"Either You Are the Shark or the Seal": Understanding Violence Among Somali Canadian Male Youth – A Population Health Perspective

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Abstract

In the past decade, the Somali Canadian community has experienced a heightened rate of youth violence. Since 2005 several dozen young Somali men have lost their lives. Most of the incidents occurred in Edmonton and Toronto, with sporadic incidents in Ottawa as well. The violence, mostly concentrated in northern Alberta, attracted sustained media attention which, in turn, led to public and private discussions within the Somali community. This study explores the determinants of youth involvement in violence and related criminal activities, as well as the impact of that violence on the families of its victims and perpetrators, and the larger Somali community.

The study's design consisted of in-depth interviews with Somali Canadians and non-Somali key informants, in the three cities where the majority of the Somali population resides, to elicit their explanations of the violence, and their perceptions of its impact.

Results indicate that the proximal determinant of the violence was the young men's participation in the drug trade in northern Alberta. Distally, determinants of the violence link three intersecting themes: poverty, racialization and gender. Poverty and racism marked the early lives of the male youth and their families in Ontario. The resettlement barriers experienced by first generation Somali refugees, the racism that this community and its youth encountered in public institutions such as schools, the criminal justice system and the media, and the anti-poor posture of neoliberalism, combined to create vulnerabilities to risky behaviour in male youth. My analysis suggests that young

men entered the drug trade and/or participated in criminal activities in order to fill material needs and enhance their self-esteem.

The inequities that underpin the determinants of violence require remedy at multiple levels. I propose an evidence-based population health framework for the prevention of youth violence, and identify interactive levels (individual, community, institutional, societal) at which to target prevention and intervention efforts.

Key words: Somali Canadians, youth violence, risk determinants, violence prevention framework, masculinity, second generation, immigration

Preface

This study seeks to contribute to the efforts of Somali Canadians supporting the well-being and success of their young men, even as it risks entrenching a perception of Somali male youth as a 'problem' population. Focusing on the Alberta and Ontario violence involving a minority of young Somali Canadians diverts attention from celebrating and building on the success of all those who are doing well. This distraction is neither the intention nor the position of this research. There are many young Somali Canadian men who are thriving, and who contribute positively to Canadian society, as I observe and report in this study. It is important to remain mindful of Berns-McGown's (2013, p.3) observation that, "while the [Somali] community faces extraordinary challenges, its achievements have been yet more extraordinary." The violent incidents in Alberta and Ontario have had, and continue to have, significant implications for Somali Canadians. For this reason the violence needs to be studied, difficult though it may be to strike a balance between identifying a problem and problematizing an identity. The challenges outlined in this study are significant, but Somali Canadians are up to the task. They will surmount these challenges just as they have risen above the other challenges they have encountered in their nearly three decades of striving to put down roots in Canada.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Research Objectives

In February 2016, the funeral of two victims of violence, both 17-years of age, was broadcast as a segment of the Toronto-based Somali television program, *Muuqaalka Soomaalida*. A Somali man attending the funeral lamented the tragic loss of the two boys; grieving, he said: *"We wanted to celebrate their graduation(s) and their marriage(s), but now we gather at their funeral."* Variations of those sentiments have been uttered by Somali Canadians since 2005 when it came to light that a group of young men who had left Toronto and Ottawa for opportunities in northern Alberta's oil patch had become homicide victims. The deaths did not seem random. Some of the incidents were clustered, like the deaths of six young Somali Canadian men who were killed in Toronto in a four-month period in 2012. Some of those Toronto victims had been in Alberta (Wingrove & Mackrael, 2012; Aulakh, 2012).

The violence began in northern Alberta where 34 young men died between 2005 and 2011 (Humphreys, 2011). In Ottawa, where several young males of Somali descent have also died violently, and sporadic violent incidents continue to occur at the time of this writing, the community also observed a parallel rise in incarcerations of Somali Canadian male youth. In response, an advocacy group consisting mainly of mothers whose sons have been incarcerated for a range of offences, The Canadian Somali Mothers Association (CSMA), spearheaded activities to raise awareness of the problem within Ottawa's Somali community and to seek remedies within public institutions, such as the education and

criminal justice systems (Taylor, 2011).

Following these events, Somali Canadians from all walks of life began asking questions about the origins of the violence and the motivations of the male youth participating in criminal activities. The problem seemed widespread, and crosscut socioeconomic backgrounds, creating a sense of urgency for members of the Somali community.

This research stems from my Master's thesis that examined the settlement challenges and survival strategies of Somali single mothers in Ottawa. My participants were women of diverse educational and professional backgrounds who found themselves responsible for families, as lone parents, at a time when they were struggling with their own experiences of displacement. They were women who suddenly became 'single mothers' when their husbands were killed or separated from their families by the Somali civil war. They were also women divorced from their husbands after their arrival in Canada. One of the salient themes that emerged repeatedly from the interviews was the anxiety mothers expressed when discussing their male children. They felt that their sons were unfairly scrutinized and disciplined, first, by a school system that was ill-prepared to teach them and focused too much on their "difference", and second, by policing institutions that profiled them (Mohamed, 2007).

With the violence and the incarcerations, those mothers' apprehensions seemed to have materialized. Anecdotally, there is a strong perception among Somali Canadians that their male youth are experiencing a generalized crisis of identity and are endangered by their very environment. They believe that the violence is the tip of an iceberg of deeper

struggles being faced by young second generation men. There is an equally strong perception that the girls are doing well, while the boys are not. The violence, associated exclusively with male youth, has heightened this assumption. I am not claiming that Somali girls are without problems. Evidence suggests that racialized second generation girls struggle to balance their own set of competing identities, pressures, and gendered expectations (Rajiva, 2009). Exploring the distinct struggle of Somali girls and young women would necessitate a different lens and, as such, it does not fit within the scope of the present work. As gender, discussed in a later chapter, is relational, some aspects of girls' experiences will be considered because they crosscut the experiences of the young men who are the focus of this research.

The violence and the incarcerations involved young men who were said to be Canadian-born or had arrived in Canada at a very young age (Aulakh, 2010). These were second generation Canadians, born to families who fled the Somali civil war that started in the late 1980s. They were the generation on whom this community's hopes rested, as the statement of the funeral participant above expressed.

This research was undertaken with several objectives in mind. The most important objective was to frame the violence as a population health issue and recommend preventive interventions using an evidence-based population health framework that will be discussed in Chapters Three and Eight. The overarching objective was to delineate the factors in the social environment in which many young Somalis grow up that make them vulnerable to violence and other criminal behaviours. Insights into these factors were achieved by soliciting explanations for the violence from Somali community members

and non-Somali key informants. In particular, an examination of masculinities in a context of shifting socio-cultural dynamics was an important analytical lens through which to unpack the violence of some young Somali Canadians. The construction of gender and its relationship to violence is discussed more fully in Chapter Three. Here it is important to note that, from a population health perspective, gender is an embodied determinant of health and wellbeing (Spitzer, 2005). Thus, while other perspectives are drawn on to elucidate the violence of racialized male youth, the primary perspective I deploy considers the role of idealized masculinities in the social construction of violence to be in itself a significant determinant of participation in violence.

An additional objective in undertaking this study was to highlight the psychosocial effects of the violence on families and the community because, as Razack (p. 166, 2004) has noted, "we generally do not listen to those who are suffering." My goal was to privilege the community's voice and to situate their stories in the wider scholarship of black youth in the diaspora and their socio-political, economic and historical contexts.

Research Questions

This research set out to explore the determinants and implications of the violence that has claimed the lives of Somali Canadian male youth. It aims to provide insight into what might be required to achieve health and wellbeing for Somali Canadian male youth. The main question the research sought to answer was:

What are the determinants of Somali Canadian male youth violence? And how do these determinants combine to create vulnerabilities for Somali Canadian male youth?

Secondary research questions that the study explored in the context of the main question were:

1. *What can the construction of masculinities add to our understanding of Somali Canadian male youth violence? Relatedly, does the construction of postwar Somali masculinity help to explain the disproportionately high level of violence experienced by young Somali men and, if so, how?*

2. *How does the Somali community understand the causes of the violence?*

3. *What are the impacts on and responses to the violence of families and the community*?

Rationale for the Study

The Somali youth violence under study occurs against the backdrop of an already fraught resettlement process (described in the next chapter) and the emotional and psychological turmoil experienced by all refugees and immigrants (Beiser, 2005). Focusing on the experiences of Somali male youth sheds light on the state of the Somali community in Canada, the consequences of unaddressed collective trauma, and the effects of early resettlement struggles on subsequent generations. As Berns-McGown (2013, p.22) observes, "communities that have suffered a collective trauma do not easily recover from it just because the acute state is over." More importantly, as Razack (2004, p.14) asserts, how Canada is implicated "*in the crisis of Somali children*" [my emphasis] needs to be spotlighted to understand the present violence.

I am especially interested to further the discourse on youth violence by highlighting the many forms of oppression (both historical and contemporary racism and/or poverty) that mark the everyday experience of young Somali men, and to do this from the perspective of population health. The aim here is not to delink the experience of young Somali males from the experiences of other black youth in Canada, nor to portray their struggles as unique (especially given that Aboriginal youth in Canada consistently fare worse). Rather, the purpose of this research is to illustrate that there are multiple determinants (e.g., gender, socioeconomic status, migration, ethnicity, and discrimination) that "intersect and interlock" (Jiwani, 2006, p.202) to make males vulnerable to criminality and violence. These determinants create vulnerability not only for the youth who suffer the direct consequences of the violence, as in the violent deaths in Alberta and Ontario, but have lateral psychosocial implications for the larger Somali community in Canada. Evidence suggests that criminalizing minorities (e.g., the deportation of undocumented migrants or imprisonment of minority youth) has lasting health and social impacts on the families and communities of those individuals (Human Impact Group, 2013; Wacquant, 2009).

Thesis Organization

This thesis was undertaken to contribute to the efforts made by Somali Canadians to understand the causes of the violence, and to protect the lives of their boys and young men. It also hopes to address more generally the issue of violence prevention among marginalized youth. Its organization, therefore, follows a public health model in order to

best facilitate policy and programmatic interventions. Themes drawn from community narratives (study findings) are summarized in two separate chapters to ensure that the community's perspectives on the violence and its impact are given prominence.

Chapter Two provides context for the immigration of Somalis to Canada and presents a literature review summarizing the state of scholarship concerning Somali Canadian youth: particularly the representation of Somali Canadian youth and Somali Canadians more broadly.

Chapter Three establishes the theoretical framework guiding the study, including a look at perspectives that explain potential causes for, and raise considerations related to, male youth violence. The chapter proposes a population health conceptual social ecological framework that will organize the discussion and recommendations in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Four describes the research design and data collection process including some reflections on my position as an insider researcher and the impact of my location on the research outcome.

Chapters Five and Six present themes that emerged from the study results, identifying and discussing determinants of the violence,[1] and the psychosocial impact of the violence on families and beyond.

Chapter Seven provides an in-depth discussion of the significance and implications of the study findings, anchoring the analysis in the wider scholarship on black youth

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[1] By determinants of violence I mean factors that contribute to or facilitate violence and should not be read as deterministic or suggestive of direct causality (See definition in Terminology).

violence, and the structural determinants of that violence. The discussion is broken into three sections, each addressing a major theme from the study findings.

The concluding chapter, Chapter Eight, provides recommendations based on elements of the population health framework proposed in Chapter Three. It reflects on the strengths and limitations of this study, and considers opportunities for knowledge transmission, including how best to enable the study outcomes to inform future prevention efforts, including my own ongoing post-dissertation research plans.

Definition of Key Terms

There are terms used in this study that might introduce confusion and/or ambiguities. They require explanation and a clear definition of their meaning as they are used in this research.

Youth

Youth is a socially constructed concept generally applied to adolescents and young adults up to 30 years of age (Walcott, Foster, Campbell & Sealy 2008). This definition reflects the current reality in which many young people take longer to transition to adulthood as a result of the shift to the knowledge economy. This shift requires higher levels of education that result in delays in attaining the social markers of adulthood, such as employment, marriage and childrearing (Frank, 2010). The term youth also identifies the marginalized young adult population whose path to adulthood is challenged (Doucette, 2010). It may also signify "cultural practices, self-identification, and other variables that might involve taste, music and clothing" (Walcott, Foster, Campbell & Sealy

2008, p.323). All of these definitions of youth are relevant for this research and for that reason the terms youth and young men are used interchangeably to refer to the study participants.

Second generation

The term second generation refers to children born in Canada who have at least one parent born abroad (Jantzen, 2008). For simplicity, I include in this definition of second generation those who are generally known as the 1.5 generation; those who were born abroad but spent their formative years in Canada. The integration outcomes for both groups are believed to be similar (Sykes, 2008) for which reason second generation is used in this research to refer to both groups of Somali youth, those born just before or shortly after their parents' arrival in Canada.

Community

This term is problematic and will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Four. Here it will suffice to establish that community is not meant to suggest a monolithic or fixed identity, but a fluid identification dependent on time and place (Anderson, Khan & Reimer-Kirkham 2011). In this research, when I invoke the Somali community it is to highlight their shared ethnic identity and common identification with struggles that encompass migration, resettlement, and second generation experiences.

Social determinants of health/determinants of violence

Social Determinants of Health (SDH) are the factors that contribute to differential health and social outcomes in populations that are beyond the biomedical focus on disease and individual behaviours. The way society is organized and the distribution of

resources and power, affect people's opportunities to live a healthy life (Raphael, 2004).

SDH acknowledges "the consequent unfairness in the immediate, visible circumstances of

people's lives" (Commission on Social Determinants of Health, 2008, p. 1).

By using the term *determinants of violence* throughout this thesis, I am using the

determinants of health literature and the recognition that health is influenced by factors

outside the individual's control. The term, determinants of violence, is meant to suggest

that there are factors both within and outside an individual that create an opening for, or

a vulnerability to, violence and criminality. This shall not connote the absence of agency

in those who engage in such behaviours, nor should it be read as implying direct

causation. The determinants of violence considered in this research include those that are

generally recognized to be social determinants of health, including income, education,

gender, 'race' and social status, among others. The social determinants of health are

described in greater detail in Chapter Three.

Inequities/inequalities

Inequities are fundamentally about "unnecessary and avoidable" differences

between groups within a society (Whitehead, 1992, p.433). Far from natural, inequities are

the result of "a toxic combination of poor social policies, unfair economic arrangements

and bad politics" (Marmot & Friel, 2008, p.1095). Inequities are socially constructed

difference that over time result in hierarchies among individuals and between groups

based on access to economic resources and other social stratifiers and identities such as

racialization or ethnicity (Braveman, 2014). Reducing these unjust differences entails

taking action on the social determinants of health (Braveman, 2014).

Inequalities are also about differences in health that may or may not be unfair as well as how the determinants described above are distributed among populations (World Health Organization, 2017).

Marginalized populations

The consequences of the inequities described above are that some groups in society "experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions" (NCCDH, 2015). Although population health literature frequently uses the term 'vulnerable populations' (Frohlich & Potvin, 2008), marginalization more clearly underscores the processes and structural conditions by which people become vulnerable.

Risk conditions

In the context of public health, risk conditions refer to the root causes of ill-health. Similar to the determinants of health defined above, risk conditions "are environmental and social factors that increase the chance an individual, group or community will have lower levels of health compared to the overall society" (NCCDH, 2015). In this work, risks and risk conditions refer to the environmental and social conditions that make one group more prone or susceptible to violence and/or criminality than another.

With these definitions in mind, the next chapter reviews the existing literature on Somali migration and settlement in Canada. It examines the issues and the explanations arising for second generation Somali Canadians that are presented in the literature, which will lead to exploration of the causes of this violence.

CHAPTER TWO: SOMALIS IN CANADIAN CONTEXT

Literature Search Strategy

The literature review focuses primarily on the settlement experiences of Somali Canadians. Focusing on the experience of settlement is particularly important because the majority of Somali Canadians arrived as war refugees and their migration trajectory and resettlement experience provides a useful context for the violence being enacted and experienced by the second generation. My research considered both academic and grey literature (reports by government and non-profit organizations). *Google Scholar* was useful for accessing a broad range of literature using search words such as "Somali," "Somali Canadians, "Somali Canadian youth" or "Somali male youth and violence." These search terms generated extensive results, covering topics beyond the scope of this research (e.g., general articles and literature about Somalis in the mainland and other publications from outside Canada). Only Canadian publications and those relevant to the topic were retained. Searches were also carried out using general library databases, such as *SCOPUS* and *ERIC* (Educational Resources Information Centre). These searches generated fewer sources, not all of which were relevant to the research topic. The majority of the search results included in this review are Canadian sources, though later chapters also draw on broader research concerning Somali migration to the United States and Western Europe.

My literature search results are organized thematically, beginning with the themes of migration, resettlement, emerging issues for youth and the second generation. I pay particular attention to the theme of violence and Somali Canadian male youth. The

chapter concludes with an analysis of the strengths of, and gaps in, the literature. My

research is situated within a growing body of important writing about Somali settlement

in Canada, and especially Somali Canadian male youth. It makes linkages with migration

scholarship concerned with acculturation of second generation Canadians and, briefly,

points to scholarship exploring trends in black Canadian male youth violence. These two

significant bodies of scholarships will inform discussions in subsequent chapters.

Background: Somali Migration to Canada

Somali people have been migrating in large numbers to Canada, and to other

Western countries, since the start of civil war in Somalia in the late 1980s (Kusow & Bjork,

2007). That war created more than a million refugees, along with significant numbers of

internally displaced populations (Cavallera et al., 2016). There was no significant Somali

presence in Canada before the 1980s, and the majority of the Somalis who settled in

Canada were war refugees (Berns-McGown, 1999; Ontario Council of Agencies Serving

Immigrants [OCASI], 2016). The majority of Somali refugees arrived between 1991 and

1996 as Convention refugees[2], claiming asylum within Canadian borders. Some entered

Canada through the family reunification program (Murdie, 2003; OCASI, 2016). Following

the pattern of settlement of other recent immigrants to Canada, many of the Somali

refugees settled in Ontario, mainly in Toronto and Ottawa (Opoku-Dapaah, 1995).

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[2] Convention Refugees are persons fleeing persecution in their own countries based on a number of characteristics, such as their ethnicity, racialized status, religion, and sexuality, among others. The 1951 Geneva Convention on the Protection of Refugees sets out the rights of refugees and the responsibilities of States who are signatories to the Convention and related protocols (UNHCR, 2011). Canada signed the Convention in 1969 (Canadian Council For Refugees, 2009).

Although 2011 census data estimates the Somali population in Canada to be approximately 45,000, most other sources consider this number to be a gross underestimation. They place the actual size of the Somali population at double that number in Toronto alone, with another 20,000 in Ottawa, and between 10,000 and 15, 000 in Edmonton, in addition to some communities in other major Canadian cities (Berns-McGown, 2013; Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014). One source claims that at the height of the Somali civil war in the early 1990s, Canada received between 55, 000 and 70,000 refugees (Carrière, 2016). This number excludes both the children of Somali immigrants who were born in Canada, and Somalis who arrived after the initial waves of refugees as private and/or government sponsored immigrants.

Somalis are among the largest African immigrant population in Toronto as well as in other Ontario cities, such as Ottawa-Gatineau, Hamilton, London and Windsor (Mensah & Firang, 2007). In Ottawa, between 1991 and 2001 Somalis made up nearly 84% of all newcomers to the city (No = 6,420) and the Somali language became the fourth most prevalent non-official language spoken in the city (Hindia, 2007). In Edmonton, while there was some Somali settlement in the 1980s, the population increase since then is largely attributed to secondary migration from Ontario due to the economic upturn in Alberta. Migration to Edmonton included a significant number of young men moving on their own (Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014).

The war separated families and disrupted kinship networks. Consequently, early Somali refugees who settled in Canada were predominantly families headed by lone females (Affi, 1997; Berns-McGown, 1999; Mohamed, 1999; Opoku-Dapaah, 1995). These

families were large. Many households consisted of part of a nuclear family as well as extended family members displaced by the war (Opoku-Dapaah, 1995; Koch, 2007; Murdie, 2003; Spitzer, 2006).

