely shocked because I didn’t expect America, uh, the United States to be like this because, you know, the movies are so – glamorous and – but the reality was different” [P14].

Participants also expressed shock at the extreme weather, both hot [P3, P4] and cold [P13]. Participant 3 said, “It was very hot. It was in July. I’ve never been to this kind of weather. It was hard to breath, I remember that.” Temperatures in Ethiopia’s capital Addis Ababa range from 65-85 degrees Fahrenheit, so arriving to a high humidity 90+-degree day in a Washington, DC summer would be a drastic difference. She continued: “...the temperature was very intolerable for me. A couple of days it was hot and I stayed home. I didn’t even go out for days because it was too hot” [P3]. Participant 4 shared that she had travelled extensively in Europe, which in some ways eased her transition, but she was still not prepared for the weather: “It was hot...it was in June so it was in the midst of summer. I was like, whoa, this is hot.” On the other hand, for those arriving in winter, the cold temperature and bare, leafless landscape was a stark difference from Ethiopia. One participant described her reaction: “And then when I came off from the airport, it was like – that was February I think – everything is just like dry. There is no trees. Everything is dry so I was like, oh my God, it’s a desert” [P13].

Participant 5 used the analogy of being in a “jungle” in an urban city to describe what it was like when she arrived. Participant 10 remembered driving away from the airport: “And, the

cars...I was just watching these cars just pass like, I don't know, like, fast cars on that highway. I was like, 'Wow! What's going on?'" She continued on in her description of the overwhelmed feeling: "I'm telling you, my head was spinning. I felt like I was in a movie, or something like that" [P10].

In addition to mostly being met at the airport by family members, the women also had interactions with other people immediately upon their arrival. These initial contacts left indelible marks in the memories of the women. One participant told the story of exiting the plane at the Dulles, VA airport. The passengers of the flight, which had been a non-stop flight from Ethiopia, were greeted by four or five Ethiopian women employees. She related: "I was extremely relieved and at the same time, shocked to see, at the exit, women –Ethiopian women – waiting for Ethiopian passengers, to help them. And, that was for me, it was extraordinary..." [P10]. She said that the woman helped her call her sisters who were elsewhere in the airport waiting to pick her up. She said of the Ethiopian women greeters: "Those people are like, they save you" [P10]. She also had a positive experience with the customs agent who was familiar with Ethiopian immigrants. As a background, she explained that it is common for Ethiopian people to pack very few clothes and other possessions, and to mostly fill one's luggage with Ethiopian spices for cooking upon arrival in the U.S. When she arrived at the customs agent, she said "The guy...was like, 'What do you have? 'berbere and kibbeh? Like those are the butter and the pepper, right?' They are so familiar with the whole thing because there's a lot of Ethiopians carrying that stuff every day" [P10]. She appreciated the familiarity of finding women from Ethiopia to greet her and a customs agent who knew the name of her spices. Another participant shared her positive experience with the first Americans she met upon arrival:

“The people from Homeland Security, the people who check your passport, they know that we have diversity visa so they wished us luck, the best luck. That was nice” [P3]. Moving across the world to a new land, new culture, and new language caused these women to be particularly appreciative of the kindness of strangers upon arrival.

Participants experienced a range of emotions and impressions that were informed by mainstream media, their own imagination, and reports from friends and family in the U.S. Some had expectations, others were trying to limit expectations. Despite their previous experience living, visiting, or hearing of the U.S., each participant had a unique experience on her first day of immigration.

Living arrangements. After initial arrival, each participant needed basic food and shelter. Those participants with family members in the U.S. were all met by family members at the airport and most stayed with those relatives for varying lengths of time. Aunts, uncles, daughters, and cousins hosted their family members after arrival [P1, P6, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P14]. Being able to stay with family already living in the U.S. eased the transition for the participants. One participant [P11] said she stayed with her aunt: “She picked me from the airport and she gave me all the accommodation and everything. Almost she sponsored me for everything so it was not challenging for me that way.” Participants described staying with family members for eight months [P1], a year and half [P14], and four years [P6] before moving into other living arrangements. Others reported that they have lived the entire time since their immigration with the family members who were already living here when they arrived [P8, P9, P11].

Not all participants who had family in the U.S. lived with them, however. One participant [P2] had a brother and other family in the area, but did not stay with them. She and her family stayed in a hotel for 5 nights and then rented their own apartment. Another [P3] arrived with her family of five; her relatives in the U.S. rented a basement apartment for them and had it ready for them upon their arrival. She related: “My aunts... couldn’t take us all in... because there’s five of us... What they did was they rented a basement of a townhouse, and that townhouse was luckily owned by Ethiopians. So it was nice to have some Ethiopians around.” Although one participant [P4] was picked up by a cousin at the airport, she stayed with a close family friend for four or five months.

Those women without family in the U.S. found alternative housing solutions. One woman [P13] stayed with family friends whom she considered so close she began referring to them as cousins. Another participant [P7] first arrived in Chicago – assigned to the city by the refugee organization that arranged for her first living arrangements. She recalled being very unhappy with the situation. Finally, the participant [P5] who described her entry into the U.S. as “being smuggled” said she had planned to stay with people connected to the man she had hired to smuggle her. She explained: “He said he has brothers and cousins who live in Dallas. So I’m going to stay with them until I report to the immigration, and I can ask asylum staying with them.” However, things changed once they arrived at the airport. She continued: “We travelled together and he just disappeared from me at the airport, so I can’t say anything. And then I found this Ethiopian taxi driver...luckily in Dallas, Texas, this taxi driver he took me to his friend’s house” [P5]. She felt “lucky” to find an Ethiopian taxi driver who drove her to one of his Ethiopian friend’s place to stay the night. She remembered that first night: “Actually I was very comfortable because she is a

very bubbly person, and she made me feel like home. She gave me a new towel and a shower sponge, bath sponge.” [P5] This woman was a complete stranger, but shared an Ethiopian heritage with the participant. She welcomed her into her home and the participant said she told her to ““feel like home. You can stay as much as you want until you find a place to go.”” She continued: “I was very comfortable with her because she has that culture in Ethiopia. Even if you don’t know anyone, if somebody come to your house as a guest, you have to care for them. You have to show good hospitality. She still has that so I don’t feel like a stranger” [P5].

The difference in living environments between the U.S. and Ethiopia was something that repeatedly surfaced in the interviews. These differences were categorized both negatively and positively by the participants. One participant [P12] said:

It was different... There, I can sleep in one bedroom with my sisters in one bed. Here, when I come, I was expecting my older sister can sleep with me, but she gave me one bedroom and that makes me feel lonely. It’s not private. For me, it was lonely at that time. I said, “Oh, she don’t hug me into sleep.” So I feel lonely...

Hence, this participant did not interpret her own bedroom as a private luxury, but instead felt isolated.

Another participant [P10] aptly described the conflicting feelings of enjoying the luxury in the U.S. living arrangements, but missing the communal living aspects of housing in Ethiopia. She remembered what it had been like in Ethiopia: “...Ethiopians tend to kind lean on one another, like, relatives... You just invite them over and they stay forever... I remember, sometimes, there were... 15 people in one room, because relatives keep on coming and coming and coming and staying for weeks” [P10]. It was different when she came to the U.S., and there

were advantages that she enjoyed. She continued: "...And then, I come here, and I have my own room, and it's...extremely small room, but it's still like, I'm by myself now. I'm comfortable now." But there were also disadvantages, she explained: "I was depressed because I was used to the craziness going on there. When you come from a large family and then... all of a sudden, you find yourself alone, it's really hard to get used to it, at first." She enjoyed the luxury of privacy and her own belongings; she said "But, first time, it's like I excited about having my own room and everything. My sisters had arranged everything. I had my own computer and everything, my own closet." But, with the new culture of privacy came a loneliness she had not expected. She continued: "...And that's the thing, it was different. I enjoyed it, having my own space, obviously; but once my sisters would go to work, I'm miserable. You know, I'm by myself, and that's it" [P10]. Despite moving in with family members and the great support of both friends and family, the participants were still faced with changes in culture such as increased space and time alone.

The women found housing primarily through the generosity of family members already living in the U.S., although others also received housing through family friends and even one through the kindness of strangers. Despite gratitude for somewhere to stay—often free of charge—the women expressed loneliness and an ambivalence about newfound privacy.

Finding employment. The search for employment—both the first time and throughout the time in the U.S.—was one of the common struggles faced by the women in this study. Additionally, the types of jobs that the women secured, especially at first, were often labor intensive. The common themes of unexpected, different, and difficult work emerged through the

stories of the participants. Another theme that was repeated was the participants' working multiple jobs, second shifts, and long hours.

Some of the women's most poignant memories were associated with their first experiences working in the U.S. The participants spoke of taking multiple jobs—a day shift and a night shift. They reported language barriers being particularly difficult in the work place. They also talked about the process of moving from first job to second job as well as the journey from accepting any work available to transitioning into careers they desired. Overall, the Ethiopian network of friends and family already in the U.S. was a major factor in the participants' ability to secure employment.

Participant 2 worked at a grocery store for more than six months while she was searching for a professional job. She said she first started teaching part time with an IT company. Once her work permit was processed, she was hired full time with that same IT company. She is an example of how the Ethiopian community helped her find employment. She said she found the job "...through the community. The guy who owns this teaching place, he's an Ethiopian. That's how I found out" [P2]. She also mentioned the help of family and a local Ethiopian publication: "I looked at the papers. There is a local magazine for Ethiopians. I looked at that and then I talked to him. Also, my uncle took me there actually" [P2].

It took Participant 3 two months to find her first job at a hot dog restaurant at a shopping mall. She found the job through a friend she had known when they were younger in Ethiopia. Her friend, now living in the U.S., was about to leave her job at the hot dog shop and was able to help the participant get hired and trained to take her place. She worked there for about five months before her aunt introduced her to a manager at Starbucks, where she was hired and has

worked for over three years. Again, both of these jobs were found with the networking support of friends and family already living in the U.S.

Participant 1 worked at 7-Eleven for almost three years and then moved to CVS Pharmacy. She is an example of the participants joining the network in the U.S. to help future immigrants find a place in the system. She said that she serves as a link for jobs to Ethiopian who arrive in the U.S.: “Always I hire many people to 7-Eleven. 7-Eleven is my friend, the manager....I have experience over there. When it comes somebody from Ethiopia, anybody, let’s go. Fill the application here, let’s go. I hire a lot of people.”

Participant 5 is another example of finding a job through Ethiopian connections. She also demonstrates the theme that many of the women worked more than one job at a time. She got her first job working at a night club that a family friend from Ethiopia owned in DC. She worked that job at night and then found a daytime job through another Ethiopian friend. Her friend had worked for the owner of a holiday shop in the mall and referred her to the shop owner, and she got the job. She told an interesting story of how her friend told her to say that she had experience working retail in America so that she could get hired. She was hired, but then the owner left her on her own to run the shop the first day. She related, “I called another friend, the friend who referred me. I was like: ‘She left me. I don’t know what to do.’ I don’t even know how to operate the cash register” [P5]. She said that her friend came to the shop and bought a scarf and showed her how to use the cash register. Before her friend arrived, she made a \$2 sale, but instead of entering \$2, entered \$2000 into the machine. When the owner “came and read the register report, I sold something like \$2,000-something and she laughed.... She was like, ‘I

don't even have a \$2,000 inventory'" [P5]. Clearly, employment in the U.S. was fraught with new challenges.

Several of the participants related how different the work they found in the U.S. was from the work they had done in Ethiopia. In some ways, this was a shift in the way they viewed themselves. It took a year for Participant 4 to find a job at a barbeque restaurant, where she was hired as a server because her friend from Ethiopia knew the manager of the restaurant. "It was completely different from Ethiopia. First of all, I never served before...I have never ever imagined myself to be a server at all..." She thought of herself as an academic and an activist. She continued: "....And then I found myself being trained like this is barbeque sauce, this is baby back ribs, and this is spare ribs... Also serving meal and how to treat customers...about the computer system, everything, I had to learn everything ..." [P4]. She had not imagined that she would end up in this situation: "I never thought of myself being in that kind of position where I'd be working as a server. I used to be a director of a human rights of the association, and now I'm... a server in the United States" [P4]. However, she found the silver lining: "But then eventually I started to like it... So it was fun, but it was hard work. We worked so hard. It was very hard." Another participant talked about how her jobs in the U.S. were very different from the data entry job she had worked in Ethiopia [P6]. When she came to the U.S., she worked at 7-Eleven, babysitting, and hotel room cleaning. She eventually received training and took a job as a phlebotomist.

Participant 7 talked about wanting to contribute financially and send money to her family back in Ethiopia. She put off going to school so she could earn money—working two jobs waitressing and a third as a café cashier. She said that when she arrived in DC after being in

Chicago, Seattle, and San Francisco, the situation was better for minorities than it had been in the other cities, and she was able to get a job (or three) right away. These common themes of unexpected, different, and difficult work along with working multiple jobs emerged through the stories of the participants.

Other participants struggled to secure employment for various reasons. Participant 11 faced the barrier of not having a work permit right away. She started volunteering with various organizations including the organization where she eventually was hired to work. In Ethiopia she was a public health professional working for an international NGO. She said that her work here has some similarities, as she coordinates projects for an Ethiopian community center including an after-school program. After two months in the U.S. in California, Participant 14 found a job as a barista. She said she loved the job and was able to work it while she was a high school student, and then in the interim while she waited to start college. Since finishing college and graduating school with a Master's of Public Health, she has not been able to find a job. In fact, she moved to DC from California in hopes of connecting with one of the many public health organizations in the DC area, but she has not succeeded in securing employment.