Refugees generally experience symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to their exposure to violence and other social upheavals (Beiser, 1999; Bokore, 2012). Somali refugees to Canada experienced the symptoms of PTSD common among those exposed to violence, and brought their trauma with them to Canada (Bokore, 2012; Opoku-Dapaah, 1995). There were no targeted mental health supports made available to these refugees (OCASI, 2016) despite strong evidence that the war and displacement "had profound effects on both the individual and collective wellbeing of Somali people" (Cavallera et al., 2016, p.54). Past trauma can be triggered by the stresses associated with resettlement and for that reason mental health support for new refugees in the early years is clearly seen as a critical part of their integration into a new society (Beiser, 1999).

High rates of psychotic disorders, as compared to the general Canadian population, have been found in some refugee populations, including populations from East Africa (Anderson, Cheng, Susser, McKenzie & Kurdyak, 2015). Notably, a study by Anderson *et al* (2015) highlights that in addition to refugee status, low socioeconomic status and experienced discrimination contribute to the emergence of psychotic disorders. Supporting the finding that trauma builds on trauma, Bokore (2012) documents incidents of mental illness among Somali women due to past traumatic events and their own settlement challenges, precipitated by the struggles of their children.

Settlement Challenges

The majority of the early arrivals from Somalia were refugee claimants. They received little or no settlement and integration support (Opoku-Dapaah, 1995; Danso, 2001). There was no prior significant Somali settlement to integrate or incorporate the newcomers (Carrière, 2016). Opoku-Dapaah claims that these Somali refugees were severely disadvantaged and were not even provided with basic information about how to access the services, which should have been available to them, such as language training. In the absence of settlement programmes or an established ethnic community, early Somali refugees relied almost entirely on other Somali refugees to help them access essential settlement services (Berns-McGown, 1999; Dion, 2001; Opoku-Dapaah, 1995).

The settlement (i.e. neighbourhood) choices of early refugees were influenced by their need for the social support of relatives and kin. The predictable result of Somali families settling next to other Somalis was that some neighbourhoods became ethnic enclaves. Toronto's Dixon Road in Etobicoke is an example. The neighbourhood became known as 'Little Mogadishu' (Foreman, 2001; Kusow & Bjork, 2007; Opoku-Dapaah, 1995). Neighbourhood choice was also driven by the cost of housing. Somali settlement concentrated in areas where affordable accommodation in both private and public housing was available. (Murdie, 2003; Opoku-Dapaah, 1995). The social housing in some of these neighbourhoods was unsafe and of poor quality. Two decades on many families still reside in these areas (Tiilikainen, 2015). Dixon, mentioned above, has been the subject of numerous media stories, including as an example of 'white flight' (Berns-McGown, 1999; Kusow & Bjork, 2007), a phenomenon that further segregated the

newcomers within disadvantaged residential areas with low socioeconomic standing and substandard schools (Kusow & Bjork, 2007).

Marginalization marked the experience of Somali settlement in Canada. Somalis endured high unemployment and underemployment levels, and many relied on social assistance as their primary source of income (Daniel & Cukier, 2015; Danso, 2001; Opoku-Dapaah, 1995). Murdie (2003, p. 189) states that in 1996 the Somali community in Toronto included "considerably more university graduates than the general Toronto population" but it could not convert that higher education into employment.

One of the main consequences of poverty, for recent immigrants in particular, is being forced to turn to subsidized housing due to the shortage of quality, affordable housing. Government subsidized housing is frequently substandard and poses a range of mental and physical health risks (Hadi & Labonté, 2011; Wachsmuth, 2008). In addition to giving rise to specific health outcomes such as respiratory and other chronic conditions (Wellesley Institute, 2010), housing inequities have been found to influence the long-term integration of immigrants, especially affecting the education outcomes of children since family resources are committed to meeting housing needs (Murdie, 2003; Wachsmuth, 2008). Murdie's findings from a 1996 study comparing the housing experience of Somalis, Poles and Jamaicans in Toronto highlight the barriers that Somalis and other new immigrants encounter in the search for quality and affordable accommodation. According to that study, 70% of Somalis paid over 30% of their income on housing compared to 35% of Jamaican and 30% of Polish newcomers although some Somalis were spending as much as half of their income on housing (Murdie, 2003).

A notable feature of Somali settlement in Canada was the high proportion of female-headed families (Affi, 1997; Berns-McGown, 1999; Mohamed, 1999; Spitzer, 2006). Their experience of poverty, and its intersections with other barriers to integration such as discrimination, followed a distinctly gendered pattern referred to as the *feminization of poverty* (Taylor, 1994). For example, Dion (2001) notes that a Somali woman in Toronto would experience multiple forms of discrimination layered one on top of another: discrimination based on ethnicity (Somali), racialized identity (black), religion (Islam), immigration status (refugee), single motherhood, family size and reliance on social assistance. The numerous hurdles that Somali female-headed households continue to encounter have an enormous impact on their ability to secure quality, affordable, and accessible housing for their families (Hadi and Labonté, 2011; Wachsmuth, 2008; Wellesley Institute, 2010).

Female-led families were particularly challenged in navigating a different linguistic, cultural and religious environment without the social supports traditionally provided by extended families and members of kin (Berns-McGown, 1999; Spitzer, 2006). At the core of their general worries about how to meet the practical needs of resettlement noted above, these mothers confronted the challenge of holding their families together in a new and different (secular and individualistic) culture requiring new tools and strategies, especially as the children quickly acclimatized to their new environment (Berns-McGown, 1999; Israelite, Herman, & Alim, 1999). These challenges were compounded by external forces that hindered the settlement of the newcomers, thwarting the aspirations of some parents, and the integration of their offspring.

The emergence of anti-Somali policies and discourses

The immigration claims of Somalis who arrived prior to 1993 had a high acceptance

rate such that the first arrivals perceived Canada as a tolerant place that offered them a

sense of belonging (Berns-McGown, 1999). That goodwill soured for subsequent refugees.

A series of new immigration policies introduced in the 1990s delayed their claims, held

back their attainment of permanent residency, and slowed family reunification efforts

(Canadian Council for Refugees [CCR], 2016). Around the same time, news media reports

began focusing on the Somali presence, highlighting the 'differentness' of their values,

beliefs and behaviours (Daniel & Cukier, 2015; Elmi, 2009).

Several studies have documented the series of immigration policies introduced in

the 1990s and their lasting effects on Somali-Canadians (Bassel, 2012; CCR, 2015;

Mohamed, 1999; Spitzer, 2006). Key among these policies was a 1992 amendment to the

Immigration Act requiring refugees to produce government-issued identification as a

condition for obtaining permanent residency. The legislation, Bill C-86, affected 13,000

refugees, most of these Somalis or Afghanis (CCR, 2015; Bassel, 2012). Even when they were

accepted as Convention Refugees, all undocumented refugees were required to wait five

years before becoming eligible for permanent residency under a new category known as

Undocumented Convention Refugees in Canada (Pratt & Valverde, 2002; Spitzer 2006).

The impact of these policies on Somalis, especially the requirement of identity

documents, was obviously "profound" (Bassel, 2012). Studies call attention to the huge

impact these policies had on the community. They impeded family reunification, access to

employment, and admission to postsecondary education for children who had graduated

from secondary school (Bassell, 2012; Israelite, Herman & Alim, 1999; Spitzer, 2006).

Consequently, Bill C-86 contributed to family breakdown and "had an intergenerational

impact: the transmission of disadvantage, in the form of lost educational opportunities, to

the second generation" (Bassell, 2012 p. 99). A study by Israelite, Herman and Alim (1999)

considering Somali women who were left in immigration limbo asserts that these

immigration policies took a particular economic and emotional toll on women. The

authors also note that the impact of these policies on youth was already evident in the mid-

1990s. As some mothers in their study reported, without school or work to occupy them,

youth were left idle to wander in the neighbourhood.

At the same time the immigration reforms were being enacted, public and political

discourse began to focus on perceived Somali incompatibility with Canadian life (Spitzer,

2006). Pratt and Valverde (2002, p.146) assert that Somali refugees arriving in the 1990s

became ensnared in existing debates about unrestricted immigration, "especially from less

desirable parts of the globe." These debates were focused on fears about 'bogus' refugees

and 'welfare cheats' who were taking advantage of a generous welfare system, and the need

to protect Canada against the scourge of foreign criminals. Government investigations and

media reports sought to uncover claims of welfare fraud by Somali individuals alleged to be

funneling money to warlords in Somalia (Pratt and Valverde, 2002; Spitzer, 2006). Even

though the allegations of widespread abuse were never substantiated, the damage was

done. In the public mind, the association of Somali identity with welfare abuse and

criminality had been made (Pratt and Valverde, 2002; Walcott, 2003). The Somali woman,

in particular, was branded as a "welfare queen" (Spitzer, 2006, p.50), invoking existing and

entrenched stereotypes about poor black women who are blamed for their own poverty

and the crimes of their youth (Maynard, 2017).

Confronting stringent immigration and welfare reforms as well as hostile public

debate, Somali refugees continued to draw negative press. As their resettlement challenges

receded from focus, their cultural difference was magnified in the press (Walcott, 2003).

Dixon, the Toronto neighbourhood (and Somali enclave) mentioned above, became the

site of tensions between the Somalis residents and the mostly white condominium owners.

Dixon became the focal point of sustained anti-Somali sentiment in the popular press

(Mire, 2017; Walcott, 2003). The neighbourhood attracted both academic and media

attention over the two and a half decades of Somali settlement in Canada; attention which

gave rise, some have argued, to the construction of the Somali criminal and the Somali

'Other' (Elmi, 2007; Kusow and Bjork, 2007; Pratt and Valverde, 2002; Walcott, 2003).

Dixon Road in the early 1990s was a conservative middle class suburban

neighbourhood. Somalis who moved to the street's six high-rise apartments were drawn to

the area by its relative affordability (Kusow and Bjork, 2007; Walcott, 2003). Tensions rose

and there were clashes with landlords and neighbours when the Somalis were accused of

overcrowding and disorderly behaviour. In response, security guards were hired to patrol

the buildings, allegedly to monitor the Somali residents. The clashes were captured in two

widely cited media reports in 1993: a documentary by the Canadian Broadcasting

Corporation (CBC), *A Place Called Dixon (1993),* and a Toronto Life Magazine article,

Dispatches from Dixon (1995). Both news reports underscored Somali cultural differences

and implied that such differences could not be overcome and this community could not be

integrated into Canadian life (Berns-McGown, 1999; Elmi, 2009) While both reports had a similar tone, it was the Toronto Magazine article which "as a whole had a significant impact on the community's sense of beleaguerment and also on official state actions" (Pratt and Valverde, 2002, p.156).

Walcott (2003, p.125) suggests that the racialization of Somalis as 'black' harkens back to the Dixon clashes. The policing of their movements signaled that, "they were being forced into the North American *black criminal paradigm*" [my emphasis]. Being racialized black signified that Somalis would suffer the prejudices historically inflicted upon peoples of African descent, despite the fact that such classification was not meaningful to them. Somalis did not self-identify with 'black-ness' (Berns-McGown, 1999; Kusow, 2006; Spitzer 2006). These identity politics confounded and burdened the Somali newcomers who privileged kinship, religion and ethnicity as identity markers rather than skin colour (Spitzer, 2006).

Dixon unfolded in the shadow of two key events concerning Somalia that may be interpreted as further influencing the perception of Somali refugees in Canada. These were the failed United States (US) military intervention, Operation Restore Hope (1992 - 1993), and the scandal involving members of the Canadian military who were in southern Somalia on a peacekeeping mission (1992 - 1993); the 'cover up' following the torture and death of a Somali teenager (Hirsch, 2011; Razack, 2004). Razack (2004, p.120) contends that the "Canadian press mimicked American...rhetoric in its presentation of Somalia as a primitive society helplessly caught in the backwardness of its own traditions." These two geopolitical events together with subsequent events (e.g., piracy and the 'War on Terror')

solidified the association of Somalis with chaos and violence (Arte, 2015; Naji, 2012; Somali Canadian Cultural society, 2014).

Two decades on, Dixon continues to be the focus of unwanted media and police scrutiny. As with the 1990s Dixon stories, recent events continue to associate Somali identity with crime. The highest profile of these incidents is the reporting fiasco involving the former Toronto mayor, Rob Ford, and his embroilment, captured on video, with young Somali Canadian men who were said to be drug dealers and members of a Dixon-based gang known as Dixon City Bloods[3] (Doolittle & Donovan, 2013; Pagliaro, 2013). On the heels of that incident there was a police raid (known as *Project Traveller*) on the Dixon condominiums that reportedly seized drugs, money, and guns, and resulted in the arrest of dozens of young Somali men. These events left Somali Canadians, particularly in Toronto, feeling unsafe, unfairly portrayed, and traumatized (Pagliaro, 2013; Tiilikainen, 2015).

The combined outcome of the geopolitical events (that continued to expand with the emergence of pirates on the Somali coast and Muslim extremists), and national debates was to depict Somalis in a negative light (Daniel &Cukier, 2015). Some of these representations, in particular the welfare fraud stories, were perceived by Somalis as clear evidence of racism in the media targeting Somalis (Carrière, 2016; Razack, 2004). They have also been characterized as a form of *structural violence* and *anti-Somali racism*

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[3] In May 2013, the *Toronto Star* broke a story about the existence of a video showing the Mayor of Toronto, Rob Ford, smoking crack cocaine in the company of three young men alleged to be members of a gang known as Dixon City Bloods. The video was recorded by a Somali male who had attempted to sell it to the media. Members of Toronto's Somali community complained about the repeated references to the Somali identity of the video recorder, effectively tying a high profile scandal involving an elected Canadian official to a Somali Canadian. *Toronto Star* later apologized in an editorial in its paper writing that, "we realize the first version of the story used 'Somali' too heavily...we understand why the community is upset, and we apologize" (English, 2013).

(Fellin, 2015, Stachel, 2012, Mire, 2017). The apology from the Toronto Star following its reporting of the Rob Ford scandal does not mitigate the initial impact of the story. In some ways it contributes to the story's original mistake, repeating the word "Somali" too many times.

The Impact of the Settlement Challenges on Somali Families

The migration and settlement challenges described above had lasting effects on Somali families, particularly women and children (Spitzer, 2006). Somali Canadian children grew up in extreme deprivation. Analysis of the 1996 census shows that the poverty rate among Somali families was nearly 63%, while 70% of Somali children lived below the poverty line (Ornstein, 2000). Many families that arrived together or were reunited in Canada did not survive the sustained economic pressures without the extended family that, in the past, mediated marital conflicts, helped with childrearing, and provided economic support (Affi, 1997).

The stress on families was heightened by gender transformations wrought by both the war and resettlement. Normative gender relations had been upended. As women's economic contribution to households increased so did their decision-making power in the home and outside (Abdi, 2015; Berns-McGown, 2003; Spitzer, 2006). There was a high divorce rate among Somali immigrants as a result, even though a significant number of women arrived having been widowed or separated from their spouses by the war (Affi, 1997; Berns-McGown, 1999; Mohamed, 1999; Spitzer, 2006).

For Somali men, adjusting to their social demotion was made especially difficult by their inability to secure the employment from which respect and authority in the home flowed. Some succumbed to "despair" and addictions (Berns-McGown, 1999, p. 19). Danso (2001, p.7) has written that in the early years of resettlement in Canada, Somali men were more likely than women "*to have their dreams shattered*" [my emphasis]. Somali women, in contrast to the men, continued to draw meaning from the traditional roles and responsibilities of childrearing and household management (Berns-McGown, 1999). Berns-McGown explains these gendered responses to migration and displacement among Somalis:

> Regardless of circumstance, a woman who sees her life's work primarily as the raising of her children still has her raison d'être as long as those children are with her. A man who takes his identity in significant part from his role in his family and community is bound to find things stressful when he cannot provide for his family and is not sure what role he can play in a community that he does not yet understand. (1999, p. 18).

However, given the challenges of resettlement described above, particularly family separation, many women could not adequately fulfill their mothering roles. Many could not support their families financially, becoming worse off than they had been in Somalia. This was particularly true for professional women (Israelite, Herman and Alim, 1999). Despite their increased power within the household, Somali mothers still had to contend with the demoralizing effects of intersecting racism/xenophobia, sexism, poverty and the stresses of being a newcomer with limited linguistic competence and diminished social

supports (Maynard, 2017). Still, studies highlight women's resilience and the ways they

were able to exploit resettlement to reshape their lives (Berns-McGown, 2003; Israelite,

Herman and Alim, 1999). Somali women responded to the hardships of resettlement by

reconstituting time-tested homeland practices for their new Canadian environment. To

stretch their limited incomes, women activated a micro-credit money-pooling practice

known as *Hagbad (*Mohamed, 1999). Some women began selling imported articles to

supplement their incomes (Spitzer, 2006). Religion played a pivotal role in women's lives,

connecting them with other women for support, especially with the difficult task of

learning how to raise their children in a non-Muslim, Western environment (Berns-

McGown, 2003, p.14).

Moreover, Somali women, coming as they did from a patriarchal society, were

already used to negotiating marginal spaces and were better equipped to adapt to the

challenges of their new environment. Even if they had been economically and socially

better off in their homeland: "The combination of the formal skills and the spirit of agency,

resourcefulness and survival inculcated by Somali culture were useful in helping Somali

women deal with their current marginalization as refugees" (Mohamed, 1999, p.2).

Challenges of the Second Generation

The travails of Somali families impacted the integration outcomes of their children, particularly their male children (Bassel, 2012; Jibril, 2011; Naji, 2012). The challenges encountered by second generation Somali Canadian males that emerged in this literature review fall within three themes: identity formation, school abandonment and scholastic underachievement, and participation in crime and violence.

Identity and alienation

Somali youth are said to have bumped up against the demands of acculturation and identity formation while still in the shadow of their parent's tribulations (Arte, 2015; Daniel & Cukier, 2015; Foreman, 2001; Naji, 2012). Elmi (2007, p.3) contends that Somali youth, such as himself, struggled to overcome alienation from both their own Somali community and mainstream society: "To the Somali community I was a lost, Westernized teen, but to mainstream society I was a 'Black youth' who required constant surveillance for the greater good of Canadian society." Somali youth more generally struggle to establish their identity within the twin demands of family and society, alongside the pull of black youth subculture most notably associated with Rap music, and more negatively with drug dealers (Arte, 2015; Foreman, 2001; Naji, 2012; Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014). Geopolitics and events in the Horn of Africa also play a role in the identity construction of Somali youth in the diaspora (Stachel, 2012).

Intergenerational fissures emerged as some youth drifted away from the Muslim and Somali identities privileged by their parents (Arte, 2015; Berns-McGown, 1999;

Kusow, 2006; Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014). Berns-McGown (1999) argues that the religiosity of Somali mothers is driven by the need to protect their children, and manifests in strict parenting practices and the expectation that their children abstain from activities prohibited for Muslims, especially drinking and dating. Others have made similar observations (Arte, 2015; Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014).

In addition to the challenges inherent in acculturation, discrimination has hindered Somali youths' access to and development of a positive Canadian identity. The media has further contributed to their alienation in the way it has constructed Somali identity in association with violence and criminality (Arte, 2015; Berns-McGown, 2012; Stachel 2012). While adult Somali have turned to "moral discourses," invoking their own sense of belonging and of cultural pride as a buffer against discrimination (Kusow, 2006, p.546), young Somalis negotiating competing identities while facing discrimination lack such armour.

The experience of discrimination based on Somali, Muslim and racialized black identity has resulted in alienation from a desired Canadian belonging, some youth drifting towards Hip-Hop subculture and Rap music (Berns-McGown, 2012; Arte, 2015; Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014). Youth may utilize this black identity as "a form of resistance" (Stachel, 2012, p.151). In other instances, alienation and perceived threats to their faith compel some Somali male youth to sympathize with Islamic extremist groups (Taylor, Wohl, King & Kawatra, 2012).

Though not all Somali youth experience the 'identity crisis' or 'confusion' that some

have attributed to them (Arte, 2015; Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014),

many do struggle to establish a stable identity, oscillating between identifying as black,

Canadian, or Somali depending on the particular social space they occupy at a given

moment (Daniel & Cukier, 2015; Gariba, 2009). The struggles of some male youth

notwithstanding, Somali youth in general have managed to establish identities sufficiently

fluid to traverse successfully the demands of sometimes competing Somali, Muslim, black

and mainstream Canadian identities (Berns-McGown, 2012; Collet, 2007; Stachel 2012).

Schooled for failure

Schools are where youths' identities are developed and honed (Collet, 2007;

Forman, 2001). Bhatia (2010, p.73) has observed that Somali youth have been "inserted into

the racial dynamics of North America" and they in turn "negotiate their identities in the

context of school through consumption of popular culture ideologies of race." Similarly,

Forman (2001, p.38), who conducted an ethnographic work in two schools in Canada and

the United States, observes that young Somalis "are positioned in a turbulent nexus of

institutional influence" consisting of family, religion and school. Schools and the desire to

fit in with peers, Foreman argued, exert the greater influence on youth. Schools inculcate

in immigrant youth mainstream liberal and multicultural values (Collet, 2007) even as they

are also "often the sites in which...larger societal systems of discrimination are reproduced,

perpetuated, and maintained" (Daniel & Cukier, 2015). Consequently, Somali male youth in

particular report feeling disconnected from school (Hashi, 2017; Somali Canadian Cultural

Society of Edmonton, 2014;). Forman (2001) observed in the 1990s that Somali students

were channeled into schools that were under-funded and into non-academic streams

within those schools, making them less equipped to attend university.

There is strong evidence of both the academic underachievement of Somali students, and their high secondary school dropout rate, particularly boys (Farah, 2011, Jibril, 2011; Hashi, 2009; Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014). In 2012, the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) convened a task force to determine the challenges Somali students experience in schools. The findings of the Task Force indicated that between 2006 and 2011 the Somali student dropout rate in Toronto was 25%; other estimates suggest the number was closer to 37% (Stachel, 2012). The risk of early departure from school was greater for boys than for girls (35% and 17% respectively). Additionally, the study revealed that 74% of Somali students had been assigned to special education programs, suspended from school, or performed below average in provincial standardized tests (TDSB, 2014).

An Ottawa study also found wide spread discrimination against Somali children, boys in particular, on the part of school administration. The study notes that, perhaps because they are perceived as violent, male youth from underprivileged backgrounds "are shown no tolerance in school… [and] are often kicked out of school … [with] some schools even involv[ing] the police" (Farah, 2011, p.285). Similar challenges, including the unavailability of help or tutoring, the lowered expectations of teachers, and experiences of discrimination were found to exist for Somali youth in Edmonton (Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014; Hashi, 2014). Discrimination and bullying have resulted in disengagement, absenteeism and, in the case of boys, fights and behavioural issues that often lead to expulsions or police involvement (Daniel & Cukier, 2015; Farah,

2011; Koch, 2007; Forman 2001; Stachel, 2012).

The role of Somali parents has also been implicated in the poor education outcomes of their children. Youth, although they are not refugees themselves, may experience trauma transmitted through their families (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick & Stein, 2011). Moreover, Somali parents' interactions with school have been characterized by misunderstandings. Some parents fail to adhere to school policies because they are not often present in the school environment and are unable to interact with teachers or participate in meetings with teachers and administrators (Koch, 2007; Stachel, 2012). In some cases parents resisted their children's participation in liberal education programs within the schools, such as co-ed physical activities and sexual health education, creating additional tensions with the schools (Collet, 2007). In other cases, parents had to negotiate with teachers who wanted to put their children into dead-end programmes, navigating the racisms of Canadian teachers to ensure positive opportunities for their children; especially their male children whose physical energy made them problematic for their young female teachers (Farah, 2011).

Discourse about Somali mothers brands them as detrimental to their children's learning potential. This identification of mothers as part of the problem is due to mainstream perceptions about Somali culture and/or the women's lack of literacy skills (Stachel, 2012). Fellin (2015) argues that the parenting classes offered to refugee women through various Canadian government-sponsored parenting programmes for refugees see Somali women as victims who need to be taught Western, middle-class parenting practices and values. These classes fail to recognize the agency of Somali mothers, manifest in their

efforts to ensure the survival of their families, and create safe spaces for their children (an observation others have also made, e.g., Berns-McGown, 1999; Stachel, 2012, Mohamed, 1999). Studies note that the linguistic barriers, family separations, and inadequate community support structures described above drastically limited some Somali parents' ability to engage in their children's education (Koch, 2007; Stachel, 2012). Moreover, parents did not always understand the education system, or the language of report cards, and they were confounded by the practice of promoting children with their age-cohort regardless of academic achievement (Berns-McGown 2012; Koch, 2007).

Somali parents have the same high hopes for their children and the same high expectations of their children as other immigrant parents: parents who defer their own aspirations to invest in their children until they can be said to be "*living through their children*" (Taylor & Krahn, 2013, p.1017) [emphasis mine]. Such high parental expectations have been flagged as among the pressures youth struggle to navigate without having the support they need to live up to them (Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014).

Poverty, prejudice and crime

Recent literature, consisting primarily of grey literature (government and non-governmental organizations reports) and graduate theses, has begun documenting the rising crime rate and incidence of violence among some segments of Somali Canadian male youth (Adan, 2016; Bucerius & Thompson, 2016; Hashi, 2009; Jibril, 2011; Khalema et al., 2011; Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014). The violence that this thesis explores is directly tied to drugs and membership in gangs, and laterally tied to the

risk conditions in which the youth grew up, namely, high unemployment, discrimination

and police profiling (Arte, 2015; Bucerius & Thompson, 2016; Gariba, 2009; Hashi, 2009;

Jibril, 2011; Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014). In media reports, the

homicides in Edmonton were attributed to youth getting caught up in "an escalating gang

and drug turf war" (CBC, 2010, para.2).

An untold number of Somali Canadian youth moved to Alberta from Toronto and

elsewhere in Ontario following a similar pattern of secondary migration to other Canadians

heading West in search of economic opportunities (Wingrove & Mackrael, 2012). In

Toronto, Somali youth endured high unemployment rates. Young men, in particular, faced

added discrimination based on their Muslim names (Gariba, 2009). In Alberta, youth, even

those with university degrees, encountered barriers to employment despite the economic

growth associated with the oil industry, (Abdela, 2015; Hashi, 2009; Somali Canadian

Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014). As a result, some became easy targets for recruitment

into criminalized activities (Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014).

Jibril (2011) asserts that the disadvantages suffered by the first generation of Somali

immigrants have been inherited by the second generation, leading to their participation in

criminal activities such as the drug trade. From this perspective, the violence which has

created so much fear for Somali Canadians is seen as driven by the youths' need to belong

and their need for material goods (Adan, 2016; Arte, 2015; Jibril, 2011; Khalema *et al.*, 2011).

Early exposure to bullying and racism has normalized violence for some youth (Stachel,

2012). Weak connections to family and school, and strong reliance on peers for support,

has also been offered as an explanation for participation in criminal activities (Somali

Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014). Studies report strong youth distrust of the criminal justice system due to experiences of police harassment. This distrust, and the fact that witnesses have refused to cooperate with the police, is offered as an explanation for the continuing unsolved status of Somali homicides (Bucerius & Thompson, 2016; Hashi, 2009; Khalema et al., 2011; Tiilikainen, 2015). Police in Edmonton acknowledged that the distrust is mutual. They have little knowledge of the Somali community in Edmonton except as a "problem community" (Bucerius & Thompson, 2016).

The violence continues to create fears for the safety of their male children among Somali Canadians (Adan, 2016; Jibril 2011; Khalema et al., 2011; Tiilikainen, 2015). The media contributes to these fears by focusing on associations between crime and Somali youths thereby diminishing public sympathy for them (Berns-McGown, 2012; Khalema et al., 2011). Khalema *et al.* (2011, p.65), examining the risk factors for involvement in crime of Somali youth in Edmonton found that media narratives were suffused "with a subtext of the violence as being a cultural/community problem that has nothing to do with Canada." The researchers interpreted these messages as "shaming the community" by highlighting their Somali, refugee or immigrant backgrounds even though some of the victims of violence were Canadian-born (2011, p. 80). They also found that inaccuracies in the media stories were common: "some of the media stories are not documented correctly, names are constantly misspelled, facts such as timelines are incorrect and references and headlines are frequently misleading" (2011, p.65). Bucerius and Thompson (2016) carried out several studies with members of the Somali communities and Somali youth in Toronto and Edmonton, as well as police officers in Edmonton. Their findings suggest that youth

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experience discrimination most often in public spaces suggesting that media stories are

influencing public perception.

Summary, Strengths and Gaps in the Literature

The available literature on Somali migration and resettlement in Canada is generally concerned with the experiences of first generation refugees, providing a comprehensive backdrop to their struggle to plant roots in Canada. That literature also examines gender relations and the role reversals that resulted in marriage breakdown, exacerbating the disproportionate number of lone female-headed families due to the number of women who arrived alone having lost or been separated from their husbands in the civil war. Recent and growing, but less robust, literature has begun to focus on challenges specific to the second generation (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Summary of Somali Canadian Migration and Settlement
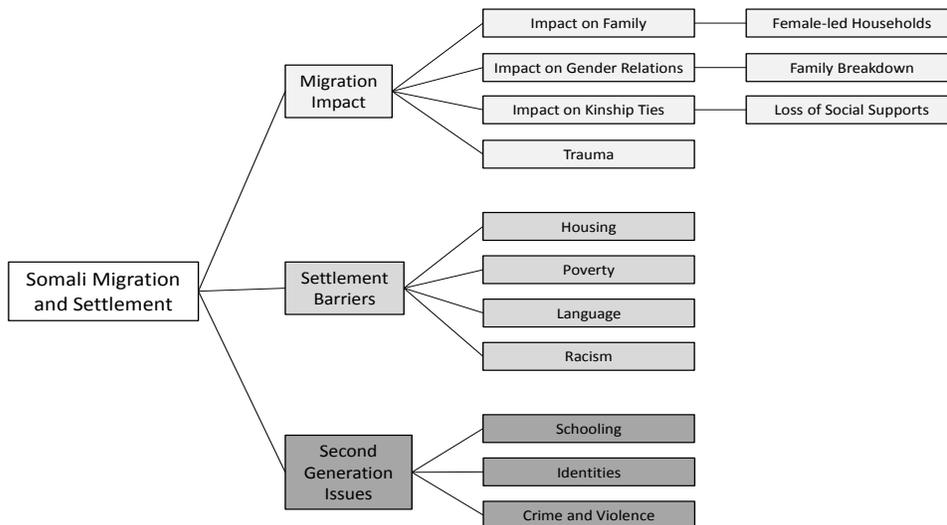
The strength of the existing literature is that it provides a rich exploration of the challenges met by the first generation of Somali refugees and their struggle to adapt and integrate in the face of unemployment and their outsider and refugee status.

Existing research draws clear links between the struggles of the first generation, and the adverse outcomes observed in the second generation of Somali Canadians. The children, studies suggest, have borne the brunt of their parents' struggles. More than a quarter of a century later these parents continue to fret over the wellbeing of their children. Their worries converge on the twin issues of institutional racism and precarious identities. The push into criminality and violence observed in some youth is attributed to social rejection, material want, and the troubled identity formation of the second generation. Second generation Somali youth struggle to establish a sense of themselves within a set of competing identities (Canadian, Muslim and Black). The most marginalized among them consume the messages promoted by some Rap music and gravitate towards drugs and gangs; assuming identities more readily associated with urban African American black youth. 'Structural violence' such as poverty and racism are acknowledged distal causes, driving the violence and participation in criminal behaviours.

Locating this Study

The struggle of the first generation Somalis is well documented, so that a literature review provides a comprehensive backdrop to the current situation. The trials of the second generation are an emerging area of study within broader Somali diaspora scholarship, to which this research hopes to make a significant contribution. Gender is an important factor and as such is considered in most existing studies. While earlier studies focused almost exclusively on Somali women with men appearing tangentially in their analysis, this study looks at the particular struggles of Somali male youth.

Although there are studies highlighting issues specific to young women (e.g., discrimination based on the hijab), and generalized identity and unemployment issues common to both sexes, research on Somali youth implicates young men specifically as participants in and victims of crime and violence. Despite the fact that studies link the violence and reported crimes to young Somali Canadian males, scholarship on Somali Canadian youth has not sufficiently engaged with masculinity and how it shapes the response of marginalized young men to their marginalization. I would argue that this approach is critical to understanding how and why some young Somali male yield to violence.

Additionally, while studies consistently underscore the negative impact of violence on Somali Canadians and its psychosocial consequences (e.g., Jibril, 2011, Bokore; Tiilikainen, 2015) there is also evidence of positive community responses and the assertion of agency on the part of advocacy groups in Toronto, Edmonton and Ottawa. A deepen look at both the impact on and the response of the community is still needed in order to understand the wide-reaching effects of the violence on Somali families and community, and strengthen ongoing prevention/intervention efforts.

Despite the obvious fact that violence has implications for public health (and individual health both specifically and generally), existing literature has not engaged the problem from this disciplinary perspective. I aim to address that gap by proposing a clear and robust evidenced-based framework that can be used to understand the determinants of violence among Somali/racialized youth and support informed prevention efforts.

Initial studies exploring the causes of the violence involving young Somali men signal the need to examine the complex interaction of social, economic and political factors that influence the criminality and violence of marginalized youth.

Though this study explores youth violence and crime specific to the Somali Canadian experience, it is positioned within a broader field of scholarship examining migration and the African diaspora[4]. Migration literature concerned with the identity formation of second generation offers insights into the identity 'crisis' ascribed to second generation Somali youth. There are two important reasons for studying the second generation, which are relevant to the present study.

First, second generation undertake identity formation processes which are distinct from the acclimatization process their parents must navigate (Rajiva, 2005). The older émigrés must overcome the barriers to resettlement described above (e.g., language, housing, employment) and contend with the racism their difference engenders in the country of resettlement. Meanwhile, the second generation confronts questions of belonging and identity formation in relation to their peers, the mainstream society, and parental expectations (Rajiva, 2005; Walcott et al., 2008). Their struggle is one of "growing up different" rather than of being 'different' like their parents (Rajiva, 2005, p. 186). This group, which is predominantly racialized despite growing up within the dominant white culture, tends to be less rooted in the "new" culture than one would

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[4] The scope and framework of this study does not permit sufficient space to delve into the robust diaspora scholarship. The African diaspora, and indeed the Somali diaspora in Canada and elsewhere, is transnational, and consists of diverse cultures and histories (Walcott, 2005; Zeleza, 2005). Writing about the Somali presence in Canada, even with such a specific focus as the violence of its youth, nevertheless, implicitly brings this study into conversation with diasporic preoccupations.

expect. 'Second generation immigrants' are often treated as outsiders despite being Canadian-born and/or bred (Kobayashi, 2008). The literature on Somali settlement in Canada, reviewed above, already signals the divergence between the experiences of first and second generation immigrants.

The discussion of identity formation in second generation Somali-Canadian youth and its relevance to the violence and crime under study will be revisited in Chapter Seven. Here, it is sufficient to state that what is known about second generation black Canadians provides ample reason to study the specific experiences of second generation immigrants. In 2006, second generation black Canadians were the youngest racialized group in Canada, most of them living in urban metropolitan centres such as Toronto (Statistics Canada, 2011). They are a significant and diverse population that warrants research attention.

Another reason for studying second generation disaggregated from their immigrant parents is that the integration trajectory and outcomes of the second generation offer lessons about the state of the ethnic community as a whole. How well their children have "settled in" is a valuable gauge of how the ethnic community will fare in the long run (Maira, 2002). US studies examining the integration of immigrants into the American 'melting pot' describe a *segmented assimilation* trend whereby the children of racialized black immigrants are assimilated into the socio-economic and cultural structures of existing black communities (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Portes and Zhou (1993) observe that racialized immigrants become concentrated in areas within close proximity to existing marginalized black communities where their children's behaviours and values

become indistinguishable from that of their peers. The authors further note that, even if the parents' economic conditions improve, some of their children, having embraced the subculture of urban black youth, will fall into intergenerational marginalization.

In Canada, despite a multicultural rather than assimilationist framework for managing diversity, there is reason to believe that children of African descent follow a similar integration trajectory. James and Turner (2017) observe that the education outcomes of third generation black youth are worse than those of the second generation. Observable trends related to the involvement in crime and violence of black Canadian youth similarly lend credence to the claim that over time, at least in the North American context, second generation youth of African descent become identical to (or identify with) youth in long-settled black communities. In brief, black Canadian male youth constitute the majority of both victims and perpetrators of youth violence (Thompson, 2014). Additionally, there is an upward trend of increasing incarcerations of black men in Canada (Zinger, 2016). I will discuss in a later chapter the ways in which these incarcerations contribute significantly to the construction of violence.

The idea of segmented assimilation as seen through a racialization lens is, of course, contested, particularly by perspectives that privilege ethnicity over racialization as an explanation for differing experiences and/or reactions. Ethnicity is also relevant in the case of Somalis and will be considered later in this thesis. Here I want to emphasize the importance of both racialization and ethnicity for this particular study. For this reason I have located this work in both Somali Canadian/Somali diaspora experiences and black Canadian/black diaspora realities as well as intersecting with migration literature more

generally. The reception and resettlement of first generation Somalis, and the position of Afro-Canadians in Canada, are contexts which must also be considered in seeking explanations for the emergence of the violence and crime among Somali youth, the stated focus of this study.

This research looks back to the experiences of the largest cohort of Somalis to settle in Canada, in order to explore how those experiences influenced the integration outcomes of their offspring, in ways those newly arrived Somalis could not have foreseen nearly three decades ago. While this specifically Somali context is relevant, the violence and crime of young Somalis is, I propose, also clearly visible within the construction of black masculinity. The impact of the violence is most clearly seen and most helpfully interpreted through a population health framework. I turn to that discussion next.

CHAPTER THREE: A POPULATION HEALTH PERSPECTIVE ON VIOLENCE

The position of this work is that violence is a preventable social problem and "factors that contribute to violent responses —whether they are factors of attitude and behaviour or related to larger social, economic, political and cultural conditions — can be changed" (Krug et al, 2002, p.3). It is now increasingly accepted that youth violence is a public health problem with identifiable risk markers, or determinants, that are amenable to change (CAMH, 2005; Dahlberg & Mercy, 2009). A key tenet of the population health perspective is that the unequal distribution of power and resources in society is largely to blame for the uneven burdens of disease and injury. That is to say, socio-economic inequalities underlie health inequities (Canadian Council for SDH, 2008, McGibbon, 2012; Raphael, 2012).

Most recently, youth violence has been likened to an infectious disease in that where it clusters, how it spreads through populations, and how it is transmitted to individuals mimics the etiology of pandemics. Just as not all communities are equally vulnerable to infection; those exposed to violence are more likely to engage in acts of violence (Slutkin, 2013). The comparison of violence to disease and the behavioural prescriptions that flow from such comparisons risk focusing attention on individual behavioural changes (and an individual's immediate environment) while neglecting upstream factors, such as power inequities and unfair economic distribution, among others. Still, this perspective on youth violence underscores the contagious nature of a violent incident, which can often trigger other violent incidents, or augment the threat of

violence (Anderson, 2008). It is the social production of violence, or conditions that promote violence, that motivate this discussion.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as "[t]he intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (Krug et al., 2002). This definition considers both the loss of life or injury sustained as a result of violence, as well as the psychological harm and deprivation violence can create. In this sense, and as I shall discuss below, racism has been viewed as a form of violence that over time results in psychological injuries (Carter, 2007; Jiwani, 2006; Walcott et al, 2008).