Another challenge in the employment arena was language barriers. Participant 13 remembered her interview for a cashier position at Goodwill Thrift Store where they asked her how much a quarter is worth, and she did not know. Participant 12 told of the language barriers she faced in her retail job, a job at a store she compared to a Wal-Mart. She recalled a story of a customer asking for "Dove." She told the woman they didn't have any. The customer was upset: "And she tell my supervisor, 'She told me that they don't have.' 'Why did you say that?' 'Because we don't sell birds.' 'No, it's not bird. It's a kind of soap'" [P12]. She also learned

that camels are not always animals, more likely in the U.S. they are cigarettes. Clearly, the language and cultural barriers emerged at difficult times for many of the participants in the employment arena.

In addition to learning to count change, use a cash register, and know the brands of products, the sheer physical challenges of many of the jobs available to the participants were overwhelming. As a young 20-year-old, Participant 7 took a job as a housekeeper at the Four Seasons in Seattle. She said housekeeping is the hardest job and she could not keep up; one day she actually passed out in one of the guest rooms. Participant 8 worked multiple jobs including cleaning airplanes between flights during the night, taking a bus to get home to sleep for one hour and then starting a day job at CVS in the morning. She said she could only juggle working day and night for about six months: “It was really hard for me, like I suffered a lot.” The first job Participant 13 found was at McDonalds through a connection of the family friend with whom she was staying. She recalled: “I didn’t expect America will be like this. Any kind of job I will do. I have to” [P13]. So she accepted the job at McDonalds, “I have to wrap like sandwich. It’s hot. My finger is so red. By the time I finish, I’m tired. All day I’m standing. So, oh my God, this is the job I’m working” [P13]. The demands of supporting oneself and at times family in and outside of the U.S. were physically overwhelming for some of the participants.

The physical demands of laborious jobs, long and multiple shifts, as well as the mental demands of overcoming language barriers and cultural differences were challenges that faced the women in the process of seeking and maintaining employment. They were almost universally, however, aided in finding employment by a family member, friend, or member of the Ethiopian community who helped connect them to a job.

Pursuing education. One way many of the participants moved from grueling manual jobs or the burden of multiple jobs was to pursue training and advanced education. Similar to job finding, family and friends already in the U.S. were instrumental in assisting the participants in accessing the educational system. Not all of the women, however, considered furthering their education a part of their goals in the U.S. Participants 1, 2 and 11 had already completed their education and selected their professions before they came to the U.S. Out of the 14 participants, they are the three who did not pursue any formal education after arriving in the U.S. Overall, however, those who did pursue education received assistance, encouragement, and mentorship from friends and family members in the U.S. who provided a support system for the participants.

For some of the women, education provided an avenue to earn more money that they could use to help family members. For example, Participant 6 attended courses at Howard University to become certified as a phlebotomist. She was hired by Howard University and worked to earn money to bring her four children and husband from Ethiopia. Participant 7 was in the U.S. for eight years—also focused on sending money to family members—before she enrolled in a business school certification course. She finished her certification in one year and got her first office job. She said she went “From making \$4 and \$7 and \$8, for me to get paid as \$25,000 a year, that is a lot of money.” She worked in that job for several years and then wanted to be able to contribute to the Ethiopian community. She said, one day she thought: “‘You know what, why don’t I get my real estate license then I’d be able to help the Ethiopian community. I can sell houses.’ So, I did it for about six years.” Later her brother came to the U.S. and received his Master’s degree. She talked about that being a pivotal moment for her:

And for me, it was an open door to see him walking into that stage, graduating, and being able to be very proud and giving me hope, it was an open door for me to see him. If he can do it, I can do it. So, I started school back again. I was able to manage to finish my bachelor's, and then I got my Master's. [P7]

She received a Bachelors in Accounting and a Masters of Business Administration.

For other participants, the main reason for immigrating was to pursue their education. Participant 3 immigrated with her immediate family because her parents were concerned about their children being assigned to colleges outside of Addis Ababa to areas of Ethiopia that they did not consider safe. In fact, Participant 2 had already begun college in Ethiopia when her family won the Diversity Visa lottery. She came with them to the U.S. and six months later started attending college. She reported that her aunts who were already living in the U.S. and her father who immigrated with her were integral in helping her start her American college experience including completing admissions forms and language placement tests. She has pursued her educational dreams, though altered. She changed her major from architecture, which she had studied in Ethiopia, to nursing, which she is currently studying.

Participant 5 viewed her employment as an avenue to pay for her education, which she had not pursued in Ethiopia. She worked multiple jobs so she could send money to her family as well as enroll in the University of the District of Columbia (UDC) after being in the U.S. for almost two years. She majored in business administration, but after taking a required accounting class, her professor noticed her aptitude for accounting and recommended she change her major. Although he was not part of her Ethiopian network of connections, certainly it can be argued that this person played an important part in her educational path. She followed his suggestion and

graduated in accounting. She worked two years for a large accounting firm and currently works as an accountant for educational television channel, where she has been for over five years.

Participant 8 was enrolled and buying supplies for college in Ethiopia when she received news that she had won the lottery for a Diversity Visa. She took the opportunity to come the United States, lived with her uncle, and worked for three years in various jobs. She said that her boyfriend encouraged her to pursue her education by telling her: “‘Because to have a better job, to have a better life, I believe you need to have an education.’ So, I started in NOVA.” She started and finished her Associate of Science degree at NOVA (Northern Virginia Community College). She said she plans to continue her education by applying at Howard University or University of Maryland to study to be a dental hygienist.

Participant 9 also immigrated for the purpose of higher education. She had been assigned to a university that was outside of Addis Ababa and her parents did not want her to go there. Since she had an aunt living in the U.S., they decided to send her to live with her aunt and attend college in the U.S. She graduated from a local private university with a degree in nursing and is now pursuing a certification program at another local college.

Other participants also hoped to seek education abroad. Participant 10 worked as an Administrative Assistant in Ethiopia and dreamed of pursuing her education abroad. When she won the Diversity Visa lottery, she came to the U.S. and lived with her sisters. She worked in retail at a department store and at a shoe store. She earned her associates degree at a community college and then transferred to state university where she earned a bachelor’s degree. She is currently a graduate student at another state university.

Another participant was already working on her college degree in Ethiopia when her opportunity there ended. She sought immigration as a path to education. Participant 12 wanted to immigrate in order to attend college. After her first year of college in Ethiopia, she didn't have any more opportunities to continue there. She said "I came as a visitor. Even in my mind it was to go to school, but I don't have student visa. And then I got a student visa." She explained that when she was seeking her education: "The same time, it was the revolution in Ethiopia. So that's why to get education is very hard. So I have to ask asylum. I cannot go back then" [P12]. She lived with her brother who was already in the U.S., and he helped her navigate the educational system in terms of applying to college. She earned a degree in electrical engineering from a local university and got a job as an electrical engineer with the government and has been with them for 15 years.

While Participant 13 was working at Goodwill Thrift store for 2 years, she met friends who were working and going to school part-time. They helped her learn about some of the programs available and encouraged her to sign up for a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program: "So after I finish the CNA class, I start going to Montgomery College...And then after Montgomery College, I start going to the LPN" [P13]. She continued describing her educational journey: "Like small, slowly I started doing little by little changes. From CNA, I start doing my LPN class and graduated about 2007. And in the same place they promote me...And now I'm going for registered nursing (RN)" [P13]. She is working toward her RN while she is employed as a Licensed Professional Nurse (LPN). In this situation, friends in the U.S. played a role in helping her learn about educational opportunities and institutions as well as gave her encouragement to try to further her education.

In her ten years in the U.S., Participant 14 has experienced a range of American educational opportunities. She came to Los Angeles to live with her aunt and uncle after she won a Diversity Visa lottery. She was told she needed to be in the U.S. for a year before starting college so she went to a year of U.S. high school even though she had already graduated from high school in Ethiopia. She then went to college and majored in Cell and molecular biology. Then she earned her Masters of Public Health.

The women in this study comprised a range of educational levels when they arrived in the U.S. Some had college degrees already while others had just finished high school. Further, once in the U.S., some successfully completed graduate degrees, others worked on four-year degrees or associates degrees. Others did not go to school in the U.S. at all. Those who did pursue educational goals in the U.S., however, did rely on support from family and friends who were already in the U.S. Despite the women's educational background or current enrollment status, one commonality among many of the participants was the discussion of the challenge of adapting to life in the U.S.

Challenges of adjustment phase, despite assistance from family and friends. One theme that emerged repeatedly throughout the interviews was the concept of an adjustment period immediately following immigration. This was not a specific question in the interview, but a theme that kept recurring throughout the interviews. Challenges during this adjustment phase included difficulties in finding work, learning how to apply to school, not having sufficient English language abilities, and put simply, culture shock. Many of the participants referred to this two-three year period as the length of the adjustment phase. One participant shared a medical issue that demonstrated a long-term consequence of her adjustment phase.

Regardless of whether or not they already had family or friends in the U.S., several of the participants described the challenges of immigration as particularly painful and overwhelming for the first couple of years after arrival. Participant 1, who had been in the U.S. for 12 years, described her initial time in the U.S., where she had begun working at a 7-11 convenience store in this way: “I’m crying a lot. ...it’s very hard to me because I didn’t know the money. I didn’t know how to work with different people. For me, it was hard. But step by step, step by step, I fight.”

Participant 12 also described her beginning time in the U.S. as a time of depression. She said, “I cried three years, missing home... I was depressed.” She considers this a normal part of the journey and tells that to others when they first arrive, “When people come, now they cry, I say, ‘Oh no, it’s okay. You’re going to get used to it. Don’t worry.’” She said this homesickness was part of the process: “...Why I cried is I missed home. So if anybody comes first time, they all are passing the same pattern, I think - anxiety, depression, and missing home for no reason...” [P12].

Participant 5, who received asylum status after arriving in the U.S., described her adjustment period as lasting for two to three years. She said, “It was really hard especially the first two years - the adjustment, the homesickness and everything really. The first two years was really bad. She said that during that time she would have returned to Ethiopia if that had been a safe choice for her, “I would go back. If I could back then, I would go back. But I know if I could go back it’s going to be bad for me, so I don’t want to go back” [P5].

Participant 8 discussed how even having family in the U.S., the adjustment was still hard: “... I was crying every single day. It’s hard with living by myself. I mean, it’s still with my

uncle but it's different when you live here with your relatives and when you're in Ethiopia" [P8]. She concluded, "So, it was hard for me to get used to it" [P8].

Culture differences or "culture shock" was an integral factor in the adjustment period. Almost every single participant, [P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14] talked about differences in culture—the language, the food, the way people interact, the money system, the focus on technology, the transportation system, etc. The women in the study shared experiences where they realized they did not understand the way of thinking of the Americans with whom they were interacting. Participant 5 described a situation where she gave up her seat for a woman on the bus. The woman was older than she was, but instead of being grateful, she was offended and rude to the participant, telling her, "I'm not that old." This was confusing for the participant because in Ethiopia, if someone is older than you are, you show deference and respect [P5, P13]. Another experience that Participant 5 described was with discussion of body size:

In my country, if you are a big size, you say it. ...when I was working at the retail, one lady came. She said she's size eight. I said, "No, you're not size eight, you're big. Maybe you're 12 or 14." She was like, "That's discrimination." She reported me. [P5]

Another participant talked about trying not only to learn the language, but the communication patterns. Participant 8 explained that speaking loudly is rude in Ethiopia and you don't make eye contact when you speak, especially men and women. She learned that this was not the case in the U.S. One participant shared an experience of a situation during her adjustment phase that had more serious personal consequences and institutional implications. During her first years in the U.S., she became very ill and was told that her fallopian tube was infected. She

said, “So I had to go in surgery which I don’t know, maybe I was foolish or I don’t know much English” [P13]. She was told she would still potentially be able to have children. However, she tried unsuccessfully for years to have a baby, even seeking fertility treatments. She found out that her second fallopian tube was damaged during that surgery when she was new to the U.S. She will not be able to have children. This was a huge disappointment to her. She felt that this was a consequence of her adjustment phase. The doctor, hospitals, and other medical professionals did not give her the information she needed to make an informed choice. Her limited English compounded the issue:

I was new and then I didn’t ask or “like is there any option that I don’t have to go to the surgery?” You know you have to ask a lot before. “Okay, can we do treatment with medication first before I go to the surgery?” Those kind of stuff I should have asked.
[P13]

This experience in this participants’ life demonstrates the challenges that institutions face when working with new immigrants, as well as the potential consequences to the individuals involved. For the women in this study, the period of adjustment following immigration to the U.S. was filled with homesickness, culture shock, language barriers, loneliness, depression, and institutional barriers in receiving adequate medical care. Through time, perseverance, and gaining familiarity and comfort levels, the participants talked of exiting that difficult adjustment period. This transition from unhappiness and wanting to go back to Ethiopia to a sense of belonging in the U.S. will be discussed more in future sections.

Phase 2: Finding a Place in a New Community: The Definitions of Community and Role of Community Organizations

After arriving in the country and focusing on basic needs like housing and jobs, many participants began to get involved with community organizations. Indeed, the challenges associated with the adjustment period and the pursuit of education were often aided by their involvement in such groups. The degree to which the women were involved with the organizations varied.