Young black men experience a high level of violence and are frequent victims of violence, often at the hands of other young black men (Anderson, 2008; WHO 2014). To understand the drivers of violence in the present case study, a population health perspective is helpful. This perspective lends itself to understanding the personal and social factors that contribute to or give rise to violence, while underscoring the relationship between public health and violence, and the health consequences of violence — its impact on young men, their families and their communities (WHO, 2014). Because population health is concerned with "the study of why there are different disease burdens or risks amongst different social groupings" (Labonté et al., 2005, p. 6), this perspective necessitates exploring the social relations and distribution of resources in a given context and at a particular historical moment (Dunn & Hayes, 1999).

Social Determinants of Health and Violence

Socially and environmentally produced inequalities, from a population health perspective, cannot be prevented or amended through individual behaviour changes alone, nor can they be addressed through state-sponsored punitive measures; they require redressing the societal conditions that give rise to these differences through action on the social determinants of health (SDH) (The Chief Public Health Officer [CPHO Report], 2008; Raphael & Makkinon, 2008).

The SDH are factors in an individual's environment that influence health and wellbeing. They go beyond biomedical perspectives on the causes of health problems, such as pathogens, behaviours, and genetics, by "focusing the gaze on the historical, political, social and economic antecedents of ill health" (McGibbon, 2012, p.19). This critical gaze sees populations unduly impacted by systemic factors as "people under threat" (McGibbon, 2012).

Several determinants have been identified as significant to a population's health and wellbeing (See Table 1). Those that are most relevant for this study and for immigrant populations more generally are shown in the right hand column of the table and include key determinants such as age, migration and ethnicity[5].

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[5] In 2011, my colleagues and I identified the SDH most relevant for immigrant populations based on a model by Dahlgren and Whitehead (1991) that identifies SDH at three interacting levels: Macro, Meso and Micro. Our modified version highlighted education, racialization, gender, housing and employment as key determinants of health for immigrant populations (see Benkhalti Jandu, 2015). Missing from that list are ethnicity and age, which Dahlgren and Whitehead identified and which are relevant for the present study.

Table 1: Social Determinants of Health

SDH from Raphael, D. (2004, p.6); Mikkonen & Raphael, 2009, p.9).	SDH relevant for immigrant/refugee population
Aboriginal status Disability Early life Education Employment and working conditions Food insecurity Health services Gender Housing Income and income distribution Race Social exclusion Social safety net Unemployment and job security	*Age* Disability Early life Education Employment and working conditions Food insecurity *Ethnicity* Health services Gender Housing Income and income distribution *Migration* *Racialization* Social exclusion Social safety net Unemployment and job security

Source: Benkhalti Jandu, 2015; Bryant, Raphael, Schrecker, & Labonté, 2011; Dahlgren & Whitehead, 1991; Raphael, 2004; Mikkonen & Raphael, 2009.

Importantly, these determinants also point to factors that shape social relations, such as 'race' and gender, which combine to produce "synergies of oppression" that result in inequities in health (McGibbon & Etowa, 2012). Within this compendium of determinants, two concepts — race and gender — are among the most significant for understanding the reasons young black men in North America engage in violence. It is important to situate the young black men and the violence within their context because "[h]uman behaviour is always shaped by social expectations and institutions, relationships of power and meaning, and landscapes of economy and ecology" (Prentice, 2010, p.168).

As will be discussed shortly, the intersection between the construction of black masculinity in North America and other known determinants of health (notably racialization and deprivation) is where risks for violence emerge and possible explanations for the violence might be sought.

The population health perspective provides a useful overarching framework for conceptualizing and preventing violence, situating it within intersecting determinants of health. Although the theoretical foundations of population health as a discipline are still in the early stages of development (Dunn, 2006), its interdisciplinary nature permits the incorporation of other theoretical perspectives that have grappled with the problem of young men and violence, such as the aforementioned-segmented assimilation perspective. This interdisciplinary reinforcement strengthens the conceptual framework I am using. Theories emerging from Gender Studies, in particular Masculinity Studies, situate the violence of young men within a set of social expectations defining what it means to be a man in a given society, while acknowledging the crosscutting impacts of race and class (Connell, 2005).

Racialization and racism: Determinants of violence

Race is a socially constructed concept generally understood, without any scientific basis, to describe innate biological and cultural differences between groups (Etowa & McGibbon, 2012). Because the social construction of race is relational it serves the purpose of creating social hierarchies that ultimately confer power and privilege on dominant groups (Galabuzi, 2006). As McClintock argues, race "is not simply a question of skin color but also a question of labor power, cross hatched by gender" (1995, p.5). To

talk about race is fundamentally to talk about power and domination (Jiwani, 2009),

making race a political category with origins in slavery and colonialism (Roberts, 2011).

Creating racial categories serves to undermine interpersonal solidarity across

racially diverse groups by depicting an individual from a subordinate group as "an

outsider [that is] sometimes dangerous and sometimes a pariah" (Galabuzi, 2006, p.31).

For this reason, critical social theorists prefer to speak of racialization rather than race.

Making this distinction allows them both to be vigilant against the reification of

differences between people and to underscore the social process by which some groups

become the 'other' and are thus systemically excluded from the social, economic, political

and legal protections and benefits of society (Chan & Mirchandani, 2002; Galabuzi, 2006;

Razack, 2004; Spitzer, 2011). Racialization is the "process through which any diacritic of

social personhood — including class, ethnicity, generation, kinship/affinity, and position

within fields of power — come to be essentialized, naturalized, and/or biologized"

(Silverstein, 2005 p. 364).

Razack (2008) describes racism as a system of thought in which there are clear

beneficiaries and losers. It is a system sanctioned through state apparatus. Even the

deaths of those deemed racially inferior may be seen "as something that will make life in

general healthier: healthier and purer" (2008, p.10). In Canada, racism is often framed as

"difference." According to Razack "a difference framework suggests that people possess

certain cultural characteristics;" such that groups can be assigned an essential character.

By this logic Somalis, for example, are prone to clannishness, while Canadians possess

"inborn niceness and civility" (Razack, 2004, p. 135).

What makes racism significant for health is the privilege or lack of privilege conferred on particular groups (Paradies, 2007) through what Krieger (2006) calls the "biological expression of race relations." Racialized communities are vulnerable to the emotional stress of racist policies and practices that form the basis of their social exclusion and result in their exposure to harmful social, economic and physical environments (Etowa & McGibbon, 2012; Galabuzi, 2010). A growing body of psychological literature has likened the effects of racism to the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), claiming that racist encounters are kin to assaults in that both result in deep psychological and emotional injuries (Carter, 2007; Helms et al, 2012; Williams, 2013).

Related to the concept of race is ethnicity, which is similarly a determinant of health and demarcates boundaries of group-belonging based on shared physical, symbolic and ritual characteristics, language, geography or kinship relationship (Dressler et al. 2004). Ethnicity merits specific consideration in the context of this study to acknowledge the diversity both within and between racialized groups. The experiences of the diverse communities that make up black Canadians are vastly different, and the social position of each group warrants its own set of analytical tools and attention (Walcott et al. 2008). As Walcott et al. (2008, p.328) contend, "poverty and racialized violence appear in many guises and with varied outcomes for and reactions to and by those defined as Black in Canada."

Even while drawing heavily on the experiences of long-established black and other minority communities in North America, in order to understand our study group, it is important to acknowledge the specificity of the experience of being Somali in Canada.

Membership in this particular group carries an 'ethnic penalty' higher than that of any other black African identity (The Economist, 2013), a reality which points to the existence of racial hierarchies and informs the way in which new immigrants are located within these "colonial situations" (Grosfoguel, 2004, p.320).

Understanding this racial hierarchy is essential to understanding how the Somalis of Canada are positioned vis-à-vis the dominant white society as well as other minority groups. I shall argue in a later chapter that Somali ethnicity represents a problematic and marginalized social grouping in Canada and elsewhere, fuelled in part by geopolitics in the Horn of Africa. The association of Somalis with piracy and terrorism, in particular, has allowed this group to be depicted, as Said (1985, p.42) observed of Muslims decades earlier, as the "radical *other*, fundamentally and constitutively different", confirming their alienation from the Canadian community, real and imagined.

Gender: A determinant of violence

The racial and ethnic pecking order can be understood, in essence, as a struggle for power between men competing to attain and control desired and finite social goods; resources, women or anything else seen to enhance their group's social status in relation to others (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). It is more often black men, and not black women, who are the targets of such contestation in the form of direct aggression or institutional policies to contain or exclude them (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Thus, racism may be viewed as a form of hidden violence that is "structured in a larger culture of power — a culture mediated by institutions structured in dominance" (Jiwani, 2006 p. xi). Gender plays a significant role as a determinant to well-being, just as it does to behaviour.

Similarly, gender signifies the socially ascribed roles of men and women, boys and girls. It includes notions of femininity and masculinity that reinforce gender binaries (Krieger, 2003; Spitzer, 2011). The gender order establishes normative expectations of the roles men and women will fulfil in society. Moreover, the "meaning and expectations of gender are expressed through gender ideologies" and mediated through other social identities and locations such as ethnicity/race, socioeconomic status, sexuality, and age, in order "to shape social hierarchies and structure access to determinants of health" (Spitzer, 2011, p.5).

Gendered expectations also define and delimit relationships between men and women and the inequalities that are emblematic in those relationships, such as who has control over resources, and can place people in positions of risk (or risk-taking), thus constraining their opportunities for a good life (Sen & Östlin, 2008; Spitzer, 2005). Connell (2005, p. 76) asserts that "gender relations are a major component of social structures as a whole, and gender politics are among the main determinants of our collective fate." The social production of gender, like the social production of race, is fundamentally an embodied experience. It is in the process of embodiment that the health effects of gender are produced (Connell, 2012; Krieger, 2003; Spitzer, 2005). For example, gender acts as a determinant of men's and boys' health through notions of masculinity that idealize stoicism and risk-taking (Evan et al., 2011).

To fully understand the logic and role of gender in violence, we must turn to masculinity theory to understand the genesis of men's desire for power and domination and the violent responses this engenders in marginalized men and boys.

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The Construction of Black Masculinity

Connell (2005, p. 29), who has examined masculinity in various contexts, surmises that masculinity, rather than being an "idea in the head or a personal identity'" is linked to institutional and economic structures and embedded in social relations. Far from existing as a static ideal, claims Connell, the idea of 'what men ought to be' "is always liable to internal contradictions and historical disruption" (2005, p.70). Masculinity, thus, is "simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place...and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture" (Connell, 2005, p. 71). Reese (2010, pp.51-52) similarly proposes that to understand masculinity's construction we must focus on the process by which it is constructed, and how it is "built up and made to appear natural and eternal."

There are many masculinities, and while ideas about the masculine are socially produced, it is not easy or even possible to pinpoint precisely who produces them (Reese 2010; Connell, 2005). Among the many forms of masculinity the *hegemonic* ideal "emphasizes practices toward authority, control, independence, competitiveness, individualism, aggressiveness, and the capacity for violence" (Messerschmidt, 2000, p.10). By its very definition, then, hegemonic masculinity is related to the way a group of men dominate other groups (both men and women) in social life; dominance and access to institutional power, is at the intersection of cultural ideals of what it means to be a man. As Connell (2005, p.77) contends: "It is the successful claim to authority, more than direct violence, that is the mark of hegemony," with violence as a readily accessible option to assert domination and authority.

It is the capacity for violence, and masculinity's role in legitimizing its use, that can help explain how young men learn violence as a practice of masculinity. The internalization of violence can be further explained in the ways in which masculinity intersects with blackness and marginalization.

Masculinity, marginalization and violence

Before exploring the reasons young black men engage in violence, an understanding of the construction of black masculinity is necessary. This is because, as Connell (2005, pp. 2-5) proposes, while hegemonic and other forms of masculinity are "internal to the gender order", marginalization reconfigures those relationships, incorporating class and race as "integral part[s] of the dynamic between masculinities." Colonization and globalization brought diverse populations into contact and influenced racial hierarchies. Masculinity remains central to the racial and ethnic ranking derived from those encounters (Connell, 2005). Doubtlessly, black masculinity is constructed as a response to the social control of a racist system, an embodied resistance of social arrangements that are not merely in the past but still play out in the present (hooks, 2004; O'Donnell & Sharpe, 2000).

Particular types of masculinities are associated with different groups. Asian men's masculinity may be perceived as effeminate, that is to say, possessing qualities associated with women, while black masculinity, broadly speaking, tends to be epitomized by an "excess" of violence and sexuality — "hypervirility" — a state of being out of control (Reese, 2010, p.149). Like black masculinity, Muslim masculinity has historically been, and continues to be, linked with violence, especially since the terrorist attacks of 2001 (Razack, 2004; Walcott, 2009). Meanwhile, favoured, moderate masculinity is seen as the purview of

upstanding middle-class white men who must control the ostensibly out-of-control black men, in the streets, and in prisons (Connell, 2005; Reese, 2010). Hegemonic masculine traits may be internalized and/or appropriated by racialized men for their own ends, or such men may adopt alternative masculinities in order to define themselves in opposition to other groups. Either performance is seen as suggesting the absence of innate masculinity (Reese, 2010).

Black masculinity (or more accurately, masculinities) in North America is considered to be endangered and in crisis (hooks, 2004; Walcott, 2009). It is an idea of masculinity constructed in the presence of white supremacy, and for the consumption of a white audience (Connell, 2005; hooks, 2004; Lewis, 2008). Lewis (2008, p.7) asserts that: "black masculinity has historically been framed in notions of Brute, Negro, Stud, Noble Savage, Uncle Tom, and Bad Nigger, or womanizer, lazy, flashy, greedy, violent and dumb." These stereotypes originate in justifications for slavery and the Jim Crow laws in the US: the same justifications that sanctioned the colonization of African peoples, depicting them as inferior and leading to the emergence of an essentialized black masculinity that continues to mark black men as lacking intelligence and "bestial in their needs" (Roberts, 2011; Alexander, 2010; Saint-Aubin, 2005, p.35). These stereotypes still shadow even successful black men (hooks, 2004), typecasting them as itinerant and transient outsiders prone to "criminality and devious violence" (Wacquant, 2005 p. 128).

These representations, while most visible in the United States, have existed and continue to exist in Canada as well, revived most recently through neoliberalism — an ideology promoting free market economies and the reduction of state interventions to

assist the poor (Navarro, 2007; Walcott et al., 2008, Walcott, 2009). The neoliberal enterprise[6], which Walcott argues is both an economic and a cultural ideology, given its emphasis on individual self-management, has classified black men as "'wasted' masculinities who appear to have nothing to contribute to the global engines of capitalism" (2009, p.79), thus, paving the way for the mass incarceration of black men (Alexander, 2010; Uwusu-Bempah & Morgan, 2016; Wacquant, 2009).

hooks (2004, p.17) asserts that black men in the North American context construct their masculinity in relation to capitalism, making the attainment of money "by any means necessary" a way to compensate for weakened masculinity. hooks (2004, p.39) blames patriarchy and capitalism for linking manhood with money, thus undermining their "holistic selfhood" and robbing black men of alternative ways to feel good about themselves. Driving this focus on money as a measure of manhood, rather than "the realization of a work ethic based on integrity and ethical values" is the combination of black men's alienation from work under capitalism — which is exploitative and pays 'wage slavery' instead of a living wage — and the racism they experience in their lives, both in the streets and at work (hooks, 2004, p.18). The violence of marginalized men and boys thus

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[6] Neoliberalism, an offshoot of classical liberalism that includes, among others, concepts such as individualism, freedom and the rule of law, has been reconstituted over the past 40 years to prioritize the unrestricted pursuit of economic profits both within and across national borders, and state policies designed to facilitate those economic objectives (Freeden, 2015; Labonté & Stuckler, 2016). It has sought to place competition and individual self-interest above concerns with individual and communal welfare (Freeden, 2015; Giroux, 2012). Neoliberalism has not confined itself to the economic sphere but has sought to transform other areas of life (culture, social, political) in the service of free market enterprise (Freeden, 2015; Giroux, 2012; Walcott, 2009). The impact of neoliberalism has been far reaching, resulting in steep inequalities. It has been linked to the decline in social welfare programs and health expenditures, rising and persistent unemployment, including cuts to training programs, and stagnation or declines in population health and wellbeing outcomes (Labonté & Stuckler, 2016; Madut, 2106).

arises in the context of competition for self-esteem as well as limited resources (Anderson, 2008; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). In the absence of legitimate means for gaining power and domination, crime becomes a seemingly viable option for attaining social status (Anderson, 1999; hooks, 2004).

Black and marginalized men, thus, "negotiate hegemonic masculinity under a set of conditions that determine what options are available …[and] violence is a readily available option", becoming, in this context, a "measure of masculinity" (Razack, 2004, p.103). This is not to ignore the role of patriarchy and men's violence towards women, but to spotlight race — and poverty, underscoring the intersectionality of multiple axis of inequalities and hierarchies — and to highlight the impact of its construction on the behaviours of black men and boys (O'Donnell & Sharpe, 2000). There is a strong association between poverty, violence, and lack of trust in the mainstream justice system, which is seen to serve the interests of the rich. Experience steers these men towards the most immediate or expedient solution — or 'self-help' — directing their indignation not at those systems, but against those nearest to them, or as Pinker (2011, p. 84) bluntly states it: "not at society but at the asshole who scraped his car and dissed him in front of a crowd."

To address the specific situation of the black youth in the present case study we must add to this already complex backdrop. I turn now to a brief sketch of Somali masculinity to examine its impact on the identity formation of Somali boys and young men whose sense of self is formed and honed in the West.

Postwar Somali masculinity: The state of 'raganimo'

African masculinities, in general, are under-theorized (Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005). Like other African constructs of what it means to be a man, Somali masculinity emerged out of encounters with colonization. In the Somali case, this refers to the geopolitical tensions resulting from colonization in the Horn of Africa, chiefly the border disputes with neighbouring Ethiopia (Keynan, 2000). It is also shaped by competition for scarce resources locally, and the unequal distribution of the fruits of globalization, which have left many Africans impoverished (Keynan, 2000; Ouzgane & Morrell, 2005). Somali masculinity has consequently come to be dominated by the traits of hegemonic masculinity, those of a Macho culture that exalts and rewards aggression and valour (Keynan, 2000).

Somali masculinity has been constructed around the concept of *raganimo,* which, in addition to virility, embodies elements of bravery and toughness (*geesinimo*), generosity (*deeqsinimo*), and oratory skills, particularly in poetry (*aftahanimo*) (Hansen, 2008). Underlying these ideals of manhood is a man's ability to provide for his family and support and manage the affairs of his kin as the head of the household in a patriarchal kinship system; capacities that have diminished considerably with the civil war and resulting emigration to Europe and North America (Gardner & El-Bushra, 2016; Hansen; 2008; Kleist, 2010).

Welfare systems in the Western countries-of-settlement that promote gender equality have frustrated men's abilities to provide for their families, thereby undermining their moral authority and influence in the home (Abdi, 2015; Hansen 2008; Kleist, 2010).

As mentioned in the preceding chapter, Somali women are believed to have emerged as the heads of households in these countries by benefiting from welfare policies that prioritize the economic protection of women and children. This prioritization has upset traditional Somali gender roles in which men, rather than women, were the breadwinners and the heads of households (Abdi, 2015; Kleist, 2010). Consequently, Somali men who have migrated to the West in recent decades, particularly those underemployed or unemployed, have experienced a loss of "power, privilege and respect" and thereby a loss of social status (Kleist 2010, p.198). Hansen explains:

> The figure of the *raganimo* that ventures out into the public sphere and establishes himself as an authority by way of his braveness, helpfulness and eloquence is challenged in Western countries that mostly see Somali men as unemployed khat[7]-chewing nuisances with very few positive skills or qualities (2008, p.1117).

The ideals of hegemonic masculinity ostensibly dominate masculine practice in Somalia and elsewhere in Somali territories (Keynan, 2000). In the diaspora, however, diverse masculinities have emerged in response to new circumstances. Within the diaspora, some Somali men, particularly those with education, have found other avenues to fulfill desired social roles and thereby attain social status, most notably by becoming religious and community leaders or by supporting causes in Somali territories (Kleist, 2010). Others have returned to the Horn of Africa where, unlike in the West, there is a role for them to play within the affairs of their kin and country (Hansen, 2008).

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[7] Khat is a mildly stimulant herb common in Eastern Africa and Yemen.

Whether young Somali men growing up in Canada and elsewhere in the West are assuming elements of *raganimo* — and so performing it — or constructing their identities in opposition to it remains to be explored. The above brief sketch of the attributes of the ideal Somali man, and the emergence of diverse Somali masculinities in the postwar period, informs but does not explain the reality of boys and young Somali men growing up in urban centres of North America, especially those who have become involved in violence. We must, then, seek an explanation for the violent incidents involving young Somali men in Canada in the identity formation of black boys and young men in North America more broadly. Black youth masculinity in North America has developed against the backdrop of past and ongoing marginalization of black men.

Marginalization and the Constructed Oppositionality of Youth

We have seen in the above summary of the construction of black masculinities that black boys grow up in an environment where their male role models are disadvantaged by the history of slavery and colonization. Racist policies and perceptions, a legacy of that past, mean that many black communities exist as an 'underclass' in Canada and other Western countries (O'Donnell & Sharpe; Walcott et al., 2008). Recent neoliberal policies that have been blamed for the dismantling of pro-poor social protection programs have compounded the existing marginalization of black communities.

Given their emphasis on the rule of law, neoliberal policies have further been implicated in the "production of violence and crime among racial minorities" through the increased criminalization of marginalized youth, most notably the introduction of tougher criminal sentences and safe school acts that have resulted in the expulsion of black pupils

(Walcott et al., 2008, p.335). The incorporation of involvement in crime and violence into the identity formation of young black males is closely associated with their experiences of racism and poverty and their responses to those experiences (Walcott et al, 2008; O'Donnell & Sharpe, 2000; Anderson, 1999; Lewis, 2008). In the case of Somali boys, this reality is intensified by the decreased social status of Somali male emigrants to the West, as noted above. Behind the crime and violence black youth often inflict on one another is the violence of racism and the alienation it inflicts on young blacks. Young Somali men experience a deep-rooted anti-black racism in Canada, by which they and their communities are excluded from a sense of belonging to Canada. As Walcott et al. argue:

> The concerns over growing acts of violence by Black youth are all issues related to citizenship, in terms of questions and concerns about belonging and, among those youth, feeling a sense of empowerment to meaningfully contribute to the nation-state as genuine, accepted, and cherished members of the society, recognized as practising their full and active citizenship rights (2008, p. 320).

Poverty and alienation from society result in a "profound crisis" and as a result some black youth develop an oppositional culture that intensifies their social isolation (Anderson, 2008, p.7). This oppositional culture is enacted as a rejection of the norms and values of mainstream society, and takes shape in opposition to the dominant white society and the rules connected with it (Anderson, 2008; Lewis, 2008). Oppositional identities are refined by abrasion, scraping against the norms of the mainstream society. Schools and education become a particular target, because schools are where young people first encounter state authority (Connell, 2005). The school and its rules are experienced as

confining by these young boys from working-class and poor families such that they

develop their masculinity in opposition to learning and authority (Anderson, 1999;

Connell, 2005; Willis, 1977).

'Counter-school culture'

Willis (1977, p.128), in his influential study of working-class boys' experience in

secondary schools, described the reaction of 'lads' who came to understand that rather

than provide upward social mobility, schools actually seek to instil conformity and work to

entrench existing social hierarchies. He called their opposition to this education project

"counter-school culture". In his words:

> The individual might be convinced by education's apparent resume of what is
>
> supposed to happen in society — advance through effort for all who try — but the
>
> counter-school culture knows much better than the state and its agencies what to
>
> expect — elitist exclusion of the masses through spurious recourse to merit (1977,
>
> p.130).

The counter-school culture thus "helps to liberate its members from the burden of

conformism and conventional achievement. It allows their capacity and potential to take

root elsewhere" (Willis, 1977 p.130). The adoption of distinct clothing styles, musical tastes

and generally disruptive behaviours, including the derision of learning and of all school-

prescribed rules, are ingredients of counter-school culture, as are racism and sexism

(Willis, 1977).

O'Donnell and Sharpe (2000) identified several distinct ways in which black youth

respond to the oppression they experience, responses historically deployed by black people

to cope with oppression that have, over time, given rise to parallel masculine identities and styles(Table 2).

Table 2: Types of Black Masculinities and Related Coping Strategies

Coping Strategy	Related Masculine Identity
Submission	Uncle Tomism
Conformity/Accommodation	Low Key
Imitation	Acting White[8]
Resistance/Rebellion	Macho Culture, Political Activism
Retreatism	Drug Dependency, Drop out
Separatism	Rastafarianism, Black Muslim, Nationalist

Source: O'Donnell & Sharpe, 2000, p.62

These strategies are not static or mutually exclusive. They change with the times and conditions in which black youth and men find themselves. *Submission (Uncle Tomism)* has always been the most abhorrent strategy (O'Donnell & Sharpe, 20000). *Acting White,* while it served in the past to provide some social mobility (O'Donnel & Sharpe, 2000) has, in recent times, been cited as an explanation for lower academic achievement rates among urban black youth. This view claims that the overriding desire to blend in explains the behaviour of black youth (especially in the US) who reject academic achievement (even when they are talented) in order to fit in with their peers, and discourage (through ridicule and bullying) those of their peers that seek to excel academically and thus stick out above the crowd (McWhorter, 2014) and has been criticised for ignoring the structural factors that influence the school experience of black pupils (e.g., see Cook & Ludwig, 1997). In the context of this study, *resistance and rebellion* and, thereby, the living out of macho culture is most salient. While this coping tool and self-presentation strategy has taken and

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[8] I have replaced O'Donnell and Sharpe's term *More English than the English* which is specific to Britain with *Acting White,* which is the common expression of the imitation strategy in North America.

continues to take a political form among black male youth, these strategies are deployed

both to resist oppression and to assert agency (O'Donnell & Sharpe, 20000). Macho culture

is closely linked to the traits of hegemonic masculinity discussed above, in which (among

other more desirable traits) violence and the capacity to inflict violence are seen as readily

available ways to demonstrate maleness. By contrast, black girls and women more

frequently opt for the more pragmatic approach of "critical accommodation" to cope with

racism and its impacts, and to secure education and employment (O'Donnell & Sharpe,

2000).

Because of the alienation young black boys experience in their encounters with

white adult authority and the suspicion that their presence in public spaces triggers,

resistance strategies may be taken up in anticipation of prejudice so that young black boys

adopt in self-defence the very antagonistic postures which deepen their alienation

(O'Donnell & Sharpe, 2000; Anderson, 2008). This is to say, the young black male is

considered a threat in public spaces from shops to street corners, especially if his dress

suggests affiliation with Hip-Hop culture, a form of dress he has deliberately chosen as

armour against the hostile gaze (Anderson, 2008). Perceptions about the potential

criminality of the young black male influence his access to opportunities for employment,

especially if he does not change "from his oppositional uniform to something more

acceptable to the white establishment" while seeking employment (Anderson 2008, p. 21).

Hip-Hop culture derives its legitimacy from the streets of poor urban

neighbourhoods. It not only provides a sense of belonging for alienated youth (Walcott et

al., 2008) but has been, historically, "an expression of young people's despair and

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resistance" (Lewis, 2008 p.2) and, therefore, an assertion of their agency in the face of social isolation and deprivation. Gangsta Rap, the most commercially successful genre of Hip-Hop music and "the essence of patriarchal masculinity" (hook, 2004, p.27), has been most closely associated with the promotion of violence as a way to dominate others — to become a predator rather than prey — or to "get rich" and, therefore, to have power (Anderson, 1999). The tough masculinity of Rap Music emerges as an "attempted compensation for a perceived loss of power, potency or manhood in the wake of the real perceived power that controls the world" (Lewis, 2008, p. 2). The message of Hip-Hop music resonates with black youth in major Canadian cities who see parallels between the poverty of their lives, and those of black youth growing up in American ghettos (Walcott et al., 2008). Hip-Hop in itself does not cause violence and may even provide an outlet for the frustration of disenfranchised youth by opening a space through which to contest their deprivation (Walcott et al., 2008).

Black youth, and racialized minority men, feel compelled to make "hegemonic bargains when up against the demands of hegemonic masculinity" (Messerschmidt 2000, p.104). In response to the presence of unyielding social norms that continue to value idealized forms of masculinity, violence and engagement in criminality can become accepted means to acquire coveted social status.

Poverty, alienation and unemployment draw some young men into the illegal economy where "aspirations for well-being exist alongside a desperate desire for 'street cred'" (Anderson, 2008, p. 12). Far from seeing drug dealing and crime as moral wrongs, their approach to crime grows out of what Connell (2005) termed 'radical pragmatism'

whereby crime comes to be seen as a 'kind of work'. Dealing in drugs, which are readily

available on the street in disenfranchised neighbourhoods, presents itself as an easy entry

point. The poorest boys are often the easiest recruits, particularly those without father

figures (Anderson, 1999). However, youth from two-parent households are also enticed by

promises of glamour and wealth, even if only a few ever attain riches (Anderson, 2008).

In his insightful work investigating how violence unfolds in the streets of American

ghettos, Anderson (1999) contends that while some of the violence associated with black

youth is linked to drug deals gone wrong, envy and/or jealousy, it is most often the quest

for respect that precipitates violence. The desire for respect, and the use of violence to

attain and maintain it, has also been observed among Puerto Rican drug dealers in Harlem

(Bourgois, 1995). Far from being arbitrary, the violence of marginalized black youth is

regulated by a *code of the street* (hereafter 'the code') which exists in opposition to the rules

and norms of wider society: "The code revolves around the presentation of self. Its basic

requirement is the display of a certain predisposition to violence" (Anderson, 1999, p.72).

The right dress and shoes, an attitude embodied in a particular swagger, and verbal

eloquence; these are all prescribed within the code. Adherence to the code is a survival

strategy in the quest for respect and survival, in an environment of limited resources and

intense competition.

Respect in the streets can be understood as essential social capital, it is "an external

entity, one that is hard-won but easily lost — and so must constantly be guarded"

(Anderson, 1999, p.33). The young black man's obsession with respect, Anderson suggests,

is a desire for security. Children in these neighbourhoods, even those who do not want to

be involved in street contests, learn early on the importance of using violence to be safe. For boys, not being able to fight may be perceived as not being masculine enough, as being feminine. Such boys risk becoming victimized by other boys keen on demonstrating their own masculinity to their peers (Gunn, 2008; Anderson, 1999).

Both neighbourhood streets and neighbourhood schools are experienced as "staging areas" and become sites "where campaigns for respect are waged" by provoking fights and inciting revenge (Anderson, 1999, p.76). Drug culture thrives and becomes entrenched in this type of environment, where distrust of the legal system and the experience of police harassment exist beside the fear of breaking the code of the street. The threat of retaliation or retribution from drug dealers keeps youth and other community members in line (Anderson, 1999).

Taken together, these explanations for the violence and criminality of marginalized black youth link the experience of racial exclusion and oppression, both historical and contemporary, with the oppositional youth culture that exclusion and oppression have engendered. Hegemonic masculinity, focused on domination and materialism, is the ideal of masculinity most frequently promoted by Gangsta Rap. It has emerged as the dominant form of masculine identity among poor urban black youth. It is, then, at the nexus of alienation, poverty, and the struggle to develop masculine identities that explanations for the violence of young Somali men in Canada can be sought.

Violence at the Intersection of Race, Gender and Poverty

The explanations offered above are not the only perspectives through which to understand the violence of racialized and marginalized men and boys. As McCall (2005,

p.1795) aptly observes, no single theory or lens can "fully grasp the current context of complex inequality." While the determinants of health described above are valuable in that they frame violence as a preventable population health problem amenable to interventions, the framework does have limitations. There is a risk that the determinants will be interpreted as discrete rather than interacting, or as fixed rather than fluid. There is also a risk that, in the interests of "doing something", public health actors will seek to rank the determinants, prioritizing some over others. Gender, racialization, class, ethnicity, geography, migration status, and other determinants, intersect with and act on each other (Hankivsky, 2012). For this reason, I draw on intersectional theory, coming out of feminist studies, with roots in black feminist experience and thought, to strengthen our consideration of the determinants of health most closely associated with violence (e.g., masculinity, racialization, poverty, and place). Intersectionality insists that identity and other social markers are complex and mutually constituted. They do not act alone (Hankivsky, 2012).

McCall (2005, p. 1771) defines intersectionality as "the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations." Crenshaw (1989) argues, in her influential essay describing the multidimensional reality of black women's lives, that "[b]ecause the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (1989, p.140). Crenshaw cautions against any "single-issue framework" (1989, p. 162) that privileges one social relation over another, pointing to the erasure of her research

subject's diverse experiences in dominant discourses on discrimination and sexism as the result of overlooking the way layers of experience interact with each other.

This work, which presumes that the population health determinants are interacting rather than acting alone, is consistent with Crenshaw's approach. Moreover, intersectionality's compatibility with the population health approach of this study extends to its critical analytical gaze: interrogating the complexity of being a Somali male today and examining how best to deconstruct that reality without homogenizing Somali maleness (the full complexity of which, I believe, has yet to be explored). Intersectionality makes it possible to speak about the *intersecting determinants* of violence and the inequities that mark the lives of Somali boys and young men in Canada.

While some intersectionality researchers reject creating a 'master category' in which to fit peoples' complex, contradictory, and fluid realities, others use categories (similar to the lists of determinants of health) as a tool for strategic intervention (McCall, 2005). In this context it has proven necessary to highlight certain crosscutting determinants for strategic policy reasons. Whether or not it makes use of categories, or highlights particular relationships between determinants, the aim of intersectional analysis is to make visible the inequities inherent in the construction of multiple social realities, identities and relationships (McCall, 2005). Increasingly, public health policies apply intersectional analysis in order to acknowledge the diversity within seemingly unitary concepts and constructs, such as 'gender', to help them achieve health equity for marginalized populations (Hankivsky, 2012).

A Socio-ecological Framework for Youth Violence Prevention

The perspectives on violence discussed in the previous sections describe socio-economic and historical processes, their intersectionality, and their possible contribution to the violence of marginalized black youth and men. It bears repeating that while black communities in Canada all experience racism, black communities in Canada are themselves diverse, and experience oppression differently (Walcott et al., 2008). The anti-black racism (as it is increasingly labelled) that young Somali black men experience is different from the racisms to which other racialized minority groups are subject. Accordingly, a socio-ecological framework can help to highlight the particular experiences of Somali Canadians and the conditions under which young Somalis are expected to grow and thrive.

Frameworks provide visual representations of important concepts and their relationship to each other (CCSDH, 2015). A population health conceptual framework reveals the "domains of inequality" (Kindig, 2007, p. 147) that litter the path to health and wellbeing for Somali male youth, and other marginalized youth in Canada. More importantly, such a framework helps to focus attention on those determinants of violence that can best facilitate the prevention of future violent incidents among marginalized black male youth.

A widely used framework for conceptualizing and preventing violence is a socio-ecological model developed by the United States Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the WHO in 2002. Ecological frameworks trace violence to micro

level factors related to individual characteristics, intermediary factors in the individual's

social environment, and macro level structural factors (Moser & Shraded 1999; Hamner,

Latzman & Chan, 2015). The framework adapted for this study employs four levels of

analysis in order to understand and prevent violence: Individual, relational, community,

and societal levels.

The individual level seeks to articulate the factors and behaviours within the

individual that precipitate violence, such as age, education, substance use, personality

traits and past experiences of abuse (e.g., child abuse) or engagement in violence

contributing to its normalization. Captured within the character trait pride, for example, is

the tendency to act impulsively. Krug et al. (2002) suggest that impulsivity precipitates

violence.

The framework's next level examines *relationship*s with peers or within families to

determine how these might influence the emergence of violent behaviours. The

community level considers the settings that might contribute to violence, such as schools

and neighbourhoods. The presence of drugs in a neighbourhood discourages people from

using public spaces and interacting with each other. Poverty and isolation encourage

violence (Krug et al., 2002).

Finally, the *societal level* of the socio-ecological framework for violence prevention

considers factors in society that might encourage violence such as existing economic or

social policies that perpetuate inequalities and create environments that motivate violence

(CDC, 2015; Krug et al., 2002). The levels considered in this framework interact, each level

influencing and modifying the other levels to prevent or promote the emergence of

violence (Krug et al., 2002). Within this conceptual framework, the problems of young Somali men can be explored, and remedies identified.

In summary, this chapter proposed that population health determinants could help illuminate the causes (both proximal and distal) of the violence that has claimed the lives of some Somali Canadian youth. Racialization, masculine gender, and the intersection of these identity markers with marginalization emerged as significant explanatory factors for the violence. In using these perspectives to understand the determinants of the violence, it was important to review what is known about Somali masculinity in the postwar period to determine the degree to which that social construction has influenced the behaviours of the second generation Somali Canadian youth under discussion. That discussion will be revisited in a later chapter. Before that, however, we will look at how the Somali Canadians who participated in this study understand the causes of the violence of some of their youth and, consistent with the population health determinants approach, the impact of that violence on their community.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

Methodology "is about the underlying logic of research" (Castles 2012, p. 7). It sets out the epistemological basis for choosing a particular method, it explains why specific questions were asked, and provides a rationale for what counts as evidence. My choice of methodology flows from a subjectivist knowledge paradigm that seeks explanations for social events within the context in which these events occur (Castles, 2012; Silverman, 2013). This epistemic position also recognizes the subjectivity of study participants, that is "their beliefs, values, and wishes" (Aguilera & Amuchástegui, 2014, p. 282), and privileges the meanings they ascribe to social events.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative methodology is particularly suited to studying a variety of social and health problems. It has given rise to multiple methods through which a qualitative researcher interprets the lived reality of study participants, thereby constructing knowledge from the research encounter (Bourgeault, Dingwall & De Vries, 2010; Silverman, 2013). As Denzin and Lincoln illustrate, qualitative research, in all its many guises and traditions, "is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world." They describe the qualitative researcher as a quilt-maker who splices together "slices of reality" into a meaningful, "interpretative experience" (2011, p.3). Hence, there is an underlying assumption "that research is an interactive process" between the researcher's personal identities and history, and the study participants and their milieu (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.5).

In this project, I employed qualitative methods in order both to explore the narratives constructing the violence and crime associated with some Canadian-born and raised Somali male youth, and to access the narratives explaining that violence from the perspectives of Somali Canadians. Somali Canadians are, of course, not a homogenous ethnic group. Within what I describe as the 'Somali community' there are individuals and groups with differing socioeconomic status, personal histories, and migration trajectories.

Anderson et al., (2011, p.26), while cautioning against the presumption of inherent values and characteristics within groups who happen to share features of language, religion or some other characteristic "lest we claim more than we can deliver," still recognize the usefulness of the concept of group identity when designing a study and setting up criteria for participants. This caution notwithstanding, my study participants themselves spoke in terms of a shared Somali Canadian experience and common worries about the challenges of raising children, especially boys, in Canada. Community in this study is, therefore, assumed to be "a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographic locations or settings" (MacQueen et al., 2001, p.1932). It is also understood to signify "a fluid social construct that has political, social, religious, and cultural relevance at different points in time" (Anderson, Khan & Reimer-Kirkham 2011, p.26).

Insider Researcher

Consistent with the subjectivist knowledge paradigm of qualitative research, feminist researchers in particular highlight the researcher's influence on the research participants and process, and the need to be explicit about one's positionality (Hesse-Biber,

2007). I identify as a Somali Canadian, making me an insider researcher: one conducting

research within a community with which one shares ethnicity, religion, language and the

experiences of migration and settlement. There is ongoing debate among qualitative

researchers regarding the implications of conducting research within a population with

whom the researcher shares characteristics such as ethnicity, language, gender, nationality

or religion (particularly when these characteristics are salient to the research topic),

commonly described as 'insider research.' Two key concerns that arise in relation to

insiderness are the researcher's potential impact on research participants as well as on the

validity of the knowledge produced (Ganga & Scott, 2006; Voloder et al 2014).