In order to learn about the structural aspects of social capital, a significant section in the interview guide for this study was about participants' involvement with social groups and community organizations. The participants reported participating in a variety of organizations such as African Student Union [P14], Ethiopian Student Association [P10], African Working Group [P10], Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) [P7], soccer leagues for their children [P7], volunteer service in the library and elementary school [P3], volunteer services during tax season with the Ethiopian Community Development Council [P7], National Black Accountant Association [P5], mentor services through the JumpStart program [P9], Ethiopian club [P4], Meet Up group (an online way to meet people with shared interests in your local area) [P11], the American Public Health Association [P14], and church congregations. The participants described being involved with many of these organizations for a short period of time, often during the time they were attending school. This could be attributed to the fact that organizations mostly cited by the participants were school clubs that participants would no longer be part of once they graduated or stopped attending school (such as the African Student Union, the Ethiopian Student Association, the African Working Group, and even the mentoring through the JumpStart

program). It might also be attributed to the idea that students are out connecting with other students more and that this is a natural extension of student life to join community organizations or social clubs.

Other participants [P3, 6, 8], however, reported that they were not involved with community organizations. The reasons for not being involved in organizations—or not being involved to a deeper extent-- were varied. Several participants referenced being busy and lack of time as reasons for not joining organizations [P3, P6]. Participant 8 referred to the lack of time, but she also seemed to feel a sense of not belonging. She said:

I would love to if I had the time but I just go to school -- even in school, sometimes I really want to join a club, like any club, but I feel like their schedule is not for me, because after school I have to go work, and you have to study, you have to do a lot of stuff. And every time I saw whatever in the group, even Ethiopian people, I see people have families here, growing up here, so I feel like, ‘Okay, this is not for me.’

Participant 4 talked about getting involved in an Ethiopian group that met at least monthly, sometimes weekly at Ethiopian restaurants. She said she was referred to the group by her lawyer and was involved when she first arrived, but then got busy with work and lack of time and didn’t stay involved, other than to continue to receive their newsletters and follow their website. She said in the club meetings, “They talk about how to better the country, what the diaspora can do, what kind of government we need.”

Another reason cited by for not getting involved in any Ethiopian organization was because of divisive politics among the immigrants, politics that has carried over from conflicts in Ethiopia. She suggested that the divisiveness is in fact a tool of the Ethiopian government: “Here

we're divided. So I don't want to go...we have about 80 different races and this government is one of their strategies dividing people" [P5]. She was referring to the Ethiopian government and the continued divisions that exist among Ethiopian immigrants in the U.S. based on past and current conflicts in Ethiopia. She seemed to believe that the Ethiopian government seeks to keep those with Ethiopian heritage divided—no matter where in the world they are currently residing. She said that she is concerned that when the Ethiopian immigrants are divided against each other in the U.S., they are not able to unite against the Ethiopian government's transgressions that are continuing in Ethiopia. She continued: "When we fight each other, nobody's going to fight them for what they're doing - the reason why I don't involve." She said she had hoped it would be different among the Ethiopian immigrants in the U.S.:

When I came here my expectation was high for our people who live here. They do understand that we will unite together and help the people who is dividing there to be united and change the government's mentality, change the people's mentality who thinks that, "Oh, I am Amhara so I am inferior. I am Tigre, I'm inferior." We should be able to change that. But here in America it's the worst, the worst. [P5]

Despite busy lives, lack of time, and concern over the political divisiveness of the Ethiopian immigrants, most of the women were involved in some type of organization such as a child's sports league, Parent Teacher Association, student union group, or most commonly a church group.

The role of church in the lives of the women. Church was the organization that almost all participants were involved with in some way. Eleven of the 14 participants reported some kind of involvement in church [P1,2,5,6,7,9,10,11,12,13,14]. The reasons for attending church

varied among the participants. There was a deeply religious component for some, others appreciated the social life and friendships, and still others valued it for the connection their Ethiopian church gave them with their former Ethiopian life.

Some of the participants talked of a passionate belief in their religion, as it guided and grounded their life: “I don’t see it as part of my social needs, but rather it’s Christ first and then sort of my second. Of course I’m benefited, but it’s part of my Christian life” [P2]. It also provided an opportunity for close relationships, “It’s really good to have sisters and brother whom you are really close to and whom you spend most of the time Our church is a small church, we’re like family...It has a big part in my life...” [P2]. Interestingly, Participant 2 talked of how she had not been part of this religious group in Ethiopia, but that in the United States, it had become the focus of her life. Participant 7 talked about moving to DC from Seattle and the role the church played in her DC experience: “Ethiopian Orthodox Church was on... 16th Street. For me to see that, it was joyful. I will be able to go and cry and tell everything to God....I said, ‘You know what, this is the place I need to stay’” [P7]. For her, the church provided a representation of home and comfort and an avenue to communicating with God in a familiar context.

Others talked about how church served as a connection to Ethiopia and their culture and life back “home.” “Even when I was in my country, you know, I was participating in the church group like singing a song and things like that. So when I came to here, there is similar church here in DC” [P11]. She continued on to tell about how she found her place there: “So I started to participate there. I registered. I’m a member there. They gave me some assignments here like teaching Ethiopian children. I’m teaching Amharic and also participating in the choir” [P11].

Church served as a link of continuity from her past and current lives and offered a sense of purpose.

Participant 10 emphasized the value of church attendance as an Ethiopian social experience:

I occasionally go to church...they have churches everywhere in D.C... Sometimes, I would go for the coffee which is bad, but it is like the whole thing after the mass and everything that is when you kind of, you feel like you are back in Ethiopia, you know, and everyone is like running for the special bread they make and then the coffee. That is where you socialize after. [P10]

The coffee, the food, the mingling with friends after the church service—all of this served as a connection with her Ethiopian roots more than an actual religious experiences.

Some participants shared that church was really the only organization with which they were involved. Participant 9 shared her experience singing in the Ethiopian Catholic Church choir: “It feels like I’m back home when I’m there on Sundays...we sing in Amharic. Everybody in there is from Ethiopia. We speak our own language together...It’s like I have another family at church. Yes. It’s beautiful. I love it.” She said this was the only organization she had been involved with continuously for the seven years she has been in the U.S. Similarly, Participant 2 explained that church was also her main involvement: “I don’t really participate in any other thing outside of church that much.” In this sense, connection to church is these women’s sole connection to organized community life.

Participant 12 explained that she took her American born children to both “American and Ethiopian” churches for the cultural opportunities. She said: “The decision to both is I want my

kids to accustom both of them. So we went in the morning American church and Sunday school, they participate. Afternoon, we go to our church which is a different view and they learn our language; they learn our customs.” She went on to explain how her children could learn about the culture simply from attending church services: “The difference is when you go to American church, you just say hi and bye...In Ethiopia... when you see, you just hug each other and ‘Hi, how are you?’ That’s our culture” [P12]. She followed up: “And so they see two different cultures. I want them to see. That’s my culture. ‘Why are you going too much? You just saw them last week, you saw them today.’ That’s our culture. That’s the way we say hi. That’s the way we talk. That’s the way we laugh” [P12]. Both she and her children learned from these interactions: “The reason I’m involved in both is I want the kids to learn, and for myself too. I learn the culture too, and the social life, and the language. That help me.” Her children learned of her culture and language at Ethiopian church and she was exposed to English and American culture at the American church. In this way, the church organization served as an educational opportunity.

Despite denomination, the church as an organization played an important role in the lives of participants for various reasons—spirituality, connection to Ethiopia, a safe home, and an educational environment.

Participant definitions of community. Another structural aspect of social capital that was included in the interview guide was that of collective action and cooperation. In order to understand these concepts, the researcher asked each participant to describe what she meant when she talked about her community. The range of responses showed the varying definitions and meanings attributed to “community.” Another section of the interview guide asked

specifically about family and friend networks, but during the interviews, the distinction between community, family, and friends and how these various groups of people would respond to a crisis, offer support, work on a project, or even differentiate among each other all blended together.

When asked to define community, a few of the responses included church members, family members, friends, co-workers [P4], and neighbors, [P1, P6]. Participants 2, 12, 13 responded that their community was the church: "...Mostly it's my brothers and sisters in the church" [P2]. Participant 9 added family to the definition, "It's pretty much my family and my church people... Because I'm very family oriented in a sense so I can say that's my community pretty much."

Those without strong church connections found community in other ways: "I would say my relatives, a family friend, usually mostly Ethiopians" [P3]. She continued: "My parents and my aunt have lot of Ethiopian friends, and they gather once every three months. They just bring food and we will just talk and have fun, I guess. I would say that's a community for me" [P3].

Three participants simply defined their community as their friends [P4, P5, P8]. Participant 14 defined her community as her friends and family, but she specified that she had known these people in Ethiopia and then they all moved here, so in a sense her community formed in Ethiopia and reassembled in the U.S.

One participant broadened the meaning of community to include all of the people who have immigrated to the United States from Ethiopia:

It's a group of people. So it's those immigrant people. Of course all Ethiopians are immigrant, so those immigrant Ethiopians are from the Ethiopian community. There are

children who are originally from here who are Ethiopians, but their parents are from Ethiopia originally. So those Ethiopians are from the Ethiopia community. That's the meaning for me" [P11].

Although many of the participants specifically named Ethiopian friends, family, or even the "Ethiopian community" as their community, one participant made clear she did not want to be automatically assumed to be exclusively in the Ethiopian community: "...I don't specifically or strictly adhere to one type of community...Because I am Ethiopian doesn't make me like I don't want to feel like I am just part of the Ethiopian community." She followed with: "I want to be part of any type of community that... adheres to ...my personal beliefs... that I share an interest with or share an outlook of life with..." [P10].

Overall, the women in this study took various combinations of family, friends, church, shared beliefs, country of origin, and current location into consideration when defining community for themselves individually. However, when the women were then asked about how their community responded to crises or worked on projects, the definition of community often seemed to shift. There were questions on the interview guide that were developed based on the SOCAT (2002), such as: "If there were a problem that affected the entire community (for instance, violence) who do you think would work together to deal with the situation?" When questions like this were asked, the responses to the questions often were met with confusion, short answers, or even no answers: "I don't know." Further, they often answered the questions in reference to the "Ethiopian community" as a whole when they had previously responded that their community was a group of friends or a group of neighbors. This is an example of how the

World Bank instrument, the SOCAT (Grootaert & van Bastelaer, 2002), which as noted earlier, at times elicited somewhat confusing responses.

Community responses and projects. The responses of the participants indicated that the women's communities served to provide social activities like have dinner, go out, go camping [P8], service activities such as volunteering at DC Central Kitchen [P8], and support for major events such as weddings, births and deaths [P1, P3, P4, P5, P9].

Among many of the participants, both the family and the community play a role in responding to problems, planning events, and helping at times of crisis. Participant 11 explained: "The first person who help the guy is the relatives, friends, and the family. Then when things are aggravating and need more help, they come to the community and the Ethiopian community can support the person." One participant shared how her family community worked on a wedding together: "When my aunt got remarried a couple of months ago, they were all working together to throw this huge wedding - huge wedding. You'll be assigned to do something and... everybody is expected to do something..." [P3]. Another participant described her family's wedding participation: "...when one of my uncles got married, his fiancée was in Atlanta. Everybody went over there, helped with everything -- cooking, the whole thing, everything" [P9]. Participant 9 also expressed how her family would come together for a family meeting if there were a crisis: "If something happens, we call a family meeting. Like, my uncles, my aunts, we come together, sit together, talk about it, and try to solve it right there and then." In addition to family community responses, participants identified ways their larger communities (such as friend groups, church congregations, and the Ethiopian community as a whole) responded to problems or needs. Participants talked about the range of ways their churches respond to life

events: “And at the church, we make food when Christmas come in, when somebody dead, when somebody, she born a baby, we contribute food” [P1]. She explained that as a church community, they prepare food, make visits, host baby and wedding showers, and collect money [P1].

The commonalities among responses regarding how the Ethiopian community would respond to the death of a member’s father was strikingly uniform. The Ethiopian culture and traditions surrounding death have been transported with Ethiopian immigrants to the U.S, with a few alterations.

One participant explained that if a friend was to come tell her that her friend’s uncle’s mom had passed away. She said, “As an Ethiopian, it's your culture to go there and comfort them or take them food and see how they're doing or at least text or call and check on them. It’s like those cultural things, you just have to” [P4]. Another said: “Because we have this culture like if somebody died, it’s like your friends and family – they come and stay with you for three or four days, maybe like a week” [P5].

In addition to speaking about what the community offers at a time of death, one participant spoke to the absolute expectation of behavior by community members, while recognizing that the expectation has changed for those living in the U.S. versus when they lived in Ethiopia. Participant 9 gave this example; “...Let’s say a friend of mine loses her father, it’s like we have to be there. It’s not even an option. Like, I leave work, I go there. I leave class, I go there, spend the night there.” She continued by describing the concerted group effort: “And it’s going to be a lot of people, not a few... It’s 30, 40 people... Back home they’ll used to sit, like be there with you for the whole seven days, 10 days or so” [P9]. However, she explained

that in the U.S., while the tradition still exists, it has been adapted. She continued: "...Because we're out of Ethiopia, it's not the same. You can't risk that. You can't do that because you have work. You have things to do on your own too, so you have to get back" [P9]. She said in the U.S., they spend about two or three days instead of 7 to 10. But they still take food and drinks to the home of the bereaved, as they would in Ethiopia. And, another adaptation in the U.S. is that "...If the body is here and they want to send it back home, everybody would put in some money, there will be a lot of contributions to help them, support them, if you have a very strong community..." [P9]. One of the most consistent themes about community response and community expectation was how the Ethiopian community responds to comforting those who have lost someone to death.

Another reference to community expectations was brought up by in regard to family wedding participation. One participant explained the response if a family member did not help at the wedding: "There's no hard feeling, but I'm sure they wouldn't say it to your face.... They would definitely talk behind your back. They would be angry. That's the worst I think that could happen" [P3]. Others suggested that community expectations were flexible to the time [P12] and financial [P13] restraints of individuals [P12, 13].

The communities identified by the participants – from families to churches to the Ethiopian community as a whole – were involved in various ways in the participants' lives. From collecting money to providing emotional support to making food, the participants were engaged in a form of community life in the US. With participation often came a set of expectations, some of which were brought along with traditions from life in Ethiopia.

Receiving and offering help. Another topic in the interview guide that related to family and friend networks in social capital was the idea of asking for help as well as responding to requests for help. The questions revolved around what types of help (if any) participants had asked for since they immigrated to the US. All of the participants described experiences where they had been helped. Rides from the airport, assistance looking for a job, navigating the college admissions process, and housing for a range of time periods are examples of types of assistance offered to the participants. Sometimes this help was requested by the participants, and other times it was offered before they even asked.

Several participants discussed asking for help, specifically financial assistance: “I did ask financial. Still my paycheck wasn’t enough...So I can borrow money from my uncle. I did that for my school one time, last year...So he just transferred me money...” [P8]. She continued on to tell how she felt about asking her uncle for the money to help with school: “It was really hard, but I didn’t have any choice to do it, and I didn’t have anything, another choice. So I was like, okay, I have to ask” [P8]. Another participant also told of her struggle to make her tuition payments: “My parents helped me with school tuition because I can’t afford it. I’m going to a Catholic university and it’s very expensive, so they are helping me a lot” [P3]. Not only did she ask for help from her parents, but she received help from her uncle: “Also, my uncle helped me, my dad’s brother... We haven’t done anything for him, but he just helped us....I didn’t ask him. I think my dad did probably. He might not have asked him directly, just ‘help on her tuition’” [P3]. She discussed her hesitancy to ask for help, saying:

As much as possible I don’t want to ask for help because my parents are minimum-waged. They earn minimum wage, so I don’t want to take whatever little they make.

They're paying house rent and everything. I try not to ask as much as possible because it kind of makes me feel selfish a little bit because they are doing a lot and then I'm just taking whatever they made. [P3]

Another participant expressed her discomfort asking for even small types of help: "So I, I was asking for rides here and there as well...at first, I was not comfortable...Because I felt like I was pressuring them. I felt like I was, you know, um, messing up their schedule" [P14]. She continued: "...So I was not... feeling happy about it....But they, they said it was fine...So I felt comfortable" [P14]. Even though sometimes participants expressed discomfort at asking for help, the thought of being able to offer help in return was comforting. Participant 3 who had talked about feeling badly about asking her parent for tuition assistance explained that she felt better knowing that her parents assume when she graduates, she will help them financially.

Many other participants received help without asking for it. Further, they often did not recognize the assistance as help because there was an expectation that the assistance would be given. Participant 10 shared that she and her sisters offer each other monetary help, cleaning help, cooking help, giving rides without even really considering it. She said: "I gave and take these things and I honestly do not even think, give it much thought" [P10]. Participant 11 was living with her aunt, but responded that she had not asked to borrow money. When the researcher pressed about receiving help in the form of living with her aunt, she said: "I didn't ask. She already gave me the space... This is a thing that we discussed even when I was in my country" [P11]. Another participant who had lived with her aunt her entire time in the US (8 years) said: "It's not like I asked them, pretty much it's like, 'Well, she's coming here and she's staying with me' kind of thing. You don't even have to ask" [P9]. Even small acts of day to day help were

viewed as part of familial duty: “It’s just normal family thing...If I’m not able to pick up my son for some reason, I just call my sister-in-law or my brother, and then they’ll pick him and bring him. Then we’ll have dinner...” [P2]. Especially among family members, significant help is provided and accepted with the understanding that this is what family is expected to do.

The participants also gave help when asked, often citing the concept that they had been in a similar situation as the person needing help. They expressed empathy and a desire to help when they could: “After school, I have to take to her house even though it was a little bit away from my house. So I just, like, oh, I’ve been there. I’ve been like waiting a bus through the rain, whatever” [P8]. She was willing to take someone home and felt empathy—understanding what it’s like to be the one waiting in the bus stop in the rain. Another participant explained: “Someone kind of asked me for advice, and I give them advice. I’m happy to give them advice and everything to share whatever I have and everything that I know” [P11]. She continued on with her thoughts on financial help: “My cousin asked me to lend money and I ... lent her money. So I was happy on doing so because since I have it. If I don’t have it, I would feel bad. I was happy for that” [P11].

Another participant who stayed with many different people during the course of her first years in the U.S. (including the friend of the taxi driver on her first night in the U.S.) said about asking people for a place to stay: “Actually back then, before I asked them I think I got the offer... because they know that I needed the help. At one point, they were in my shoes” [P5]. She then in turn, repaid the favor to another immigrant later on. A friend of hers was trying to come to DC to apply for her papers and she offered her a place to stay: “I offer because the people who were offering help for me before I asked” [P5]. Throughout the interview transcripts,

a theme of this study emerged as examples were given of participants receiving and offering help to both family and friends.

In this study, the women defined how they viewed community and what community meant to them. The concept of community included roles for family, church, and the broader Ethiopian community. From social functions and providing a sense of home to spiritual connections and opportunities for service, church communities play a major role in the community life of Ethiopian immigrant women in the Washington, DC area. Additionally, through family, church, interactions with neighbors, and the broader community, Ethiopian immigrant women offered help to others as well as relied on assistance from others in various aspects of their lives such as housing, rides, and financial assistance. These reciprocal assistance behaviors lead to the final phase, which addresses the sum of the inner thoughts and feelings that motivate such helping behaviors.

Phase 3: Seeking Belonging and a Sense of Home: Navigating Trust, Communication, and Belonging in a New World

Finding belonging in the U.S. is the final phase of the chronological organization of this study's analysis of the immigration experience. While more difficult to quantify, the inner life of participants and their emotional state and ability to interact with others is a vital component to documenting and understanding their post-immigration life. In this study, these aspects were addressed through the specific questions in the interview guide. Cognitive aspects of social capital were explored in the interview guide through questions about emotional support and trust, communication, and belonging.

Trust and communication. Participants had a wide variety of experiences with trust. Overall, the participants expressed trust in their family [P9, P2], specifically husbands [P12, P13, P9], aunts [P11, P3], siblings [P12], parents [P3], and daughter [P6]. Participants also mentioned that they could trust their friends [P3, P4, P5, P8] and pastor [P2]. Although many participants were able to identify individuals they trusted, many participants also shared their philosophies of trust. One participant said she trusts: “Because we are human being. I have to trust you. If I didn’t trust you, I cannot live this world. People have to trust you” [P1]. Another participant said “I trust people by nature” [P6]. Other participants gave simple experiences or examples of why they could trust someone. Participant 8 spoke of one of her good friends in the US, whom she met on the city bus not long after arriving in the US. She said this girl showed her how to pull the button on the bus to signal to the driver to stop. That simple gesture was the spark of trust and friendship that has lasted years.

Conversely, participants had negative experiences with untrustworthy behavior that caused them to be wary and distrustful. One participant shared an experience of visiting a friend at her home. Her friend went to the bedroom to put the baby down to sleep. While her friend was back there, her friend’s husband tried to seduce her. She said:

After that, I think I changed a lot. So I was like, how do people do that, and especially when your wife is in the bedroom? It just end up, like, “oh my God.” It was a big thing for me after that. And I was just like, how do people do that? Because I trust them so much... So after that, I’m becoming more like protecting for myself. Yeah, that was a big deal for me. [P8]

Another participant [P14] mentioned talking behind someone's back, telling someone's secrets, or gossiping as behaviors that signal not to trust a person. Overall, the Ethiopian immigrant women in this study shared a willingness to trust unless specific untrustworthy behaviors or negative experiences were demonstrated.

Communication was another cognitive aspect of social capital theory that was a focus in the interview guide. Participants talked about how they got information about services they needed, how they shared information with others in their communities, and how they communicated with loved ones still across the world in Ethiopia. Participants universally used technology in their communication—cell phones and Internet. Seven of 14 participants specifically indicated that they use “Google” to get information they need. The majority of the participants also mentioned the social networking site, Facebook. Two participants [P7, P8] both said that Facebook is used to raise money for members of the Ethiopian community who have some type of medical emergency or death. Two other participants [P4, P5] both mentioned the political aspects of Facebook. In fact, Participant 4 no longer has a personal Facebook account because she worries for the safety of her family still in Ethiopia if she were to post any political or social issue beliefs. However, she explained that if she needed to share information with her local community, she would post it on the Facebook page of her place of business. Other participants discussed using Facebook to spread the word about social events [P8], church choir information [P9], or receive/share international political news [P2, P5].

Word of mouth is another major way that participants learned about opportunities or events. They did not always indicate that method when directly asked how they shared information, instead opting for the technological explanations. However, the findings of the

study indicate that participants telling others of jobs available [P1] or hearing about jobs available from friends and family [P2, P3, P4, P5, P13] demonstrate the pervasive power of word- of-mouth communication among the Ethiopian immigrant women population.

Generational and gender issues. Several participants noted the difference between the generations of Ethiopian immigrants in the United States. They noted differences in language with older generations using Amharic and being more tied to Ethiopian culture and traditions [P9] and the younger generations speaking in English and quickly becoming “Americanized” [P11]. Other differences that repeatedly emerged were the difference in the way the generations of Ethiopian immigrants use technology [P9], the older generation’s extreme deference to the elderly [P13], and language barriers [P14]. One participant even said that there sometimes is a clash between the generations because the older generations “...just want to retain their culture and they want to be very strict” [P14]. Another participant used topics of conversation as an example of how to distinguish the differences between generations, explaining:

Age-wise I would say the older generation talks in Amharic. They are really into the Ethiopian culture. They like getting together and talking about politics, how the economy is bad and everything, and what’s going on in Ethiopia. That would be my dad, my grandfather, and the people in that age, like in the 50s, 40s. They will talk about that. People like my aunts - my two aunts are in their early 30s - they would talk little about Ethiopian issues but more of their work, their life. I would be in that category as well, I think. I see myself in that category. We still hang onto our culture, but the younger generation like my little sister and all the Ethiopians in their teens usually, most of them are born here so they don’t even talk Amharic. My sister talks Amharic, but she prefers

talking in English because all the teens and the younger generation, they are more westernized. They would talk about basketball. They will talk about the new application on iPhone or something. [P3]

In addition, the difference between the gender roles are starkly changing among Ethiopian immigrants to the United States. Some would argue that the gender differences are in tandem with the generational changes. One participant who is 46 talked about how her children and her friend's children take a different approach to the division of household labor than she and her husband do. She said: "They're more sharing the whole things of equal responsibility for the house" [P12].

One participant who arrived when she was 18 and is now 28 described the gender differences and the differences between Ethiopia and the U.S., "...The guys...want to be powerful but we won't let them be. Because you know, we say, oh, this is America...you cannot get away with it" [P14]. She explained: "Because back home, you know, males are like superior than women. They don't go to the kitchen. They don't cook. They don't clean. It's all the woman's, uh, job to do that" [P14]. She said that the men expect the same gender roles to persist when they come to the U.S., but instead the women want to be independent. She did not think seeking this gender independence was one of the main reasons why women emigrated from Ethiopia, but once they arrive, they realize "we can be independent... and...the men can do what... we used to do back home" [P14]. She said that the men: "At first, they're not happy, but, you know, they have to eat, right? They have to cook and eat, so, yeah, they got used to it now" [P14].

Another participant pointed to the Ethiopian cultural expectations that the man is the breadwinner and the woman cares for the home as the basis for rising divorce rates, family crises, and even crime among Ethiopian immigrant families: “When you come to here, both of them have to go out and work and bring something for their family... both of them are supposed to work at home and also outside” [P11]. However, she said the men are not always content with this arrangement. She said “The men sometimes don’t like such kind of things, you know. They might not be happy when the women out and do something outside, and they might not like to assist their wife at home. So that can make conflicts” [P11]. Participant 5 also saw negative relationships between Ethiopian men and women in the U.S. She said that the women work hard and adjust to the system, but the men resist adapting because of their “ego” [P5]. Another participant expressed the difference she saw in Ethiopian men and American men and her desire to find a man who subscribes to a more American mindset: “Maybe in my situation, I get to find a man who cooked, do stuff, everything. Most American men - I would say most - they will cook. They know how to cook and take care of that thing” [P8]. In contrast, she continued: “But as Ethiopian guy, I think it’s very different because they don’t. They depend on women, most of them. So that’s very different if you date Ethiopian guy and if you date other American guy” [P8].

Decision making between the genders is another area that has seen changes in the post-immigration life: “...back home, yes, I would still see that my dad has more voice than my mom. I don’t know why. It’s the culture thing. But not here. I see my aunt making decisions...” [P9]. However, one 28-year old participant voiced an opposing view, reporting: “...women are pretty much emancipated in Ethiopia. They’re like extremely independent” [P10].

Overall the prominent themes that emerged from this study surrounding gender highlighted the disparities between men and women in Ethiopia and how those roles and power balances have tilted toward more equality in post-immigration U.S. life. Similarly, the generational differences have shifted greatly with immigrants in the United States: the older generations hold on to their Ethiopian roots, with younger immigrants and the second generations gravitating to “American” culture.

Influence of Ethiopian politics in post-immigration life. The history of Ethiopia and its inner political conflict as well as violent conflict with Eritrea not only affected Ethiopia and its citizens, but many of the women carried emotional residue with them to their new lives in the United States. The way in which they dealt with this conflict carried over into how they were able to find belonging in a new land.