Being an insider researcher connotes "closeness, an inversion of the distance of the

'traditional' researcher" (Voloder, 2014, p.3). Insiderness in the research context is

sometimes believed to facilitate access to the group being studied; shared experiences,

language, and culture helping to establish rapport and providing ready access to

information and participants (Yakushko et al., 2011; Voloder, 2014). These insider benefits

notwithstanding, being an insider researcher also comes with challenges.

Insider researchers may in fact be outsider researchers in terms of power and

privilege as experienced within the group, a position that can be masked by the ostensibly

shared group experiences of marginalization and discrimination (Yakashuko et al., 2011).

There is also the concern that an insider researcher, because of familiarity with the

concepts that participants use, might fail to probe sufficiently to elicit participants'

frames of reference, undermining the validity of the knowledge produced (Van Mol et al,

2014 p.71). The key concerns with insider research, then, are about claims of authenticity,

real and perceived power differentials, and the danger of homogenizing groups of people by ignoring or conflating differences within shared identities (Fozdar, 2014).

There are researchers who reject the binary insider/outsider for a more fluid understanding of the researcher's role within the research process (Couture, Zaidi & Maticka-Tyndale, 2012; Fozdar, 2014; Van Mol, 2014). This is because "the qualitative researcher is continuously dancing a tango between insiderness and outsiderness" (Van Mol, 2014, p.81). Couture et al. (2012) for example, argue for an intersectional understanding that reflects the complexity and multiplicity of the insider researcher's role and identities, underscoring that "being an insider/outsider is neither a binary nor static status, but rather is constantly changing and negotiated depending on who is being interviewed" (2012, p. 88). Participants, too, express their agency during the research process and delineate the boundaries within which they interact with the researcher (Fozdar, 2014). This was the observation that Mapedzahama and Kwansah-Aidoo (2014, p. 181) made while carrying out research with other black migrants like themselves. They reported that their "research participants were particularly active in determining the criteria for 'insiderness' ...by emphasizing what they wanted to emphasize and ignoring the rest."

Reflecting this fluidity, Kusow (2003) contends that insider/outsider positioning in research cannot be predetermined. Participants also identify who may or may not be an insider in a given research situation. This is especially so in the context of migration where insider researchers "face an inherent contradiction between community expectations and their role as credible researchers" (2003, p.595). Preferring to think of

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the "multidimensional nature of the insider/outsider relationship" Kusow suggests that

"insiders are pulled between their intellectual impulses and that of the immigrant

community, which implicitly encourages them to present their subjects in a positive

light" (2003, p.595). Insider research, if seen to be asking the wrong questions, may be

perceived as "suspicious", working in collusion with outsider others (2003, p.595). Thus,

"the process of access and rapport are confounded by multiple issues beyond a simple

insider/outsider dichotomy" (Kusow, 2003, p.596).

Reflexivity

These debates notwithstanding, there is a consensus that researchers have a

discernible impact on both the research participants, particularly when those participants

are drawn from marginalized populations, and the resulting knowledge. Accordingly,

reflexivity has been suggested as a critical component of carrying out qualitative research.

Reflexivity "involves interrogating how differences in power and privilege shape research

relationships in diverse contexts" (Frisby & Creese, 2013 p.6). To be sure, reflexivity is not

a panacea for insider/outsider tensions, but remaining conscious of prior assumptions,

experiences and the researcher's positionality can work to mitigate the impact that the

researcher has on research participants and knowledge production (Kincheloe, McLaren

& Steinberg, 2011).

Researcher positionality

As mentioned, my position in this study is as an insider researcher with lived-

experience of the problem/research questions under discussion. Somali youth violence

and incarcerations have impacted my family such that self-reflection on my part was a requirement of this study. A key concern about my insider position relates to the risk of leading participants towards answers that I might expect by relying too comfortably on shared Somali and migration experiences to ground my assumptions. I confronted this risk early on by answering the research questions myself prior to interviews in order to remain mindful of where my answers mirrored those of my participants, or my questions became too leading. During the interviews, I often rephrased questions to draw out further responses and insights from the participants. While some of the responses were similar to my own understanding of the problem, the depth of the issues that participants raised and their framing of the problems went far beyond, and occasionally diverged from, my mapping of the issues. For example, young women emphasized the challenges faced by their female peers, arguing that young Somali women also have problems and that, unlike the widespread attention male violence has attracted, young women's problems remain hidden.

While inside the Somali community, my position was also that of an outsider as a woman studying male youth violence and crime. Gender status has been found to be relevant when research involves individuals of differently gendered identities (Pottie, Brown & Dunn, 2006; Kusow, 2003). Kusow (2003), for example, had difficulty accessing female participants, particularly married women, in his studies with Somalis in Toronto. He attributed this to the pattern of sex-segregated socialization Somalis commonly practice; segregation that limited the opportunities of a male researcher to access married female participants. Other Canadian studies found that men, recent immigrants and

Canadian-born alike, may be reluctant to speak openly about matters of health and emotional wellbeing (Pottie, Brown & Dunn, 2006; Evans et al., 2011). My research, however, did not meet with similar barrier to access, nor did I encounter reticence from male participants. My own experience closely mirrored that of Abdi (2015), an insider female researcher conducting ethnographic work with other Somalis across several countries. Abdi learned that her status as an educated woman bent gendered boundaries and afforded her an "honourary male status". She found that men could discuss taboo subjects with her, which were not generally discussed with other (less educated) women. An educated woman in this context is thus simultaneously an insider ally and an outsider Other (Abdi, 2015, p.24).

Self-reflection is also important when considering research settings, which can potentially reinforce power differences between researcher and respondents (Kelly, 2010). To mitigate these power differences, I provided options to participants in terms of where and when the interviews took place. Accordingly, some interviews were conducted in a private meeting room at the university reserved for that purpose, some in community centres, and still others in the homes of female participants. One extended interview took place in the bedroom of a mother whose son was a victim of the violence. Skype interviews took place during times suitable for the participants.

My insider position brought advantages to the research, too. The most salient strengths of my insiderness related to my linguistic competencies. My ability to speak both English and Somali permitted participants to speak in the language of their choice, sometimes mixing both. Some older participants spoke exclusively in Somali using,

metaphors and proverbs to express the depth of their worries about the wellbeing of their

male children. Young study participants, who exclusively spoke English, peppered their

speech with Somali expressions for emphasis or to establish their own grounding in

Somali culture, while expressing themselves in both formal English and the urban

vernacular specific to youth of their generation. Traversing these linguistic dynamics

resulted in fluid and engaged conversations. My insiderness and multiple locations as a

Somali Canadian with strong networks among Somali Canadians, a woman and a

graduate student, I would suggest, gave me access to diverse participants with sometimes

divergent perspectives. Young women could speak about the 'invisible' violence they

experience, while young men could express feelings of sadness and depression without

fear of judgment. In sum, being an insider to the research project entailed taking

measures to safeguard the validity of interview data but also established a rapport that

enabled participants to speak candidly about the topic.

The topic under discussion — youth violence — did not challenge social taboos

and was discussed openly in Somali Canadian circles. To build rapport within these

circles I actively volunteered within Ottawa's Somali community in various capacities

prior to and during the research (e.g., supporting the male youth advocacy work of

Somali Canadian Mothers and mentoring girls in secondary schools). That work

positioned me as someone committed to the overall wellbeing of Somali Canadians.

Study Design

The study design consisted of in-depth interviews with twenty-eight Somali

Canadians, and three non-Somalis knowledgeable about policing and crime prevention (Table 3). I initially planned to conduct both interviews and focus groups but decided on interviews alone because of the depth and breadth of issues interview participants raised. As Kelly (2010) reports, interview techniques proved particularly useful for eliciting perspectives and experiences on a social issue like the one under study. Heeding Bourgeault and colleagues' (2010 p.9) observation that "confidence in the validity of qualitative health research findings is... increased when researchers have spent an extended period of time in the setting," I spent considerable time interacting with Somali Canadians to hear about and to observe their reactions to and representations of issues related to their male children, as mentioned above. In Ottawa, I attended numerous events over the span of several years as a community member to observe how these issues were discussed within the community. Two community events I attended in Toronto were especially instructive on the broader issues of identity, stigmatization and young Somalis' interactions with key institutions of the education and the criminal justice systems. It was not feasible to spend an extended period of time in Edmonton; however, I closely monitored news reports from that city, and the in-person interviews with key informants in Edmonton that I was able to conduct yielded rich data.

The community meetings I attended provided additional access to the range of perspectives on the issue of violence. I was able to explore the issues raised in those meetings with study participants. Moreover, I regularly reviewed newspaper reports about the victims to examine how the Canadian media reported and framed their deaths, comparing these depictions with the community's perspectives. These techniques,

together with the literature review presented in Chapter Two, functioned as a form of triangulation, allowing me to gain deeper insights into the determinants of violence in the present study of marginalized racialized youth. Triangulation "reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.5). It enhances a researcher's confidence in the research results (Castles, 2012; Silverman, 2011).

Participant recruitment and sampling

I recruited participants from three cities where the majority of Canada's Somali populations live: Ottawa, Toronto and Edmonton. Edmonton is Ground Zero in terms of the youth violence under study. It is estimated that over a period of five years (2005- 2010) more than 30 young men died in Edmonton (Simons, 2011)[ ]. Edmonton also provided an opportunity to study the interaction of oil money, migration, drugs, and gender. Toronto was an important setting for the study because many of the young men who would eventually die in Alberta migrated there from Toronto (Wingrove & Mackrael, 2012). Ottawa, as my place of residence, was selected for feasibility purposes. It is where I have established networks within the Somali community. Ottawa was also suitable for the study because many of the early female-headed families who immigrated to Canada settled in the capital city (Affi, 1997). Ottawa is where concerns over the welfare of Somali male youth first prompted the emergence of advocacy and mentorship activities to support them. I shall elaborate on these activities in a later chapter.

I used purposive sampling as a strategy to recruit participants using my extensive networks within the Somali community, especially in Ottawa. Purposive sampling allows

for the selection of interview participants and/or case studies that will generate rich and appropriate data (Green & Thorogood, 2004). Accordingly, to gauge the impacts of violence on families, I recruited participants related to some of the victims of violence, such as parents, siblings and relatives. At other times, I relied on key informant sampling to select participants with specific knowledge or representative of a specific population (Kelly, 2010). For example, in the section about how youth become involved in drugs and gangs my key informants are youth who have been part of that world or had exposure to that environment. In the section on education, insights are drawn from individuals with knowledge of the schooling experiences of Somali children and the education system. Similarly, in sections dealing with the workings of the criminal justice system, I rely on individuals from those professions; and so on. While I privilege some voices, the perspectives of other participants are fully present to provide balance and alternative perspectives.

In both Toronto and Edmonton, where my networks are not as strong as they are in Ottawa, I used snowballing strategy (i.e., asking my first participants to suggest other appropriate individuals for the study) to recruit participants. I used a sampling-to-saturation strategy (Green & Thorogood, 2004) meaning that I continued recruitment until no new information or insights were gathered in the interview, ending the number of in-depth-interviews at thirty-one.

Study participants included twenty males and eleven females from various age groups (Table 3). I classified as youth those between the ages of eighteen and thirty years, and as adults those over thirty-one years of age. Participants included four individuals

knowledgeable about crime and policing who work with Somali communities or are
familiar with violent incidents involving Somalis. These individuals were not detectives
working directly on the cases considered in my study as both resource constraints and
police bureaucracy made it difficult to interview detectives assigned to these cases. The
views of these participants are an attempt to illuminate some of the issues and unknowns
surrounding the deaths of the young men from diverse perspectives.

Table 3: Study Participants

Participants	Number Interviewed
Males (Adults)	10
Males (Youth)	7
Females (Adults)	4
Females (Youth)	5
Officials from criminal justice sector	3
Academic	1
Independent crime blogger	1
Total participants	**31**

Several participants were members of the clergy who had worked closely with
Somali families. Others had extensive knowledge of the history and settlement
experiences of Somali Canadians. Some participants were relatives of the victims (parents,
siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles). Everyone who was interviewed had heard of the
deaths and most reported that the violence was widely discussed in their networks.

All the Somali participants had either lived in Canada for nearly two decades, or, like some of the youth who were in their twenties, were Canadian born. None who wanted to participate were excluded. The only criterion for selecting participants was a Somali Canadian identity. Newcomers (those in Canada for less than 5 years) were not recruited. This is because, in their public discourses, Somali Canadians discussed the problem as one impacting on young men who were born or raised in Canada. As a Canadian Somali problem it was important to explore the issue and its implication in the context of broader questions of integration and belonging for immigrants and their offspring. The degree to which these problems impact on new newcomers is a topic worth exploring; however, to keep the scope of the study sufficiently narrow, I did not actively seek recent newcomers.

The in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face or via SKYPE. SKYPE was used for several of the interviews in Toronto and Edmonton, even though I conducted several face-to-face interviews in those cities as well. All the interviews in Ottawa were carried out face-to-face. Face-to-face interviews were held at locations convenient for the study participants, such as community centres, a meeting space at the University of Ottawa, and in at least two cases involving mothers whose sons died, the interviews took place in their homes. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants. Most of the interviews lasted approximately one hour to an hour and forty-five minutes. At least one interview was carried out over two days, the participant ending the initial conversation due to work scheduling and offering to continue at a later date.

Qualitative, and especially feminist, researchers, often use pseudonyms to give

people an embodied sense of identity. Given the topic (violence) I felt the need to enhance the anonymity of participants so I have opted to use descriptors, a common practice in health science research. I use the descriptions in Table 3 above when citing participants and provide additional information about the participants as necessary, such as their role in the community or relationship to the deceased young men.

Interview guides

I used a combination of semi-structured, open-ended and unstructured questions which Kamberelis and Dimitraidis (2005) suggest help a researcher to become familiar with the subject matter. I similarly followed Holloway and Jefferson (2013, p.33) in their suggestion to "turn questions about given topics into story-telling invitations." Unstructured questions were most valuable during discussions about the impacts of deaths on families, while semi-structured questions proved particularly useful for understanding the context for the violence and the socioeconomic factors that increased young men's vulnerability and susceptibility to violence. Interview guides are appended at the end of this thesis.

Data Analysis

I transcribed the interview data using a de-naturalist approach, which entails omitting para-language, such as pauses, laughter and interruptions. I then edited the English text for readability (Kelly, 2010). This approach was also useful because some of the participants mixed Somali and English and some editorial rendering was necessary to improve the transcribed information. I translated interviews conducted in Somali into English prior to analysis. Interpreting qualitative interviews is not only about analyzing

what participants say but also how they say it. Qualitative analysis seeks to reflect the "conceptual frameworks of the study population" (Kelly, 2010, p.311). Moreover, as Kelly (2010, p.312) notes, "cultural uses of language are important for conveying meaning and context" Accordingly, I retain some Somali concepts in the transcribed data to best reflect, in their own words, the frame of reference of the participants.

As I transcribed the data, I made note of insights or themes that emerged in light of the research questions. Once all the interviews were transcribed, I transferred the text to *Nvivo* software for in-depth qualitative analysis. Figure 2 presents an example of a coded theme, in this case the explanations participants offered for the immediate causes of deaths, their perception—*not facts*—about the circumstances surrounding the deaths of the young men. In the coding process, I made note of issues or insights that warranted further analysis. For example, participants named gangs and drugs as the immediate cause of many of the deaths. However, responses also revealed that some young men who were not known to be involved in illegal activities were among the victims. In the linked memo I made note of this observation as seen in the figure.

In an attempt to avoid what Silverman (2013, p.286) described as "the problem of anecdotalism", that is selecting only excerpts and interviews that appear interesting, I employed the constant comparison method to compare and contrast views from various participants. The aim of the constant comparative method is primarily to enhance the quality of the qualitative data through rigour in the analysis process (Silverman, 2013). Accordingly, I compared views of the key informant participants with those of the community members.

Figure 2: Example of Nvivo Thematic Coding
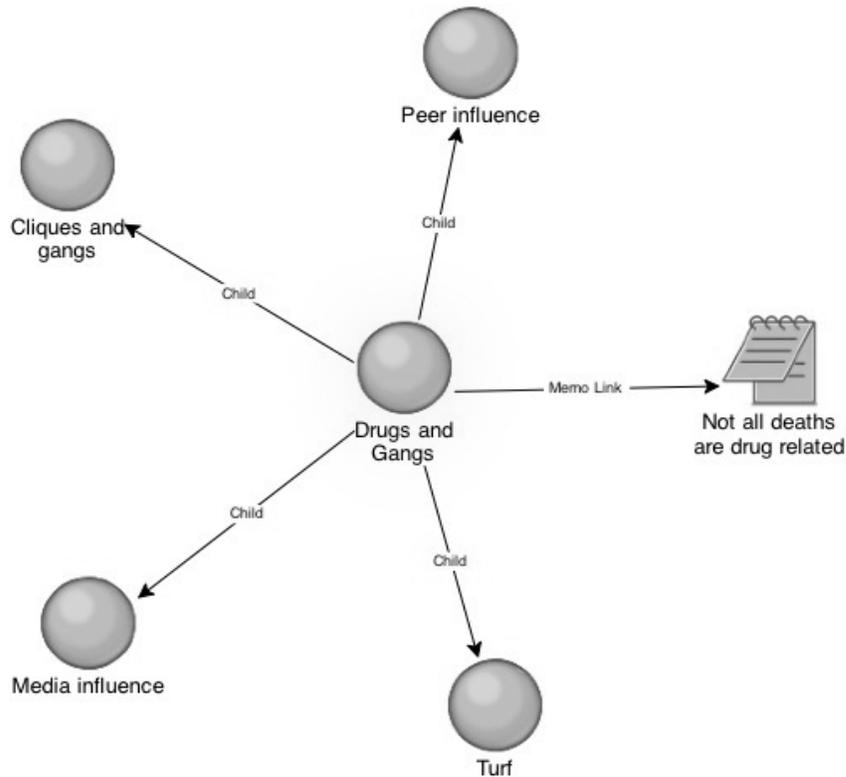
I also compared across gender and age groups to identify similitude and variance in responses concerning determinants of the violence. This meant readjusting Nvivo categories (nodes) until consistent major and related minor themes capturing a variety of perspectives emerged from the analysis. The quotations included in the study results, reported in the next chapter, illustrate and support Nvivo's coding of participants' perspectives on the violence.

In reporting the study results, I highlight both the most frequently repeated concerns raised by participants and the insights shared by a few participants able to illuminate the problem under discussion. I also worked to interrogate and explain the meanings that participants ascribed to the concepts they used. Stated differently, I tried to follow Bourgeault and colleagues' advice to qualitative researchers "to open ourselves

up to the experience of research, to gather sufficient data to make our data credible, to pay attention to language, and to be sure to look beneath the surface to uncover important contextual features of the phenomenon being studied" (2010, p.9). The results incorporate my observations over several years, during which I attended and participated in numerous events where Somalis gathered to discuss worries about their male children, as discussed above. Also included, are my observations and the insights I gained while supporting two young male relatives, over a period of six years, while they navigated the criminal justice system (e.g., attending court hearings, trial, and visits to prison/jail; meeting with parole officer).

Ethical Considerations

Frohlich and Potvin (2008, p. 218) define vulnerable populations as "groups who, because of their position in the social strata, are commonly exposed to contextual conditions that distinguish them from the rest of the population." Somali Canadians fit this description given their experiences of war and the resulting emigration. Moreover, one concern given consideration in this study was the possibility that discussing youth violence might trigger harmful thoughts and emotions for participants. To mitigate this possible harm to the best of my ability, I compiled a list of available mental health resources and offered it to participants at the end of each interview.