Three of the women in the study directly attributed their flight from Ethiopia as a direct result of the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia [P1, P5, P6]. This conflict has had years of repercussions for both nations and its people. The director of Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services used the term “Habesha” during a recruitment meeting with the researcher. Habesha refers to the people of Ethiopian or Eritrean heritage. It is a word that does not distinguish between the two peoples so it is used to avoid inflaming the political differences that have torn apart the people of those lands. In this sense, language itself has developed in ways to atone for the anger and violence that haunts these groups.

One of the women in the study, Participant 6, was born in Eritrea, but married an Ethiopian man and moved to Ethiopia when she was 19. She raised her five children in Ethiopia, worked in an office in Ethiopia, and lived the majority of her life in Ethiopia, considering it her

home. However, during the Eritrean-Ethiopian War of 1998-2000, she was punished because of her Eritrean heritage. She recalled; “I was laid off first from work because we were Eritreans” [P6]. She was out of work for four years in Ethiopia before her daughter—who was already living in the DC area-- was able to help her immigrate to the U.S. Similarly, another participant [P1] related that she had spent all her life in Ethiopia, but had Eritrean family. This caused problems during the Eritrean-Ethiopian War and led to her family immigrating—in different waves. Her daughter came first, then she came; finally her husband and son joined them.

One participant who sought asylum in the U.S. said that it was not by choice that she left Ethiopia. She felt she had to go for her safety because of the political upheaval in Ethiopia. This participant said that she had worked in her father’s law office as a secretary after she finished high school. Her father was taken as a political prisoner and they continued to question his daughter about what she knew about his clients:

It was difficult for me to just sit there and anytime they want they come and take me for questioning. It was not safe at that time to live there as a young girl, so I decide wherever I can to go which is safe for me. So that’s why I came to the United States. [P5]

Fifteen years later, this woman has never again visited Ethiopia. Her father is still a political prisoner, or as she corrected herself: “Actually we don’t know whether he is alive or not” [P5]. Unlike other participants who seemed to leave much of their political concerns in Ethiopia, this woman continued to see the political issues in Ethiopia replayed over and over again the in the U.S. She resisted getting involved with community organizations or even church because she felt they were too divided. She said “We are so divided so I don’t want to go there because I am not in one race. My mom is Eritrean and she’s Oromo too.... My dad is Amhara.

So I have Amhara, Tigre, Oromo - three races..." [P5]. She went on to explain: "I'm not one race. And I grew up with Tigre, Oromo, Amhara. Name it. I grew up with everybody. I don't see Tigre, or Oromo, or Amhara as Ethiopia. I see all those races as Ethiopia" [P5]. However, she found the political divisions in Ethiopia alive and well among the Ethiopian immigrant community in the U.S. She said "But here it's the politics as bad as home" [P5].

Other political issues have been problematic. One participant was active in women's rights, human rights, and gay issues in Ethiopia. She talked about her decision to leave Ethiopia when "all my friends and relatives, especially the ones who are working on human rights stuff, they're being arrested. It got to me as well because I was being hunted and then I...was just completely unprotected..." [P4]. Even after arriving in DC, she has altered her behavior in order to protect her family still in Ethiopia. She deactivated her Facebook account and no longer uses Twitter because she feels her family would be "at risk" if she posted negatively about the Ethiopian government from her new home in the U.S.

Belonging in a new land. Despite the challenges of political divisions and threats, language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, homesickness, and the sheer physical work of carving a life in a new land, the participants in this study universally expressed gratitude or feeling fortunate or appreciation for opportunities and experiences that immigration to the U.S. provided them.

But the women in the study did not downplay the struggles they have faced; every single participant, except Participant 2, expressed difficulties, unhappiness, and challenges. One participant explained:

It's difficult. But what was good in America is if you focus and if you work hard and if you have a goal, the opportunity is there. So I am so lucky that I came here. I'm so lucky that I got all these opportunities... [P5]

Another participant said "It's a good experience for me... When you come to a new country... We have to struggle every time for progress. If we do so, I think it's a land of opportunity so we can get what we want" [P11]. Likewise, Participant 5 weighed the sum of her experiences and concluded: "I have more good experience than the bad experience, so I really like America."

Participant 7 described the challenges of culture shock, explaining that people in Ethiopia are very hospitable and "share one plate." They always invite others to join them in a meal, and they gather close together for holiday celebrations. This closeness is not the same in the U.S. culture and the loss of it can be quite shocking:

But we are very fortunate to come here and be able to create our own churches. We have surrounding in Washington, D.C. so many Ethiopian churches... Be able to create our own community, be able to see so many businesses that are owned by Ethiopians, it's a great opportunity. [P7]

Similarly, Participant 11 noted the Ethiopian community in Washington, DC as contributing to her feeling of belonging. She related: "Especially in D.C. area... There are lots of Ethiopian around here and fortunately the people I got a chance to meet with are nice people, so I feel like at home. I feel like I'm in Addis in Ethiopia [P11].

Participant 12, the participant who has worked for the government as an electrical engineer for 15 years shared:

When they gave my first office...I cried in the office because I was never expecting that it's going to have my office and wearing like office lady and work. I know in school, I worked hard, but I don't have expectation to live better life or to get a better position or something. So everything is a surprise for me. A lot of times I thank God. ...I'm working. I came here. I finished my college...I can give the best school for my kids. I can feed them what I want. I can go and shop what I want. It's more than a dream. [P12]

However, not every participant was satisfied with her situation in the U.S. Participant 11 who had been in the U.S. just two years reflected: "If I'm still in Ethiopia, I would be in a better position and in a better job than this one." She went on to say "But now I'm a bit lagging behind and I have to still move, still have a long way to go to reach what I imagined" [P11]. Yet, she did not appear to be giving up on the opportunity of the U.S. She said that she had recently finished all the applications to bring her husband and two children to the U.S. to be with her.

This reality of the participants being separated from family members – spouses and children or parents and siblings – weighed heavily on many of the participants and affected their concept of belonging. With the exception of Participant 1, all the women in the study reported that they had family members still in Ethiopia. Some participants left children behind when they first immigrated to the U.S. [P1, P5, P6, P11]. Sometimes the children were eventually able to join them in the U.S. [P1, P6], while others' children are still in Ethiopia [P5, P11]. Three participants left husbands in Ethiopia when they immigrated to the U.S. [P1, P6, P11]. Two participants have husbands that are currently living in Ethiopia, with hopes of them coming to the U.S. [P10, P11].

Even when life in the U.S. started to get better in terms of learning the language or securing a job, or adjusting to the cultural differences, it is still hard to be away from family. Separation from family members was a huge challenge for many of the participants [P6, P9, P11, P12, P13]. Participant 9 expressed that the most difficult thing for her was “Leaving your family, my mom and dad, especially my youngest sister. She was only four.”

The participants gave a range of insights into the meaning of belonging, or knowing how they belong somewhere. Participant 2 said she thinks belonging is “...being very familiar and then being some place where you can be yourself, and you’re free. I mean, you’re happy to be there. It’s something that just feels natural. I think that’s what made me belong.” Participant 3 simply said that to belong is “to be loved and cared for in that place.” She went on to describe eating dinner together and being able to share about one’s day, frustrations, co-workers, etc. She said when she can talk about these things, and “No one would judge you...that makes me feel that I belong” [P3]. Participant 11 said “When people are friendly and when people are nice for me, I feel belongingness. And when people, if they’re trying to discriminate me or if they are rude like that, I feel like I don’t belong to this.”

Several participants described knowing a place they belonged:

- “You will know when people care about you.” [P8]
- “It will be a place where I feel comfortable.” [P14]
- “You know how they say, ‘it fits like a glove.’” [P9]

On the other hand, one participant voiced her hesitancy at belonging fully: “I think I belong here, but always I feel like I am new for this country” [P13]. She went on to explain that

even when you are adjusted to a new place, if your family is not around you, “you will always wonder, okay, what will happen if something happens?” She said that even a good community will not replace one’s concern about not having family nearby [P13].

Another participant also remembered the hard times as part of the process of learning to belong:

...When we used to live in basement and when my parents didn’t have a job, it was tough. I just wanted to go back home, go back to our old life and forget about this. But now we’re more stable and we don’t have a problem putting food on the table, so that really helps you feel like home I guess. [P3]

Finally, one participant described the moment she realized that America was now her home. It was a journey that didn’t happen overnight, but in time. She explained:

For the first two, three years I felt so weird. But after that I think I don’t feel the stranger feeling anymore. Now I feel like if I go somewhere else...I went to vacation to Europe for 20 days. For the first two weeks I was so excited and everything, and then I felt that I am not home. I was like “I want to go home. I miss home.” I was like, oh, my God, so that means home is America for me now. [P5]

In telling their stories, participants shared their gratitude for opportunities in the U.S., despite the challenges they had and will yet face in the future. They also defined belonging, and how they would know when they belonged. Despite a love for Ethiopia and a nostalgia for home and the people they love still there, the women in the study expressed that over time and as they had experiences that helped them feel comfortable in their new surroundings, they felt they belonged in the U.S.

Findings from the Researcher's Reflexivity Journal

The researcher's reflexivity journal provided an opportunity for the researcher to record her emotions, observations, and log of her research interview process. Several themes emerged from the written journal entries. First, the recruitment process was much more discouraging and frustrating than the researcher anticipated. Common entries in her journal included, "I feel so discouraged," "I was a bit discouraged," and "This is so frustrating," and even once: "I am starting to feel like a door-to-door salesman. It was cold and I was fighting back tears of discouragement, but I went on inside." The researcher had multiple cancellations, no-shows, and countless incidences of women saying they would call and never doing so. Sometimes she felt herself becoming irritated with the participants for cancelling, while at the same time recognizing the challenge of their lives in terms of lack of access to email, tight living circumstances, shift work, and child care issues. There might also have been fear or concerns about talking to the researcher, as well as feelings about not wanting to share their stories. The researcher began to recognize this pattern of potential participants saying they would call, but not following through with that agreement. She described it in her journal: "I arrived at the end of the service and the first woman I greeted coming out took my flyer and said she'd call—in a manner that I have heard so many times and understand completely as a way to get away from me." The researcher also referred to this in her journal as women "blowing me off." However, partway through the process, the researcher found a quote in her review of the literature that helped her understand what she was experiencing:

Ethiopians are very proud and try their best not to ask for favors. But if they do ask, it is best to agree to do it, even if you think you might not be able to do so. The Ethiopian

friend always understands if you explain that circumstances made it impossible to fulfill the promise. He will, nevertheless, greatly appreciate the fact that you agreed to try to help in the first place (Milkias, 2011, p. 290).

The researcher realized that the women were agreeing to the “favor” of participating in the interview, even if they were not actually going to be able to do it. In their culture, this demonstrates that they were willing to help, but it just did not work out. Reading this was an important moment for the researcher because she began to take the rejections much less personally and realized that this was part of the cultural learning she was gaining through this research process.

This was also one of several times when the researcher was reminded that she was not part of the community and did not share the trust of the group. The researcher wrote in her journal: “I am discovering that my etic (outsider) position is more of a barrier than I realized it would be. I think I really need to find people who can vouch for me because I am not one of the community.” Despite this outsider status, the difficulties in the recruitment process actually helped immerse the researcher in the community in ways she would not have if she had experienced a quicker and easier recruitment phase. She wrote in her research journal:

I have had some wonderful, rich learning experiences in "pounding the pavement"—visiting Ethiopian churches, restaurants, community centers, migrant services offices.

Talking with parking attendants and pastors, contacting professors and embassies.

Finding out about Amharic story times at Silver Spring Library.... The list goes on. Even though my research is still from the "outsider" perspective, I think it has really enhanced my research to have had these experiences.

Another important finding in the journal was the discussion of the researcher's opinions/judgments/enjoyment of the participants. The researcher expressed some discomfort at the feelings she had of liking certain participants more than others. She identified her judgment of one particular participant who the researcher felt did not recognize the help she had received from other people in her immigration journey. The researcher viewed her as arrogant. This was an important issue for the researcher to discuss in the journal because it helped her identify her bias so that it did not infect the analysis of the data.

The personal impact of the women's stories on the researcher was also a theme that emerged in the research journal. She shared moments of reflection that had been shaped by the experience of sitting and listening to the voices of these previously untold stories. The researcher wrote in her journal:

I was reflecting on driving home from my gym at 6:30 in the morning. The streets are dark, but I see mothers pushing strollers to the bus stop and young boys (8 or 9) around my son's age riding their bikes with backpacks on. This is the immigrant community. The women are dropping kids at daycare via bus before they head to cleaning jobs. The little boy is headed to some kind of before school care in the early cold hours. I think about my privilege juxtaposed with the hard lives of so many people around me. People that are all too often invisible. Somehow this research has helped me see people around me, I have a better sense of what their daily life looks like, what some of their struggles might be. Not that everyone is the same, but that there are some common struggles.

In addition to a deeper understanding of the immigrant experience, the researcher was also inspired by the women she met. She wrote about how this impacted her personal life. After

interviewing Participant 5 and hearing her story of being smuggled into the country, staying with strangers, going to college, working multiple shifts, and eventually having a successful career in accounting and buying a home in Northern Virginia, the researcher wrote these reflections:

Personally, this gives me courage too. The challenges I face can be overcome—I can cultivate grit and strength and endurance. And it also helps me feel gratitude—for the blessings and privileges I enjoy (and too often take for granted). There is never a question of whether my children will go to bed hungry or whether I will be safe. Or even if they will have a college education; we truly have so much. I feel inspired to do more with what I have been given.

The researcher's reflexivity journal provided an important venue for the researcher to record observations about her interviews and her participants, to reflect on personal reactions and unexpected judgments, and to explore personal impacts of the experience on the researcher as a scholar and as a human.

Summary

This chapter provided a detailed review of the themes that emerged during analysis of the interview data collected for this qualitative research study. Raw data, including direct quotes from participants, were included to support the themes that emerged. This chapter is organized according to a three-phase delineation. The first phase was the arrival and early years of the participants' post-immigration life. In this phase, the women's stories were used to explore housing, employment, and educational pursuits. The role of family and friends who were already living in the U.S. played an important role in each of these aspects of the participants' lives. The second phase focused on the women's effort to define community as well as involve themselves

in community organizations. By far, the most common and influential organization among all the participants was the church. The third and final phase addressed the need to feel belonging and a sense of home. The participants defined what it means to them to belong. They also shared stories that demonstrated their gratitude for the opportunities they have experienced in the U.S. They did not diminish the challenges they have faced, but articulated the benefits of opportunity, freedom, and security they have found in their post-immigration life.

Findings from the researcher's reflexivity journal were also analyzed. Themes of frustration with the interview process, the impact of the researchers' etic perspective, and the personal impact on the researcher were highlighted with quotes from the journal. The next, and final, chapter will provide a discussion and interpretation of the findings that were set forth in this chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research study explored the immigration experiences of 14 Ethiopian women and how they used social and kinship networks as they immigrated to the Washington, DC metropolitan area. Data were collected through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. Questions in the interviews were based on an interview guide developed by the researcher and informed by social capital theory. Participants were asked about their decision to immigrate, how they found work and housing, and the role friends and family in the U.S. played in their lives. Participants were also asked about their involvement with community organizations and how they defined their community in order to understand the structural aspects of social capital that facilitated or hindered their immigration experiences. Additionally, participants were asked about trust, belonging, and communication; variables considered important in understanding cognitive aspects of social capital.

These interviews were then transcribed and coded according to qualitative content analysis, in which the researcher treated the interview transcript as a text to be analyzed through open coding of transcript texts and theme identification (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999; Teater, 2011). The themes that emerged during the coding and analysis process included the important role family members who already lived in the U.S. played in connecting participants with housing, jobs, and educational opportunities; the importance of the church in providing a social home and sense of community for the participants; and the way the participants' feeling of belonging grew over time with experiences that helped them feel comfortable in new surroundings. These themes, which were discussed in

Chapter IV, will be compared to the existing theory and research on social capital theory and immigration, which were presented previously in Chapter II. The findings will be interpreted through the lens of social capital theory and previous research relating to immigration. Ways that the present study supports existing theory and research will be detailed as well as findings that deviate from previous research findings. Additionally, this chapter will address the strengths and limitations of the study, implications for social work education and practice, policy development, and finally, recommendations for future research.

Interpretation of Findings

The themes of the importance of family members already in the U.S., the community role of the church, and the participants' sense of belonging all relate in direct ways to the existing theory on social capital. Social norms, sanctions, reciprocity, and bounded solidarity are social capital theory concepts that are woven throughout the data findings. Further, the types of capital—bonding, bridging, and linking capital are evident as well as the aspects of structural and cognitive capital. Each of these will be discussed within the context of the themes that emerged in the findings.

The Importance of Family Members Already in the U.S. and Social Capital Theory

A theme of the findings of this study is that having family members in the U.S. provided a network of support that was important to the participants. When viewed through the social capital theory lens, it also becomes clear that the network of support included social norms and sanctions (Coleman 1988; Portes, 1998). For example, social norms that participants, as well as others in the Ethiopian community, were expected to follow included providing volunteer service for a family member's wedding, visiting the home of a bereaved friend, and being willing to

open one's home to a family member who was emigrating from Ethiopia. The participants talked about following these norms and doing what was expected of them, and in this sense, the social norm was powerful. Further, informal sanctions were also evident as in the case of the participant who discussed how her family members would talk behind her back and be angry if she or other family members did not assist in a family member's wedding [P3].

In the case of gender roles, social norms were challenged. The social norms of the community and culture in Ethiopia required that women stay home and care for children, not work outside the home, and defer to men. However, when the women in this study immigrated to the U.S., they described rejecting this social norm. Their stories illustrated women who worked outside the home and had children—women who made conscious decisions to pursue higher education, even one woman who left her children with her husband in Ethiopia and forged a new path for the family in the U.S. These examples show how the social norms on gender were altered upon arrival in the U.S. This could be interpreted as an adoption of the social norm among American culture where women and mothers participate in the workforce, or it could be interpreted as a choice of necessity among Ethiopian families in which the woman was required to work outside the home in order to earn enough money to live in the U.S. In any case, the traditional social norm among Ethiopians in Ethiopia no longer held power over the decisions of the women in this study; new norms were established.

In addition to the establishment of new norms, there were other social norms which were altered or modified among the Ethiopian immigrant community in the DC area. For example, several participants explained the importance of visiting the bereaved when someone dies. In Ethiopia this practice lasts for many days. However, Participant 9 explained that the norm has

changed from sitting with the bereaved family for 7-10 days as they would in Ethiopia to 2-3 days in the U.S. Additionally, the social norms regarding death have also added another component. In addition to providing food and drinks, it is expected that the social network will collect money to send the body home to Ethiopia for burial [P9]. This demonstrates the continued importance of norms among a social network, but also how the participants have adapted the social norms to fit the changing circumstances they face in the Washington, DC metro area. Social capital theory explains that norms can be detrimental to group members if they limit their choices or keep them from making decisions that would benefit them. The findings from this study suggest that the participants have adapted the norms in ways that fit with their changing needs.

The theme of the importance of family members already in the U.S. can also be interpreted through the social capital theory concept of reciprocity (Portes, 1998). The women in this study were granted homes to stay in, access to information regarding jobs, financial assistance for tuition with the understanding that they would return the favor as they could. For example, when Participant 3 talked about receiving financial help from her parents for college tuition, she referred to the assumption that her parents knew she would help them once she graduated. Another example of this concept of reciprocity in the data is Participant 5 talking about how she was offered places to stay when she first arrived—from complete strangers with only an Ethiopian connection through the taxi driver at the airport—to friends of family members later on. When she later was on her feet financially, she hosted other new immigrants in her home. Social capital theory explains her actions as reciprocation. Again, social capital theory suggests that reciprocity can pull group members down if they are hampered by the obligations

of continued support and needs of their group members. However, the findings do not suggest that this is the case for the Ethiopian immigrant women in this study. They accepted help as needed and found opportunities to help others. They used reciprocity as a way to expand their social networks to increase their educational and career opportunities without overwhelming their lives with obligated “debts” to repay.

Another aspect of social capital theory that was supported by this study was the concept of bounded solidarity which involves a group of people being unified by a common struggle (Portes, 1998; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). The common struggle of deciding to emigrate, the process of immigrating, and the challenges of settling in the U.S. all helped unify these women into a group that was willing to offer help and support to one another in many ways such as providing housing, giving job leads, and offering rides. The help that family and Ethiopian friends offered to each other over and over throughout the data show that there had developed a “we-ness” (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993, p. 1328). For example, the women were willing to work multiple jobs to send money to their families still struggling in Ethiopia, and they were willing to pay thousands of dollars to sponsor family members and bring them to the U.S. Participant 5, who had been caught in political crossfires between Ethiopia and Eritrea, was especially eager to help a friend with a similar Eritrean heritage process her paperwork in Washington, DC. These data support using the lens of social capital theory to understand the experience of Ethiopian women who immigrate to the Washington, DC area.

However, it is also important to note that social capital theory purports that bounded solidarity is limited to other members of the group who have faced similar challenges. It is not universally altruistic behaviors. The data in this study demonstrate that the participants provided

significant service on behalf of fellow Ethiopian immigrants. Yet, it could be argued that this is simply the group with whom they spent the most time. The data also shows that they offered help and altruistic acts to those who were not Ethiopian immigrants. In this sense, their behaviors might be attributed to universal altruism or social capital building on a larger community level, rather than solely bounded solidarity.

The concepts of bonding capital and bridging capital (Gittell & Vidal, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Schneider, 2010; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000) were evident throughout the interview data, especially in regard to the importance of friends and family members already living in the U.S. Bonding capital is the easiest to discern—experiences among those already in the Ethiopian community that bring them closer together. The experience of Participant 1 referring all the new Ethiopians she meets to her former manager at 7-Eleven is one example of bonding capital—because the people are Ethiopian, the woman automatically feels a bond and therefore gives a referral that only strengthens that bond. Other examples included welcoming extended family members to live with them, giving financial help, and even celebrating events and holidays together. All of these experiences bring the individuals that share the experiences closer to together; this is the power of bonding capital.

The bridging capital, or connections with people outside of the group, is demonstrated powerfully by the involvement of many of the participants in higher education. The women met mentors who encouraged them to pursue difficult degrees (P5) and classmates from both the U.S. and other countries [P10, P13]. The challenge of the types of outside groups that the women were bridging was that they were often also new immigrants from other countries who had little power to share. Since power is the essence of social capital, the bonds must not only be outside

the group, but also vertically link the group to others with more power. The vertical ties of linking social capital (Schneider, 2010) were also identified in the data. The Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC) where Participant 7 volunteered her tax expertise is such an example. This organization serves the Ethiopian immigrant community, but it does so through partnerships with the United Nations, the U.S. State Department, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, among other national and international organizations (ECDC, 2013). These vertical ties to people and organizations outside of the group and to institutions with power offer linking social capital for ECDC. Clearly, the horizontal ties of bonding and bridging capital were stronger than the limited examples of linking capital in the data. As Ethiopian women immigrants continue to obtain higher education and pursue policy shaping, business management, and academic leadership positions, this may strengthen the ability of the community to access linking social capital and the vertical ties to connect the Ethiopian community with organizations with power and decision making authority.

The literature on social capital and immigrant groups is supported by the data found in this study. The importance of the role of family already living in the U.S. in the lives of the participants, is similar to findings in other studies on immigrants and social capital (Garcia, 2005; Massey, 1990; Nee & Sanders, 2001; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). Nee and Sanders (2001) found that immigrants rely on family members to garner information about job openings, make introductions to employers, or provide housing during an initial transition period. This was evident over and over again throughout the interviews with the Ethiopian immigrant women. They lived with family members when they arrived, they were referred to jobs by family

members, and they received assistance applying for and paying for schooling. Clearly, the family member networks can be explained and viewed through a social capital lens.

Additionally, the findings from this study are consistent with Ebaugh and Curry's (2000) research on fictive kin, or the idea that immigrant families are disrupted during immigration so close friends assume this familial-like relationship and social capital exchanges, including sharing a house, job information, and financial support. Throughout this study, participants talked of individuals who they referred to as "aunt" or "cousin," but whom they explained they were not really related. These individuals provided housing, rides from the airport, jobs, and emotional support.

The findings from this study did not, however, support all of the literature on social capital theory and immigration. In particular, Livingston (2006) found that Mexican immigrant women were negatively impacted by social capital in finding employment because they were more likely to find work in the informal rather than formal job sector. This finding was not supported by this study on Ethiopian immigrant women. The jobs that the women discussed finding were by far more in the formal economy. Jobs at 7-Eleven, CVS Pharmacy and other retail stores, as well as cleaning for hotels like the Sheraton, topped the most common jobs during the first years. There was no mention of being paid "under the table" or any other indication of informal economy status. That does not mean there were no informal economy arrangements, only that they were not specifically mentioned by the participants in this study. Livingston (2006) blamed social capital networks for perpetuating the gender gap in earnings and occupations for immigrants. Again, this was not a finding in this study. In fact, there was much discussion among the participants about how Ethiopian women are more successful than

their male counterparts in the U.S. This study found the opposite of Livingston's (2006) findings; the Ethiopian immigrant women were using their social contact networks to pursue higher education—becoming accountants, MBAs, nurses, and public health/policy wonks.

The Church Community Provides a Social Home and Sense of Community and Social Capital Theory

The second theme that emerged from the data was that the church community provided a social home and sense of community as women learn to adjust to a new land. This theme can also be explained through the tenets of social capital theory.

In addition to the bonding capital evident among family and friends, bonding capital also includes “networks among similar groups or individuals or institutions” (Schneider, 2010, p. 6) which explains how the similarities in background, religious belief, and social customs drew the participants to the church communities. This bonding capital as well bounded solidarity in the form of shared struggles in learning the language, overcoming culture shock, and trying to earn a living in a new country explain the closeness women could immediately feel in a church community despite never having met previously. In these church communities, the women were able to find familiarity and a group working on a common religious goal, as well as day to day support in terms of providing meals when a baby is born or celebrating a wedding together.

Additionally, the church provided a social network in which reciprocity played an important part. Through the church, they organized to help make food for holidays and to provide comfort and mourning in times of bereavement—taking turns depending on who needed the services at the time. Social capital theory would explain this as an example of reciprocation. The researcher even wondered if one woman participated in the study as a form of reciprocation.

Her pastor introduced her to the researcher and she agreed to be interviewed. During the interview, she talked of having turned to the pastor for help in the past. In this sense, her agreeing to the pastor's suggestion she participate could be seen as a form of reciprocation. The findings of this study highlight the importance of the church as both a spiritual home and a social center for Ethiopian immigrant women.