Another ethical consideration pertained to women who may be especially susceptible to violation when interviewed by a woman researcher, most relevant in this study in relation to mothers whose sons died as victims of the violence being studied. Janet Finch (1984), in her insightful article on conducting research with women,

discovered that women often share information with "extreme ease" with female researchers. These women are perhaps too ready to avail themselves of the opportunity to have someone listen to them and too quick to rely on the shared identity of being women as an insurance of safety. The consequence for women research participants, as Finch argues, is that "[t]here is a real exploitative potential in the easily established trust between women, which makes women especially vulnerable as subjects of research" (p.81). The women in my study were similarly open, some sharing details that I decided to omit from the study results.

Recognizing the ethical risks from research with marginalized populations, Pottie and Gabriel (2014) nevertheless argue for the need to advance research on migrants and immigrants because of the "possibility that participants will gain new learning and relationships during the research process or will benefit from system changes that occur as a result of the actual research" (p. 348). There is no way to predict how the research findings will be received; however, the study was conceived to support the advocacy work of Somali Canadians, and is, therefore, grounded in social justice and anti-oppression principles. I have tried to minimize any potential harm to the participants. All participants were reassured that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time and that even after the interviews concluded, their information would not be used should they desire its withdrawal. As a case in point, one young woman requested transcripts of her interview, which I shared. She made no attempt to exclude her information from the study after receiving the transcript.

In addition to those considerations, and to further minimize harm to the study

participants and ensure anonymity and confidentiality, I obtained ethics approval for the study from the Research Ethics Board of the University of Ottawa (See Appendix A).

In summary, this study was based on qualitative research methodology. It used semi-structured interviews to access the perspectives of Somali Canadians and other non-Somali participants knowledgeable in criminal justice. It sought, specifically, explanations for the spike in violent incidents in three Canadian cities involving some Canadian Somali youth. The study settings were Edmonton, Toronto and Ottawa where the majority of Somali Canadians live and where the greater part of the violence occurred. In the next two chapters, I summarize the themes that emerged from the narratives of the study participants in order to understand their perspectives on the causes of the violence, the impact of that violence on their community, and the actions they and their networks have taken in response. The in-depth reporting of the study findings/results is intentional. My object is to expose the impact the violence has had on Somali Canadians. I take up the analysis and implications of the study findings in Chapters Seven and Eight.

CHAPTER FIVE: STUDY RESULTS – DETERMINANTS OF VIOLENCE

This chapter reports the findings from in-depth interviews with 28 Somali Canadian, and three non-Somali participants. The themes that emerged from the collected data reflect what many respondents described as the "*root causes*" of the violence that has claimed the lives of dozens of young Somali men. The analysis of these findings in the light of existing scholarship, as mentioned, will be taken up in Chapter Seven.

In their responses, study participants described the determinants of this violence as "*very complex,*" and as indicative of a crisis confronting their male youth. The themes and subthemes reported in this chapter are organized into micro, meso and macro level determinants of violence, closely mirroring the elements in the population health framework described in the preceding chapter. A snapshot of the key determinants identified by the study participants is presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Determinants of Violence Participants Identified

Macro Determinants
Migration and geopolitics
Somali ethnic discrimination
Anti-black racism
Masculine expectations

Meso Determinants
Poverty
Drugs in the neighbourhood
School disconnectedness
Police profiling
Negative media messages

Micro Determinants
Lack of parental awareness
Lack of positive adult
male role model
Intergenerational conflict
Negative peer influence

Micro level determinants describe the proximal causes of the violence and the features of their relationships that participants felt influenced the phenomenon of violent

behaviour in some youth. The meso level determinants highlight the role of three institutions (the criminal justice system, education and the media) as well as risk factors encountered in the neighbourhoods in which the youth had grown up. Macro level determinants provide a snapshot of societal dynamics that were offered as explanations for the violence. Participants raised important contextual themes mirroring those reported in the literature review in Chapter Two. These contexts warrant revisiting here, before returning to the research findings, because the issues are critical to understanding the explanations for the violence that study participants provided.

Context: War Trauma and Migration

The violence that claimed the lives of an untold number of Somali Canadian male youth begins, according to the Somali Canadians interviewed for this study, with the losses and trauma of the first generation of Somali refugees fleeing civil war, the absence of organized support systems to facilitate their successful integration once in Canada, and the secondary migration of young men from Ontario to Alberta. These three contextual themes are considered briefly here, from the perspective of the Somali study participants, before reporting the research findings related to the determinants more closely associated with the violence.

<u>Refugees unprepared to migrate</u>

Somali refugees who came to Canada carried with them, in the view of several participants, trauma from the war, which remained unaddressed because the task of setting down roots — finding housing and employment, learning a new language — took

precedence. This trauma was variously described by participants as experiences of loss, depression, pain, suffering and fear. The young men under study, the victims and perpetrators of violence, grew up at a time when trauma from the war was raw. Study participants noted that these children were directly exposed to their parents' struggles to cope with their own trauma. Although there is recognition that trauma *"never goes away"* (Female Adult3), it can also be seen that the earliest days were the hardest. It was evident in some of the young study participants that they carry scars from their exposure to their parents' trauma. A male youth who grew up in a 'broken home' said: *"I witnessed my parents cry a lot growing up... I feel like my parents were going through something I did not know [about]. It just did not seem right"* (Male Youth2).

In addition to the immediate experience of trauma they carried with them, older Somali participants maintained that being unprepared to migrate put immense pressure on families even after they arrived. This pressure, the lack of psychological or logistical preparedness, is linked to the family breakdown described above. Participants surmised that the troubles of the young men under discussion *"began with people not prepared to migrate"* (Male Adult3). Female Adult2 invoked an analogy with *Sahan,* an established custom of Somali pastoralists who send a reconnaissance team (or individual) to new settlements prior to moving their families and livestock. The purpose of sending *Sahan* was to ensure that the new settlement was free from danger, provided the means to cultivate a livelihood (grass, water), and was habitable. Because of the absence of *Sahan*—hardly anyone had any information about Canada—the new arrivals were ill-prepared for the challenges they encountered:

We never sent Sahan to Canada. We all came at one time running from war and we

really underestimated the danger around us and it took us long time, unfortunately,

to find out what we are dealing with. And…when we came, we went, like other

refugees, into a survival mode — to secure food for the family and housing — and

also…back home we had responsibilities. Everybody had their parents, or whatever,

to take care (Female Adult2).

Lack of integration services

According to several older community participants, the trauma and unpreparedness was made worse by the lack of an organized settlement process in Canada, and the absence of an established Somali community that might have facilitated the orientation of the newcomers to their new environment. Despite, *"coming to a generous system"* (Male Adult9) where many of the early Somali arrivals in Canada attained Convention refugee status easily, challenges came quickly. In the words of another participant: *"They come to Canada. There is no Somali presence, no community or strong leadership to warn them of the new challenges they would encounter here, so they fell into an ocean in which they were unable to swim"* (Male Adult3).

While a prior Somali presence would have helped, organized settlement and integration programmes for the refugees, it was noted, would have made their lives and the outcome for their children better. In this regard, participants expressed their feelings of neglect and dismay at the indifference with which their presence was met. As one community member explained, they felt left to fend for themselves: *"These people who have experienced all these shocks and strife, the difficult journey and also the shock of*

arriving in a new environment...they did not get the appropriate supports that could have helped them settle" (Male Adult7*). The vulnerability of children and youth to risks such as drug dealing was thus tied to the vulnerability of their families as a result of migration and the absence of supports in Canada.

Economic migrants in northern Alberta

The secondary migration of Somali youth to northern Alberta's booming oil-based economy is more directly associated with the violence under study. Whereas their parents fled war, young men in Ontario left *"skyrocketing youth unemployment"* (Female Adult2) to seek opportunities in Alberta. The convergence of many unaccompanied and disenfranchised young men from across Canada and the United States in a place where there was access to money, both legal and illegal, increased their exposure to risky behaviours and lifestyles. A long-time resident of Edmonton who blogged about homicides in the city observes that the movement of young men and money created an environment ripe for violence in a city that already had *"a frontier mentality"*:

> *You have a population that is very young, very transient. Nobody sets any roots. When you have disposable income, then you have chance to spend it on stuff and sometimes the choice is not healthy...[Also] whenever there is money around, it attracts business. It also attracts illegal business.*

The Somali community in Edmonton prior to the arrival of the Ontario cohort was, as a young woman who grew up in Edmonton described it *"very small, very tight-knit, very quiet; we had barbecues all the time, bringing families together"* (Female Youth4). The convergence of young men with no connection to the community and no adult

supervision overwhelmed it. Their arrival precipitated its entry into a pre-existing fringe economy. If these young men had not been completely uprooted, participants asserted, had they had access to a community that could integrate them into existing social networks, they would not have been so easily lured into risky lifestyles and become, directly or by association, its victims.

Micro-Level Determinants: Individual and Relationship Risks

With that context in mind, it is possible to create a picture of the type of young men that the violence claimed. Study participants described both common individual characteristics and shared relationship risks that increased their exposure to violence.

Profile of the victims: Young, marginalized, and male

Participants were not certain as to the exact number of youth who died in the violence, but believed that the majority of the youth involved were in their 20s. Some of these youth had already had contact with the criminal justice system and had criminal records before leaving Ontario. Some had dropped out of high school. Others had some postsecondary training. Overall, these youth, according to study participants, shared experiences of marginalization and some contact with the criminal justice system early on. An academic who had lived in northern Alberta since the 1980s and closely monitored the violence offered up a general profile of the victims:

Those who were already having a difficult time in Ontario, those who did not have much

education, those at the margins of the society. It could be those kind of people who did

not integrate very well or who tried to make a living, become entrepreneurial, and use

drugs to enrich themselves (Academic).

In the view of my study participants, the violence also claimed the lives of some young men who did not fit this general profile and had led quite conventional lives. These youth were assumed to have been mistakenly targeted by or drawn into the violence: *"It does happen where kids who come from good families, university graduates, ended up getting killed or may be even them killing somebody* (Official from Criminal Justice Sector1).

Violence and drug trafficking

Many of the deaths were attributed to the lifestyle of the young men themselves— in particular, their involvement in the illegal drug market or with gangs. There was a general perception among participants that the perpetrators of the violence were also Somalis. This perception could not be verified, but is consistent with media reports about some of the victims of the violence. Key informants claimed that established non-Somali gangs controlled the drug trade and that young Somalis were recruited mainly as *"foot soldiers,"* placing them at the frontline of turf disputes. A crime blogger and long-time resident of Edmonton expressed a view widely shared by study participants, which links the violence directly to the drug trade, and believes that, in some cases, it is facilitated by existing networks of gang affiliation:

> *I think a lot of this can be pinned down to the drug trade ...controlled by three large gangs...If we were to suggest that the Somalis came to Alberta to make money and some of them saw easier money in the drug trade, they were suddenly faced against some pretty established organizations (*Crime Blogger).

Participants acknowledged that violence and arrests are among the risks of drug dealing, which they described variously as a *game,* an *underground war,* a *black-market,* a *lifestyle* or a *hustle.* It was also described as a high-stakes pursuit in which a person has the potential to make a lot of money, but faces competition and envy from others in the trade that results in violence.

The nature of the youth's relationships with friends and family were also considered strong determinants of participation in risky behaviours.

Peer influence

Participants believed that young men enter the drug business because of the influence of peers already involved in those activities. The youth most susceptible to negative peer influence were said to be those who were experiencing troubles at home or at school, those whose relatives were already involved in drugs, and those with generally low self-esteem. Male Youth3, a former gang member whose brothers were affiliated with drug dealing, underscored the difficulty of resisting the influence of friends who, in turn, ape the behaviours of their peers. He described the domino effect as "*monkey see, monkey do*": "*What are the odds of all your friends accepting one thing but you disagreeing with all of them? That is not common. Young men, they love to fit in*" (Male Youth3). That was also the view of a mother who blamed her son's friends for his entry into the drug world: "*I can say that ninety percent of the problem for him were his friends*" (Female Adult4).

Recruitment into illegal activities did not come about through friends alone. According to study participants, the influence of relatives also facilitated involvement in illegal and risky-lifestyles for some youth. A female youth worker who reported that

several of her own relatives as well as childhood friends had been killed, described the tendency of youth from the same families to follow their siblings into gangs and become involved in drug-related activities: "*A whole generation of these children who are now [in] gangs... their siblings were involved in this type of lifestyle*" (Female youth1). The father of one of the victims similarly linked the influence of male relatives to his son's initiation into drug dealing: "w*e trusted these young men but they were involved in that lifestyle*" (Male Adult1).

Struggling families

Participants, whether key informants or community members, recognized family nurturing and attachment as protective against negative outside influences. Some Somali households, however, were said to be struggling to provide their children with sufficient nurturing, especially male children. In particular, participants underscored the lack of positive male role models for boys, the generational gap between parents and children, and the fact that parents, in the early days of resettlement in Canada, were unaware of the risks to which their children were exposed.

<u>Lack of positive male role models</u>

Positive male role models were seen as a valuable buffer against the forces that entice young men into risky lifestyles. Some Somali households, however, were said to lack such role models due to divorce, and absentee or disengaged fathers. A prominent community leader asserted that some Somali men were unable to fulfill that mentorship role for their sons. He added that, "*if a young man does not have a father he is compelled*

to find role models elsewhere, in the street" (Male Adult3). Young male study participants expressed the vital significance of a positive father figure to a young man's development and wellbeing. As one youth stated, a father provides a roadmap for his son to follow and his absence *"has a traumatic effect on [a son]: it impairs…his vision for the future. It affects how he thinks about family structure, family relations, and family roles and responsibilities"* (Male youth7).

Three explanations were provided for the absence of some Somali fathers from their sons' lives. The first explanation was that Somali men struggled to accept their loss of social status after migration, which led to tensions in the home and an increase in divorce rates among Somali immigrants. The earliest men to migrate were said to be those with wealth and/or influence in their homeland, privileges they did not have in Canada. These drastic changes in social status were difficult for some men to accept and resulted in *"dysfunctional behaviours,"* according to a community elder who also underscored that while deserving *"some of the blame… they were trying their best"* (Male Adult1).

Participants spoke critically of men who neglected their familial duties. At the same time, there was recognition among some participants that these men had encountered their own set of struggles; mental health problems, disability, loneliness, and addictions. Some of these problems were linked to or exacerbated by unemployment. The reality of men becoming disengaged from or shirking their fatherly duties was thus attributed to the loss of their ability to contribute economically to the family and their subsequent (real or perceived) loss of respect and influence in the home. This loss was

characterized by a community leader as men's *"lost moral authority in the home"* (Male Adult3). An academic participant explained the sources of some men's absence or disengagement from fathering this way:

"The men were used to making money, doing big things, controlling things, controlling the family, controlling the government, controlling the wealth. They come here and that does not happen, so they get frustrated.

Another explanation attributed the lack of male role models in boys' lives to the nature of the work some men did: work that undermines active involvement in their children's day-to-day lives. A key informant service provider described this problem as one of *"people still busy with breadwinning"* where men work long hours or on a rotational schedule: *"If someone is working as a truck driver or a taxi driver and trying to struggle to make ends meet… they are working at night when the child is at home and they are sleeping during the day when the child is out, the economic conditions does not allow them to sit down and think"* (Male Adult5).

Lastly, some fathers, while financially supporting their families, remain disengaged from active child-rearing duties. These men were described as hanging on to the traditional distinction between the provider and nurturer roles, which made women in Somali society exclusively responsible for raising children. In the view of some participants, these men did not realize that in the new context in Canada they needed to be involved actively in their children's upbringing. Their responsibilities went beyond being a provider. In a sense, participants said, men were expected to fulfill roles they had never had to play in their home country: *"When it comes to child rearing, men are not*

prominent in Somalia...It takes a village of women or a community to raise the kids"

(Female Adult1).

Interestingly, the fathering failure that participants attributed to men, and which they held partially responsible for their young men's failure to thrive, did not have a correlated failure laid at the feet of women. Instead, participants expressed a generally held perception that Somali women integrated into Canadian life better than Somali men, and have coped better with the demands of resettling in Canada. The evidence offered up to support this claim was that Somali girls were largely successful despite experiencing challenges of their own. As one participant expressed it: *"Obviously Somali women are doing much better in terms of work-wise and academic-wise, just from my observation. Somali girls, they are much more focused in terms of their school, work-wise and goal-wise. Somali girls, they have their mums."* Explanations for this trend, which a male elder characterized as an *"incredible phenomena"*, adding that he had observed it even in Somalia during recent visits, varied. In the main, Somali women's integration success was linked to the transformation of gender roles whereby while men struggled to overcome their loss of power, women continued to prioritize the needs of their families as they had done in the past, helped along by a system, in Canada, that was *"a little kinder to them"* (Academic).

Despite coping with change better, participants contended that women, too, have been challenged by the magnitude of the tasks they have had to perform without the support of extended relatives so crucial to raising children in Somali family life. Raising young boys without their fathers or other male role models while, in some cases, also

being responsible for earning a livelihood, has been a particular challenge. The success of boys, as an academic informant argued, hinges on the successful integration of their fathers: *"there is a high correlation between the lack of positive integration of men into the Canadian society and the overall success of the boys."*

<u>Generational conflicts</u>

According to the study participants, many youth who were born or raised in Canada lack Somali language skills while some parents struggled to learn Canada's official languages. Consequently, participants noted generalized poor communication between parents and youth. They also reported on-going conflict between parents who were keen on imparting Somali and Islamic values, and youth more attuned to individualistic Canadian/Western values, which they saw as more permissive. Older participants described the youth as unmotivated, consumption-oriented and lacking *"garasho"* (thoughtfulness). Younger study participants attributed the tensions in the home to differing values; youth engaging in behaviours that, while acceptable in the wider society, are frowned upon at home, such as consuming alcohol or dating: *"There is a cultural difference between...my mother and myself: All she knows is Somali culture and all I know is Canadian culture, so I cannot really relate to her"* (Male Youth3).

Tensions in the home occur when youth fail to meet parental expectations. Participants claimed that young Somalis are expected to carry the dreams of their parents — doing well in school, contributing to household income and being good Muslims — playing a role for which they do not feel adequately prepared. The matter of parental expectations was most strongly emphasized by the youth in the study who themselves felt

the pressure of those expectations acutely. A youth participant who was born in Toronto reasoned that because of their experiences of loss due to the war, parents were pinning their own aspirations on the success of their children:

> *If you are a kid whose parents sacrificed a lot to see you succeed, there is a little bit more pressure on you than on other kids, other communities, because you are seen as the one who is going to pull the community upwards* (Male Youth 7*).*

Engaging in risky behaviours — substance misuse, drug dealing or joining gangs — was described as one of the ways a youth who feels like a *"person of failure"* (Female Youth3) copes with the pressure of parental expectations. As we shall see in the discussion of subsequent themes, there are also external pressures that intensify the anxiety male youth experience and increase the vulnerability these behaviours create.

Moreover, participants described a pattern of gendered parenting that sets different expectations for boys and girls in Somali households, a practice retained from Somali culture. In their view, mothers indulge boys while instilling discipline and responsibility in girls. There was a strong belief that girls were generally more successful than boys in part because of that learned responsibility and close monitoring by their parents, especially their mothers (in addition to the aforementioned role modeling that girls get from their mothers):

> *Girls are expected to be perfect whereas boys are not expected as much, so they do not participate in home chores. They are out there playing and not being responsible and doing whatever they want. That tradition also has a role of why the girls do better because early on they are expected of that, so they keep it up* (Male Adult10).

Because of close supervision and staying close to home, participants reasoned, girls gain confidence by observing their mothers perform multiple roles: managing household chores, employment, and child-rearing, all the while supporting their community and other extended families in various parts of the world. In other words, girls have the role models that boys lack. Young female study participants recognized that their mothers' desire to instill responsibility in them was informed by cultural expectations: "*Girls are meant to behave well. They need to be home at a certain time. They need to go to school. They need to know how to cook, the whole mentality of girls having to be good*" (Female youth5).

Boys meanwhile, according to study participants, are given less structure, and are less prepared for life on their own, leaving them more susceptible to the peer influences described above. A prominent religious leader who mediates between feuding spouses summed up a sentiment about boys' lack of life skills widely shared by others:

> *If he was taught to contribute to the household chores, to fix what was broken, then he might have had a role in the household. Instead these things are done for him until he is 17 or 18. When the challenges of outside life come, he cannot survive* (Male Adult3).