Enforceable trust is a concept in social capital theory that is based on individual members complying with group expectations, not because of internal values or commitments, but instead motivated by the anticipation of future benefits of being in favor with the group (Portes, 1998; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). It is different from reciprocity because it relies on the group as a collective body to enforce through rewards and sanctions (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). One possible demonstration of enforceable trust in this study is the participation of some of the women in church services despite their lack of deep religious belief. Even participants who did not express strong religious beliefs talked of participating in church activities or holy days from time to time. Through the social capital lens, this could be explained as based on enforceable trust. Though they might not believe, they want to benefit from membership in the group and participation in the Ethiopian church helps solidify that membership. Another explanation of these behaviors might also be bounded solidarity; their commitment to the group and their common struggles in the new land binds them to the other women with similar struggles. Because of their deep commitment to the group, they attend the holy day services as an act of solidarity

The structural aspect of social capital is clearly demonstrated in theme of the importance of the role of the church in the lives of the participants. Structural aspects of social capital not

only refer to observable social structures such as institutions, organizations, associations, and committees, but also to the rules governing such structures (Krishna & Uphoff, 2002).

Receiving and giving help is an indicator of structural capital among family and friends. The data from this study demonstrate a high level of involvement in this type of reciprocal behavior. As discussed, the church was a key community network in the carrying out of this reciprocal function. Clearly, the church congregations with their attendant participants, services, and cooperative actions are an example of the structural aspect of social capital in the lives of the participants.

The cognitive aspect of social capital is also demonstrated in the church communities in which the women in this study participate. Cognitive aspects of social capital include 1) emotional support and sense of belonging, 2) trust and solidarity (Grootaert & van Bastelaer, 2002), and 3) information and communication (Harpham et al., 2002). All of these can be demonstrated in the findings of this study in relation to church participation. Participants spoke of how their church community was like a family to them—it provided them a sense of emotional support and belonging. They spoke of working together on projects, serving on committees, and sharing information. This is clearly an example of the way cognitive aspects of social capital work in social networks.

Krishna and Uphoff (2002) discuss the power of social capital when the structural and cognitive aspects work in tandem, as they do in the church communities described by the participants in this study. The cognitive aspects—the trust and sense of belonging shared by the church community—motivates them to collective action such as organizing funerals and weddings, but the structural aspects such as the organization, the meeting schedule, the

committees, and the leadership allow for the execution of the collective actions. In this way, the participants in this study demonstrate social capital theory's ideal marriage of cognitive and structural aspects of social capital to create powerful networks for action.

The social capital literature is supported in some important ways by this study. Mbanaso and Crewe's (2011) study of African immigrants found that the most important sources of social support for elderly African immigrants were a church organization and an ethnic association because they provide regularly scheduled meetings, organize cultural activities, and host celebrations native to their countries of origin. The findings of this study support the importance of the church organization in the lives of the Ethiopian immigrant women. Indeed, the church was the most important source of structural/institutional support for the participants. This study did not find ethnic organizations to be a major source of social support for the participants. However, the churches with which the participants were affiliated may have served both the religious and the ethnic center purposes. The majority of the participants were involved with an "Ethiopian" church congregation in which their native language was spoken during the service; the congregation was comprised of other Ethiopians; and often a social hour followed the service during which members drank coffee, socialized, and connected with fellow Ethiopian immigrants. These rituals strengthen the bonding capital among the Ethiopian immigrant group. Such strong bonding capital, along with the powerful cognitive and structural aspects of social capital, are what undergird the theme which emerged from the data as the church as a social home and community for the women.

The Development of a Sense of Belonging and Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory addresses various aspects of life—economic power, social support, and cultural traditions. The powerful economic effects of social networks for the Ethiopian women in finding jobs, providing free housing, and assisting in financial support has been clearly demonstrated. This section will discuss how social capital theory explains the final theme in this study: the development of a sense of belonging and feelings of trust.

Cognitive social capital explains that the internal belief of belonging to a group is a motivator for external behavior; the trust and solidarity that a person feels is the product of social interactions and networking. The data in this study offer examples of women who say they have developed a sense of belonging in the U.S. over a period of time. Through a social capital theory lens, their interactions and networking with family and friends in the U.S., members of the Ethiopian community, fellow church goers, neighbors, classmates, co-workers all contributed to increased feelings of trust and solidarity that allow for a growing sense of belonging. Over time as their interactions increased, they became more comfortable and felt more part of the group. Importantly, the group they felt increasingly a part of was not the Ethiopian community, nor their family community, nor even their church community. Their interactions with each of these communities helped build their comfort levels, but the group they grew to feel a sense of belonging with was the U.S. society—in which those sub-communities were a part.

An area of difference between the existing research on immigrants and social capital theory and the present study is the findings of McMichael and Manderson's (2004) study of Somali immigrants in Australia. McMichael and Manderson found that the Somali women had a great deal of mistrust among other Somalis because of the war which they had fled from in their

country. They also found that the war had caused much family separation. They lost many of their traditions in the immigration process and felt isolated amid resettlement. McMichael and Manderson concluded that social capital is difficult to transfer from one location to another and also difficult to rebuild in a new location. However, this is not consistent with the findings in this study. Although the women missed home and many expressed a nostalgia for the strong community among neighbors in Ethiopia—cooking for anyone who comes to the door, babysitting one another's children, everyone being on the look-out for everyone else's children in public spaces—they were able to construct a new, different type of social network in the United States. They learned to participate in church and other community organizations. They volunteered their time, they made friends during their educational pursuits, and they spent time with their family and friends in the U.S. In this way they may not have transferred social capital to a new place, but have adapted their social capital networks to a new environment. McMichael and Manderson also discuss the depression, anxiety, and isolation felt by the women in their study; similar feelings were described by the Ethiopian women in the present study. However, in this study, the women appeared to overcome such feelings. They described those feelings as an adjustment phase—sometimes a long phase of two to three years—but a phase nonetheless. They spoke of moving from feeling alone and out of place and homesick to finding a sense of belonging and home in this new land. Theirs was a story of triumph and resilience, not isolation and defeat. Future research is needed to understand what factors contributed to this process among the Ethiopian women in this study.

Although the Washington, DC area is considered a magnet community for Ethiopian immigrants and there are a plethora of services, restaurants, shops, and members of the

community who speak Amharic, a key finding of this study is that, for the most part, the participants did not solely limit themselves to interactions with fellow Ethiopians. They formed relationships with Indian immigrant neighbors, they worked for Bangladeshi and Malaysian-Chinese bosses, they became study partners with Haitian students, and they applied for academic programs with the help of friends from Sierra Leone. In this sense they reached out beyond their own native language, their own family, and circle of friends. This is a form of bridging capital. The participants were making connections with people outside of their group; they were building a form of social capital—bridging capital—or networks with others who were beyond those in their own family or ethnic circles. Although more difficult to cultivate, bridging social capital increases the power of their social networks as it gives them a much larger group upon which to rely. The power of their bridging capital relationships might explain how the Ethiopian women began to develop a sense of belonging. As they connected with others in the U.S., their shared experiences allowed them to see themselves as part of the larger community in the U.S. These relationships with other immigrants also speak to diversity of the Washington, DC area and of the possibility that there may be an overarching social capital network comprised of immigrants in the DC metro area as a whole, and not just specific immigrant groups such as Ethiopian immigrants.

In terms of structural aspects of social capital, the participants did not consistently identify with one community. Despite their personal definition of community, they sometimes answered the questions about community in response to their church group, other times in response to their family group, and other times about the Ethiopian community in general. On the other hand, they expressed a high level of willingness to both accept and give help, an

indicator of structural capital among family and friends. Finally, the Ethiopian immigrant women in this study expressed high levels of trust and feelings of belonging, two indicators of cognitive social capital. Findings also talked of them learning to *not* trust in certain situations. They indicated behaviors they had learned to identify as non-trustworthy.

An important conclusion of this study centers on the resilience of the Ethiopian women immigrants. Their stories tell of refugees and asylum seekers, education seeking students, and mothers simply wanting to be reunited with their children. Despite language barriers, health problems, homesickness, poverty, and political divisions, these women have triumphed and thrived in a new land. Almost universally they have made friends, secured jobs, found housing, furthered education, and given back to their communities. Social capital theory helps explain this success by showing how they have used the economic, social, and informational resources within their family, friend, and religious communities to leverage opportunities. In turn, they do the same for immigrants who came to the U.S. after them. Even those for whom their American dreams still seem out of reach, they have hope in the opportunity available to them. The Ethiopian immigrant women expressed the realization of opportunities they had not even imagined possible.

In sum, the findings from this study suggest that social capital theory is an appropriate lens through which to view Ethiopian immigrant women. The findings of this study demonstrate the importance of both family and fictive kin relationships in the lives of the participants, especially in the early post-immigrant life as they found housing, employment, and educational opportunities. The findings in this study also support the importance of the necessity of both horizontal and vertical, bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. There was strength in the

bonds among Ethiopian group members—especially emotional support and cultural familiarity, as well as generous financial support. But the relationships that helped participants bridge and link to outside groups and groups with decision making power were also vital.

Strengths and Limitations of this Study

An important strength of this study was the qualitative methodology which allowed a view into the lives and perspectives of this under-studied population. Face-to-face interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher and participant to develop a rapport. As each interview proceeded, the researcher could often sense the trust of the participant building. The semi-structured interview allowed for the participant to talk about the aspects that were most important to her. Some of the participants wanted to skim over their reasons for leaving Ethiopia and even the actual journey and instead focus on what it has been like for them since arrival. Others wanted to share details about life in Ethiopia and the struggle and heartbreak of being forced to leave. Some delved deeply into stories about the adjustment phase and the difficulties they faced. Others had opinions about gender and the future of the Ethiopian community both in the U.S. and in Ethiopia. This structure allowed the women to emphasize the aspects that were most important to them. The qualitative methodology allowed for rich, personal experiences to provide details into the lives of these women.

Another strength of this study was the insight it provided into the lives of a group of people who have not been represented in the research literature. The burgeoning Ethiopian population in the Washington, DC area makes this study an important contribution to the knowledge base about a growing, and relatively un-researched population.

There were also several limitations to the study. First, as mentioned in earlier chapters, the interviews were conducted in English. This precluded some women from participating—those who did not speak English conversantly, or even those who were not confident enough to try. This could skew the findings toward a more educated and affluent sample since those would have had access to more English training in Ethiopia. However, a strength of the study was that the participants did not have an interpreter to filter the questions and answers, and thus, there is more confidence in the accuracy of the findings. The researcher determined the increased trustworthiness of the findings was a fair trade off.

Another limitation was the lack of Muslim women in the sample population. Although there is an Ethiopian Muslim population in the DC area, as evidenced by the predominantly Ethiopian mosque located in Washington, DC, no participants in the study identified as Muslim. This leaves out a significant perspective of a specific segment of Ethiopian immigrant women.

The focus on Ethiopian women solely in the Washington, DC area is also a limitation. Questions arise about which aspects of the findings can be attributed to the national capital geographic region, the larger immigrant population in DC as a whole, the unique experiences of Ethiopian women, or an interaction of any of these elements.

As an exploratory qualitative study, the findings are in no way representative nor generalizable. A limitation of the study is the small sample size limiting generalizability. The limited sample was successful in giving a glimpse into the lived experiences of Ethiopian immigrant women's lives, but leaves much room for further research.

Implications of Findings for Social Work

This study provides valuable research data and theoretical support which have meaningful implications for social work policy, practice, and education. This exploratory research prompts a wealth of unanswered questions that offer significant opportunities for future qualitative and quantitative research. This section will set forth an agenda for action in regard to policy, practice, education, and research regarding Ethiopian women immigrants in the U.S.

Social Work Policy Recommendations

An important implication from this study is the understanding of the importance of the Diversity Visa Lottery program through the U.S. Department of State as a major avenue for the immigration of the participants in this study. Continued funding and support of this program is one way to continue to bring Ethiopian women to the U.S., especially those who are seeking further educational opportunities. Separating the number of Diversity Visas awarded to men and women, and increasing the number offered to women, might be one way to continue closing the gap between men and women coming to the U.S. from Ethiopia; currently there are more male Ethiopian immigrants in the U.S. than females (Capps et al., 2012).

Another policy consideration would be to provide social service funding directly to churches as a way to reach new Ethiopian immigrants. The social capital networks of arriving immigrants help them find churches almost immediately. If state and local governments provided grant funding to Ethiopian churches, they could reach a broad spectrum at a very early point in their post-immigration life. Churches might be engaged to provide educational mentoring services, and information sessions on how to take English language entrance exams as well as

college admissions procedures. Further, churches could host job and housing fairs. Connecting this already strong network of immigrants in the church communities with funding agencies would be a beneficial way to leverage the existing bonding social capital and to create linking social capital (Schneider, 2010).

Social Work Practice Recommendations

The findings in this study underscore the importance of religious communities among Ethiopian women immigrants. Social workers in refugee centers, health departments, and public schools would benefit from partnering with Ethiopian churches. This would be a focal point for educational outreach about issues such as vaccinations, social service program eligibility, English language classes, or other resources. The leaders of the church have a relationship of trust with the congregants. Social workers should cultivate relationships with the clergy in order to help gain insight into the needs of the community and how they might assist in meeting those needs.

The findings from this study also suggest that there is a need for more assistance in helping prospective students enroll in college and training programs. The barriers to entrance are high: language proficiency tests, tuition bills, and simply the application process. Social workers could play an important role in educating immigrants regarding the requirements for college admission, as well as advocate with college admission programs to prepare materials that help streamline the process for immigrant students. Social service agencies and community centers in Ethiopian immigrant magnet communities might consider adding Amharic speaking staff members and specific programs for Ethiopian clients. This study demonstrates the willingness of Ethiopian immigrant women to engage with the community—especially in ways that feel safe

and remind them of home. Creating that safe place for women to seek assistance could include hiring a woman with Ethiopian heritage at the social service agency, as she would have an understanding of cultural issues such as the cultural taboos against loud talking and eye contact. The data also support an implication for practice that involves recognition of the diversity of immigrant experiences within this population – one size does not fit all. This recognition is an important implication for social work education, as well.

Social Work Education Recommendations

In preparing students for social work practice, it is imperative that academic programs offer students opportunities to learn about the barriers marginalized groups, such as immigrants, face. Reading these stories can help sensitize non-immigrant students to the challenges and cultural barriers that immigrant women face, which would help prepare them for field work with immigrant populations.

This study also highlights the need for more Ethiopian women in the social work field. The struggles of the researcher because of her etic perspective suggest that there is a need for research and practice from the emic perspective. Women with intimate knowledge of the Ethiopian community and culture as well as personal connections could be powerful advocates and serve as instruments in creating bridging and linking social capital (Schneider, 2010). Social work education could facilitate this through recruitment of Ethiopian social work students.

Call for Future Research

As an exploratory study, the findings of this research are only the very beginning. Clearly, the population of Ethiopian immigrant women has been neglected in the literature. The findings in this study about the importance of religion in the lives of the participants lead to more

questions about the role of spirituality among Ethiopian immigrant women. Future research should examine how Ethiopian women utilize church for various aspects of spirituality. For example, it would be interesting to understand better how/if refugee and asylees use religion to heal from the painful experiences they fled in Ethiopia.

The confusion elicited from certain questions of the SOCAT (2002) also indicate a need for better researcher instruments to capture the nuances in qualitative data. In particular, there is a need for an instrument which addresses the participants' understanding and definition of multiple community memberships in their lives.

Additionally, there is a need for further research to include Muslim Ethiopian women. Do Muslim Ethiopian women also rely on social capital networks? Are they as successful at bridging and linking capital as their Christian counterparts? How does their Muslim faith complement or complicate their immigration process and post-immigration life?

Also it would be important to research why Ethiopian women are able to use social contacts to pursue higher education when this has not been the case with other immigrant women (Livingston, 2006). Do cultural differences account for this difference in educational pursuit?

There is a need for replications of this study in other communities throughout the U.S. in order to learn what aspects are unique to the immigrant community in the Washington, DC area. Additionally, there is a need for emic research in the Ethiopian community. Ethiopian scholars who are part of the community of immigrant women would bring an invaluable perspective and avenue for gathering richer data.

Finally, in addition to further qualitative research with its depth and richness, there is a need for quantitative research on the lives of Ethiopian immigrant women. There is a need to

know large quantities of information about a broad swath of the population that cannot be covered in qualitative research. Social work policy makers and practitioners would have a greater grasp on the circumstances of Ethiopian immigrant women in the U.S. if they had data from a large sample that examined indicators such as income level, marriage status, parental status, education level, and legal status. Further, comparative research by gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status would also help create a clearer picture of the issues affecting these communities, especially given the ethnic/identity diversity within the Ethiopian immigrant community. Suggested research questions include the following:

- Is there a relationship between location of family already living in in the U.S. and the city of settlement of Ethiopian immigrant women in the U.S.?
- Is there a relationship between gender, legal status, parental status at time of immigration, and educational attainment among Ethiopian immigrants in the U.S.?
- Is there a relationship between religion, ethnicity, English language proficiency, and the city of arrival for Ethiopian women immigrants to the U.S.?
- Is there a relationship between gender, legal status, educational attainment, and religious participation among Ethiopian immigrants in the U.S.?
- What are the most important factors that affect career choice among Ethiopian immigrant women in the U.S.?

Conclusion

A contribution of this study was to give voice to 14 Ethiopian women who immigrated to the U.S. Their stories have captured a range of rich life experiences. They have talked of finding

jobs and seeking education. They have shared of the relationships that have helped them most in their transition to a new world. They have identified institutions like churches and personal interactions with friends, neighbors, and even strangers. They have explored issues of trust and belonging. They have shared about accepting help at their most needy moments and the satisfaction of being able to be the giver of help to others in need.

The 14 women in this study are an example of the resilience of the human spirit. From political oppression and fear for safety in their homeland to working menial jobs day and night in their new home, these women persevered. They sought education, and they saved money and sent it back to their families. They navigated legal requirements to bring family members here, to gain citizenship, to buy homes, and earn degrees. They relied on family members already in the U.S. to help them find jobs, housing, and education. They engaged with churches to find social support and service opportunities, and they worked toward feeling a sense of belonging in a new land. Their lives demonstrated social capital theory concepts of social norms, reciprocity, and bounded solidarity. The experiences they shared highlighted the value of bonding, bridging, and linking capital in the social networks of the Ethiopian immigrant population. Their stories highlight the way cognitive and structural capital work in tandem to create powerful social networks that benefit the lives of group members. In sum, they have drawn from and contributed to the social capital networks in the Washington, DC area in order to achieve economic, social, and emotional progress. Future research will build on this study to gain more understanding into the lives, social networks, and post-immigration experiences of Ethiopian immigrant women. Bringing their voices and experiences to light will enable the larger society to both assist them in their journey as well as more fully benefit from their strength and contributions.

Appendix A

Invitation to Participate in Study of Ethiopian Immigrant Women



- **Did you immigrate to the United States from Ethiopia after you turned 18?**
- **Are you a woman?**
- **Would you be willing to participate in an interview to answer questions about your experience in the United States?**
- This study is part of my dissertation for my PhD in Social Work.
- I want to learn about the experience of Ethiopian women immigrants in the United States.
- I would like to interview you one time (for about an hour and a half). I will keep your information confidential.
- You will receive a \$25 gift card at the end of the interview.

PLEASE CONTACT Sarah Moore Oliphant, MSW at (636) 293-1083
or by email at 05oliphant@cardinalmail.cua.edu

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Introductory Statement to the Participant: *Immigrating to a new country is a life-changing experience. I am interested in understanding how you have created a new life for yourself in a new place. I am interested in hearing about the people you have met, the relationships you've made, what has been difficult for you, and what has been helpful for you during this experience.*

I. The Immigration Process

1. First, tell me about how you first decided to leave Ethiopia and come to the United States.

Probes:

When did you first start thinking about it? When did you actually leave?

Why did you decide to leave Ethiopia and come to the United States?

How old were you when you arrived? How old are you now?

Describe who came with you to the United States (such as a husband or sister).

Describe family members who are still in Ethiopia.

Were you married when you left? Are you married now? Did you have children then?

Have you had children since then?

What relationship did you have with anyone that was already living in the U.S.? Where were they living?

How long had they been living here? How did that influence your decision to come?

What was the immigration process like? (*Potential probes:* paper work, legal issues, sponsorship requirements) Did anyone help you with this process?

2. Describe what you remember about when you first arrived in the United States. What were your first impressions or feelings?

3. What has been your experience with living arrangements/environment in the U.S.?

Probes:

How did find your first place to live?

How was it similar or different than your living situation in Ethiopia?

Are you still living there? Why or why not?

4. Please tell me about your first job in the U.S.? How did you feel about that job?

Probes:

What was it like for you to look for a job? How did you find your first job?

How did you feel about the hours, the salary, the work environment?

How was it similar or different to the type of work you had done in Ethiopia?

II. Structural Aspects of Social Capital

A. Participation in Social Groups and Community Organizations

Are you involved with any groups, organizations, or associations in the United States? (SOCAT, 2002)

Probes:

For example, sports teams or school groups or parent groups?

Or do you attend a church or mosque?

Or Ethiopian associations like the Ethiopian Community Development Council on Highland Street?)

Or even informal groups like sitting together outside with friends in the evening?

If yes, What is it like for you to participate in that group? [address each group/organization]

Why are you involved or why do you stay involved in that group?

How active are you in that group? (SOCAT, 2002)

If not, what keeps you from being involved in any groups or organizations?

B. Collective Action and Cooperation

Sometimes when we use the word “community” we are talking about a place—a neighborhood or city. Sometimes we are talking about a group of people such as all of the women in a church congregation. When you think of your community, How would you describe it? Is it a specific place/neighborhood/city? Is it a group of people? Who is a part of your community? How did you become a part of that community?

If there were a problem that affected the entire community (for instance, violence) who do you think would work together to deal with the situation? (SOCAT, 2002)

Has there been a time when the community worked together on a project or crisis?

If yes, please describe this for me. How is a community member expected to participate if there is a community project or crisis? What happens or what is the response from the rest of the community if someone does not do that [stated expectation]?

If no, would you prefer for the community to work on projects together or not?

How do differences such as the following tend to affect people in your community?

- a. Differences in education
- b. Differences in wealth/material possessions
- c. Differences in renting or owning your home
- d. Differences in social status
- e. Differences between men and women
- f. Differences between younger and older generations (SOCAT, 2002)

C. Family and friend networks

What if someone in your community or neighborhood had something bad happen to them, such as father's sudden death. Who would help in this situation? (SOCAT, 2002).

“Suppose your neighbor suffered a job loss. In that situation, who do you think would assist him/her financially?” (SOCAT, 2002, p. 201)

If you were to have a personal problem or crisis, who would you turn to for support? How would you want to be supported or helped?

Since coming to the United States, has there been a time when you asked someone for help?
For example: help with a place to stay? Lending money, watch your children, give you a ride?

If yes, please describe for me a time when you asked someone for help. How did that person respond?

How did you feel about asking that person for help?

If no, why have you not asked anyone for help?

Has there ever been a time when someone has asked you for help?

If yes, please tell me about it. How did you feel about being asked? How did you respond?

Is there someone you turn to most often when you need help? Why?

II. Cognitive Aspects of Social Capital

A. Emotional support and sense of belonging

What does it mean to you to “belong” somewhere?

Probes:

What kinds of things help you feel like you belong somewhere?

How will you know when you belong?

Do you feel like you belong to a community here in the United States?

If yes, what experiences helped you feel this way?

If no, what would need to happen for you to feel like you belong?

What have been the most meaningful relationships you have had in the United States? How have those relationships been important to you?

B. Trust and Solidarity

Tell me about a time when you had an experience that made you trust another person.

Tell me about a time when you had an experience that caused you not to trust another person.

Is there someone you feel you can trust? Why?

Is there someone you feel you cannot? Why?

If you suddenly had to go away for a day or two, is there someone you could you count on to take care of your children? (SOCAT, 2002). Probe: Or other family members or home?

Do you agree or disagree that people in your community look out mainly for the welfare of their own families and they are not much concerned with community welfare? (SOCAT, 2002). Why?

C. Information and Communication

How do you get information about services you need or things that are important to you? (For example: housing, jobs, education, health, shopping)

If you had information that you wanted to share with others in your community, how would you share that information?

How do you use technology (cell phones, internet) in your everyday life? How do others in your community use technology?

IV. Perceptions and Expectations

I imagine you had some hopes about what it would be like to come to the United States. How has what really happened compared to what you hoped for when you were leaving Ethiopia?

V. Conclusion

Before we finish, is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience coming to the United States and creating your new life here?

Appendix C

Confidentiality Agreement for Transcription Services

I, _____, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all digital recordings and documentation received from Sarah Moore Oliphant related to her doctoral study on “Understanding the Impact of Social Networks on the Immigration Experience of Ethiopian Women.”

I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents
2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Sarah Moore Oliphant
3. To store all study-related recordings and materials in a safe, secure location including using a password protected computer
4. To return all study-related documents to Sarah Moore Oliphant in a complete and timely manner
5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the recordings and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed) _____

Transcriber's signature _____

Date _____

Appendix D

Consent Form



THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

National Catholic School of Social Service

Washington, DC 20064

202-319-5458

Fax 202-319-5093

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Name of the Study: The Impact of Social Networks on the Immigration Experience of Ethiopian Women

Investigator: Sarah Moore Oliphant, M.S.W.

Research Supervisors: Linda Plitt Donaldson, PhD; Susanne Bennett, PhD; Michael Sheridan, PhD

Purpose of Study: The researcher wants to learn about the experience of Ethiopian women who immigrate to the United States. This study is part of the requirements for a Ph.D. in social work at The Catholic University of America.

Description of Research and Procedures: The researcher has asked me to be in this study because I am a woman who came from Ethiopia to the United States after I turned 18 years old. The researcher will ask me questions for about an hour and a half. The researcher will ask me questions about my life experiences. The researcher will record the interview. Someone who has signed a confidentiality agreement will type my words. I may choose to answer the questions or not answer the questions.

Discomforts and Risks: I can end the interview if I feel uncomfortable. The researcher will give me a list of people I could go see if I need to talk with someone.

The researcher will not ask about my immigration status. The researcher does not have to report my immigration status. The researcher will keep this consent form in a locked file. The researcher will keep the audio recording on a password-protected computer. The researcher will destroy this form and the recording after the study. I can end the interview at any time. The

interview will be at time and place that are good for me. The law requires the researcher to report to authorities, any suspicions of harm to me, to children, or to others.

Expected Benefits: My participation in this research may not help me directly.

Costs and Payments: I will receive one \$25.00 VISA gift card at the end of the interview.

Confidentiality: The researcher will keep all information as confidential as possible. The researcher will not use my name in any presentations or papers. Research records may be subpoenaed by court order or may be inspected by federal authorities.

Contacts: If I have any questions about this study, I can contact the researcher, Sarah Moore Oliphant at 636-293-1083 or 05oliphant@cardinalmail.cua.edu

If I have any complaints or comments, I can call Ralph Albano at The Catholic University of America. (202) 319-5218.

Research Subject Rights: I have read or have had read to me all of the above. The researcher has explained the study to me. The researcher has answered all of my questions.

I understand my rights as a research participant. I consent to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

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