Interestingly, it is mothers who are said to coddle boys, an assertion that sometimes came across as blaming mothers for their sons' lack of skills. They were said to treat their sons *"like an art[work]"* or treasure (Female Youth1). Other participants, however, recognized that mothers *"would rather have the sons excel at everything"* (Male Adult 10*)*.

Lack of parental awareness about risks

Blaming parents for their children's problems was a subject to which study participants returned frequently. It was also a topic of discussion at community events where the problem of boys was discussed. Fathers and mothers were equally, but differently, chastised for failing to guide, protect and advocate for their children more effectively. Despite these recriminations, participants agreed that there was a generalized lack of awareness among parents about the risks to which children were exposed, and the kind of hands-on parenting required in the Canadian context. This lack of awareness was quite common in the early days of resettlement in Canada when many parents were said to be overwhelmed by their own struggles in the new environment. A 24-year old study participant who was born in Toronto shortly after his parents' arrival in Canada acknowledged that in those early days of settlement, "*there were lots of things our parents just did not know*" (Male Youth2).

There were blind spots in the newcomers' perceptions of Canada. The new country was seen as a prosperous society devoid of dangers, especially of violence. In the words of one informant, "*these people were tired of death*" and assumed Canada to be a safe haven (Male Adult2). Somali parents, regardless of their socioeconomic background, did not foresee risks to their children, especially the presence of drugs in their neighbourhoods, as we shall see shortly.

For many Somali parents, the most confounding aspect of their new life in Canada was the role they were expected to play in their children's education. Study participants who had worked in the school system pointed out that some parents were perplexed by

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the suggestion that they needed to be more actively involved in their children's education, a responsibility they thought belonged wholly to teachers. When their children struggled in school or developed antisocial behaviours, their disengagement was construed as negligence. A key informant who had worked with newcomer families explained that many parents simply assumed that the *"village"* of neighbours and relatives who formed a protective web around all children at "home" also existed in Canada.

> *We did not know that we needed to be with the children after school and stay with them in order to take them away from danger. We thought the kids will go to school, teacher will take care of them and I go to work and bring food, and everything will be normal like Somalia* (Female Adult2).

Taken together, the individual and relationship level explanations that study participants offered as among the root causes of the violence suggest that negative peer influence, tensions in the family and a general lack of awareness about risks were important determinants of violence.

Meso Level Determinants: Community and Institutional Risks

Study participants shared the conviction that there were innate risks buried within the social structures that ostensibly served Somali refugees and their children, and in the low-income neighbourhoods where many Somali refugee families settled. The themes explored at this meso level focus on place and poverty, examining institutions (schools, the criminal justice system and the media) and their role as determinants of violence.

Poverty and place

Participants identified poverty and place as major determinants of youth violence. The families most affected by poverty were said to be female-headed households who struggled to provide the kind of extra-curricular programming that would keep youth away from the troubles present in some low-income neighbourhoods. An official from the criminal justice sector observed:

> *I think it is about poverty and poverty deepened by women on their own and women with major barriers with regards to labour market because in Canada, unless you marry the millionaire or win the lottery, there is only one way out of poverty and that is the labour market. And barriers to the labour market, long-term barriers to the labour market, perpetuate poverty.*

Poverty impacted on families in two significant ways according to my study participants. First, it meant, as described above, that parents lacked time to monitor their children's activities because they were *"still busy with bread-winning"* (Male Adult5). Some of these unsupervised male children, who were said to be *"kind of raising themselves"*, became especially susceptible to negative peer influence. Second, and perhaps more importantly, poverty was the reason that newly arrived refugees moved into subsidized housing in neighbourhoods where their children were exposed to drugs and other risk factors during their formative years. A key informant who has worked in several low income neighbourhoods asserted: *"Poverty is the key, key factor here…and it is poverty that put us in this wagon…We settled in these neighbourhoods with high needs, already existing challenges and black markets, and we fell right into, perfectly"* (Male Adult9).

Two sub themes related to poverty in the neighbourhoods had consequences for young Somalis growing up in these environments: 1) early exposure to drug dealing and 2) neighbourhood schools struggling to support children with multiple needs.

<u>Drugs and gangs in neighbourhoods</u>

Study participants stated that the cost of housing compelled refugee families to seek government subsidized housing, mainly in Toronto and Ottawa. The newcomers had little control over where they were housed, and many settled in neighbourhoods where drug trade already thrived: *In the early 1990s it was possible to get into public housing and people took that opportunity and that unfortunately put them in…locations where there was drug market* (Official from Criminal Justice Sector)

For youth growing up in these neighbourhoods, participants concluded, the experience of poverty and repeated exposure to street drugs normalized drug dealing and crime as viable options for making money. They further contended that the influence of peers and the predatory nature of drug dealers who target low socio-economic neighbourhoods on the "*hunt*" for new recruits, posed significant challenges for parents lacking both time and resources to supervise their children: "*Majority of kids who are getting killed are from poor metro housing neighbourhood. Period. And they are being targeted by drug dealers to sell drugs*" (Female Adult1).

The risks in poor neighbourhoods were not limited to the presence of drugs. Participants, particularly male youth participants, described an environment in which youth are pressured to affiliate with a gang or clique for protection and respect, and where violence, like drug dealing, is normalized. Male Youth3, a former gang member,

explained how the fear of public humiliation and the need for respect precipitates violent incidents: *"Either you are the shark or the seal; that is what it comes down to. If you do not get respect you are more likely to be the seal"* (Male Youth3). Youth are also said to identify strongly with their neighbourhoods such that violence sometimes occurs when turf boundaries are violated and often *"Somali kids stick together based on territory"* (Male youth3).

A key informant who supported new families for resettlement characterized these neighbourhood risks as a *"different kind of war,"* one that parents found hard to comprehend: *"the war here* we *never knew who is fighting and why they are fighting"* (Female Adult2). It was and remains a reality refugees did not imagine in their perceptions of Canada. They are at a loss to understand how drugs and guns enter the country, and why their children are sacrificed in a war they did not instigate and whose rules they find hard to fathom. Their inability to understand the 'war' that is fought in urban Canadian neighbourhoods has been a deep source of frustration for both parents who participated in the study and those observed in community gatherings.

School connection and achievement

Participants strongly asserted their assumption that public education would pave the way out of poverty and into a better life. There was a perception among some participants that public schools in some low socioeconomic neighbourhoods were failing to educate marginalized children in general, not just Somalis. Participants in my study observed that these schools lowered expectations for children from marginalized backgrounds. A key informant with many years of experience in education asserted that

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while schools cannot address the children's poverty, they are responsible for providing the literacy skills those children need to get themselves out of poverty. Some schools were failing at that task, and working only to maintain the class bound status quo:

> *The system is not equipped in such a way that the education will take the child from poverty into a better place; it actually just keeps the status quo for everybody. So, if you are rich and you go to the school, your status is either secured the same as it is or it is going to get better, and if you are poor it will keep you there or worse (*Male Adult10).

Participants painted a picture of an environment where children, particularly male children, were unmotivated and disengaged from the school environment, resulting in a high dropout rate. The problem was traced back to elementary schools where students were moved forward with their age/grade cohorts, sometimes without adequate literacy and numeracy skills; skills which were not recovered in later grades. They reasoned that once these children got to high school, they were unable to follow the curriculum and became disengaged. Participants also maintained that children from poor neighbourhoods were stigmatized as unable to learn because of their family and neighbourhood poverty. Teachers were said to lower achievement expectations for those children. A police officer working in a low-income neighbourhood in Toronto where many Somalis reside recalled the shock of *"meeting a 10-year who [was] not able to read a sentence."* The key education informant, Male Adult10, framed the youths' disengagement as a response to the lack of *"concern, care and connection"* on the part of the schools. Had concern, care and connection been present, he felt it might have served as the children's

inspiration for a better life.

In addition to their misgivings about lowered achievement expectations, participants also expressed concern about the discrimination that Somali boys and black male youth in general experienced in schools, which served to further alienate them from the school environment. This was connected to a prevailing *"stigma against young black men"* (Male Adult9). A youth informant who grew up in the majority Somali neighbourhood of Dixon in Toronto claimed, *"Somali boys were demolished in high school"* because they were ill-prepared for high school and the poor grades they received ultimately hurt their self-esteem:

> *They were frustrated in their classroom and never ever felt like learning was something constructive that they can use to better themselves. Being in a classroom, reading a book, these things were all seen as a difficult task or tasks that made them feel bad about themselves* (Male Youth2).

Somali parents who could afford to, removed their children to better public schools, or private Islamic schools, an option participants supported but felt was not feasible for the majority of parents.

Paradoxically, while the school environment was seen to fail the learning needs of marginalized male students, participants asserted that Somali girls were succeeding in that environment, despite growing up in the same challenging homes and neighbourhoods. This difference was partly attributed to the presence of more female teachers who served as role models for the girls, particularly in the elementary school years. The girls' success was also linked to a "feminized" school environment more

suitable to the learning style of girls than of boys. Older study participants in particular believed boys to be too energetic: *"The system labels active children as troublemakers rather than seeing their natural energy. So they are not engaged, which brings about labels of hyperactivity, etc.,"* (Male Adult2).

As described above, there was both declared and implicit recognition among study participants that Somali women were successfully integrating into Canadian society, and that girls too had *"found a recipe"* for success (Male Adult9), despite the multiple barriers that their community encountered. Role modeling, was once again highlighted as a determinant of better integration outcomes for these boys. There are other determinants that underpin these differential outcomes. They will be explored in the next section.

Criminalization and criminal records

The criminal justice system, as an institution, was perceived as having played a role in further alienating male youth and escalating their push into criminal activities. Specifically, participants underscored police profiling, distrust towards the criminal justice system that the profiling engendered, and the long-term consequences of criminal records as a barrier to legal work and social rehabilitation.

Police profiling and criminalization

Participants described a practice where police routinely profiled black male youth during random street checks and police neighbourhood patrols. One felt a palpable anger, especially from male youth and their parents, that the same institution that was meant to protect them was, instead, criminalizing their boys. There was said to be *"so*

much police presence" (Male Adult10) in the neighbourhoods where many families lived

that describing the situation as *"over-policing"* was common (Male Youth5). A male youth

who grew up in one of these neighbourhoods described routine profiling and harassment:

> *I felt I was doing the right things by most measures; I was trying to go to school...but*
>
> *I could not escape carding[9] and I could not escape questioning, I could not escape*
>
> *this system of policing and surveillance. I just could not escape it (*Male youth7).

Youth were also profiled for associating with friends and relatives in their own

neighbourhoods who were known to police, which was perceived as manifestly unfair.

The view from the key informants working in the criminal justice sector is that one gets

onto police radar when seen in the company of those involved in criminal activities, even

if one is innocent: *"You will be associated with the people you hang out with: your friends*

or people you get into vehicles with, family members. So 'known to police'...is never positive"

(Official from Criminal Justice Sector1).

It is important to note that Somali youth, encouraged to value relationships within

the expansive Somali kinship system, have been profiled by the police when seen in the

company of their 'cousins' with criminal pasts. A key informant who counsels

incarcerated youth described the congruence between the police definition of gangs and

Somalis' duty to maintain kinship ties:

> *We Somalis are close and even those who are distant relatives are considered family.*

---

[9] Carding refers to the police practice of stopping individuals and entering their details into contact cards, which are then transferred to a police database where the information is maintained indefinitely. Police use the information in the database to solve crime and homicides when these occur. These seemingly random checks are considered to be profiling because they disproportionately target young black men (Rankin, Winsa, Bailey & Ng, 2013).

So, when a young person sees his cousins and talks to them, the police who were

targeting that man and anyone who talks to him, they would consider them a gang.

Difference between police definition of gang and the way we are close-knit and

connected, leads to this young person been profiled (Male Adult2).

<u>Distrust of the criminal justice system</u>

Youths' negative contact with police, characterized as "*very racist encounters*"

(Female Youth4) are said to breed distrust and hostility towards the criminal justice

system in general. This distrust has been deepened by the unresolved homicides and

unchecked violence. Questions about the failure of police to solve cases involving Somali

youth were among the main questions participants raised about the violence (Figure 4)[10].

Figure 4: Participants' Questions about the Violence
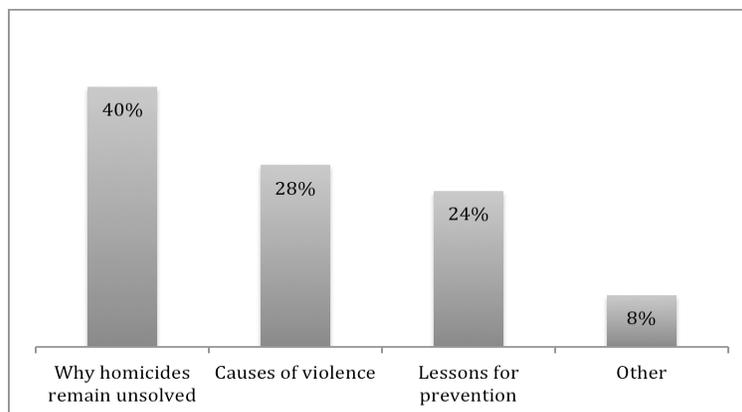
Police claim that the murders remain unsolved partly because witnesses have not been

forthcoming, even when the violence has occurred in crowded public venues. The silence

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[10] Participants were asked at the end of each interview to share questions they still had about the violence and to which they needed answers. Figure 5 represents the top three questions raised by study participants.

or absence of witnesses was reported in the media and was the subject of controversy in Edmonton, where a lead investigator expressed frustration at the absence of witnesses in many of the homicide cases involving Somalis.

Though police emphasized the dearth of witnesses, study participants believed that these crimes were not resolved because the victims were from a racialized minority group. They felt that, in contrast, homicides involving white victims often had quick resolutions: *"We see that there is no justice because these people are black, Somali, Muslim, and the parents, the wave of parents who have been grieving...they buried their kids, but they [government] did nothing"* (Adult Male 6). Study participants from the criminal justice sector familiar with the violent incidents suggested that a lack of knowledge about the workings of the Canadian criminal justice system — the way crime is reported, prosecuted, and witnesses protected — often resulted in witnesses refusing to come forward. Without witnesses, police are unable to charge individuals they suspect may have committed a crime.

Youth participants spoke about the real apprehension of witnesses who fear for their safety, as well as the *"no snitching"* code among young men engaged in the same social networks and activities. In addition to the hostile encounters already noted, these are powerful disincentives to talk to the police. Male Youth3, a former gang member argued that the police cannot always protect witnesses: *"It is hard to come forward because you are in a city where you are more likely to come across a drug dealer that can shoot you anytime. It becomes scary"* (Male Youth 3).

Criminal records as continuous punishment

Among the many issues with the criminal justice system raised by participants, the most troubling was that young men who had been punished for crimes committed in the past continue to be punished even after they have been released back into society. The combination of a trend that sees employers requiring criminal record checks when they should not, and longer wait-periods to receive pardons, was seen to undermine the rehabilitation and reintegration of young men released from prison. In the perception of study participants, there were jobs in the trades and service industry that should not require criminal record checks but increasingly asked for them. A key service provider whose programmes offered skill training to young men released from prison described the challenges to re-entry into the labour market for someone with a criminal record:

> *In this country, if you have a criminal record you are like a dead person; you cannot do anything and nobody can hire you. Even if you rehabilitate yourself and meet all the terms and conditions of the probation period, you will not have a job. You are a criminal* (Male Adult4).

Key informants who work most closely with youth in various capacities were the most frustrated by a system they believed undermined the very services and help they provide. They described the criminal justice system as a system that does not forgive youthful transgressions, that metes out perpetual punishment, and that continues to obstruct re-entry into the labour market even for those who meet their conditions of release from prison. Attaining a pardon (record suspension) is a requirement for being hired, a process that takes more than five years. A study participant expressed his

frustration: "*How does one explain this policy that criminalizes a young person for five years? Within those five years he will likely commit another crime and become even more alienated from the community"* (Male Adult3).

Participants described a "*vicious cycle"* of release from prison followed by a new offence and a return to custody. Often, the young men were released on parole conditions too stringent for a young male to maintain (e.g., no contact with close friends involved in similar incidents and no drinking) and reoffending ensued. These measures were perceived by study participants as a deliberate "*criminalization of young men"* (Male youth 5*)*, a pretext for their exclusion from society.

Study participants believed that the burgeoning prison population of young Somali men, "*right up there"* with other young black men overrepresented in prison systems (Female Youth4) is the cumulative result of police profiling and criminal record requirements. Those who enter the prison system, often naïve, according to participants, encounter more experienced, hardened criminals who school them in illegal matters instead of meeting with programmes to rehabilitate them. The consequence, as a prison Champlain observed, is that some of these youth become "*jailbirds"*, continuously in and out of prison: "*Once there, instead of finding prevention programmes, he encounters hardcore individuals. By the time he comes out, he has lost all fears because he has seen there is nothing more to fear"* (Male Adult2). That absence of fear, it was suggested, makes some young men, now with criminal records, pursue even more brazen criminal activities. Settling scores through violence becomes normalized, inevitably leading to imprisonment, injury or death.

Media and violence

A majority of study participants expressed the view that the media reporting of the violence and representations of the victims have had a deleterious effect on both the families of the young men who died in the violence and Somali Canadians more generally. They asserted that portrayals of Somali victims emphasized their past life of criminal involvement, while media portrayals of Somalis in general focused on their status as an outsider group.

Gangsters 'deserve to die'

Media coverage, according to participants, overwhelmingly reported that the victims had prior gang affiliations and were known to police. Participants felt that despite being victims of violence, the deceased were portrayed as gangsters who deserved to die. This depiction was experienced as insensitive by grieving families. A mother whose son (police would later confirm) had not been affiliated with gangs expressed the community's concerns about media coverage of victims of the violence: "*The newspaper article that came out the day after my son's death, my son's picture and that of another guy said 'maybe they were gang members'. They label them already*". The implication of such labeling was that *'these guys deserved to be killed because they were probably gang members'* (Female Adult3). It was feared that the sobriquet of gang affiliations would create an association of young Somalis with gang activities and violence: "*One person does something; they say 'a Somali gang'. Already our name is associated with gangs, which Somalis had nothing to do with. You will not hear that an Irish gang did something*" *(*Male Adult7*).*

Participants were similarly concerned about the broader implications of media references to victims as having been known to police. The statement was believed to signify that the police would not invest time in resolving the crime. Many of the homicides involving Somalis were reportedly unresolved, as noted above.

Associating Somali identity with violence

The media's references to the deceased young men's Somali identities was similarly interpreted by participants as having broader implication for Somali Canadians, and experienced as a continuation of the negative media coverage that Somali people had experienced since their arrival in Canada. The media, according to participants, created links between the violence in Canada, the Somali civil war, pirates on the Somali coast, and the Al-Shabaab radical group; misrepresentations with which Somalis *"were fed up"* (Male Adult 4). The association of Somalis with violence implied a failure to integrate into Canadian society. The perception among participants was that Somalis were singled out for especially biased reporting not experienced by other communities. An academic participant who has closely monitored and explored the causes of the violence concurred that the media are *"linking what is happening here with what is happening... in Somalia where Somalis in Somalia are known for tragedies [and] chaos...to basically make the point that these people are violent by nature."*

Participants cited coverage of the Rob Ford[11] drug scandal as an example of unfair media representation further stigmatizing Somali Canadians:

I just thought the media is always picking on poor people instead of questioning why

a wealthy businessman is in a neighbourhood where there are poor kids and buying

drugs from them. It was more like 'oh Somali drug dealers selling drugs.' No! Why is

this man… cruising the neighbourhood buying drugs? Why? That was the real

*narrative to me (*Female Adult1*).*

Some participants conceded that sensational coverage is part and parcel of the

media's business, and that the particularly violent nature of the murders, *"like organized*

mafia" (Male Adult9) lent itself to sensationalized news. There was also recognition that

other immigrants had, in the past, been targets of similar negative coverage.

Scanning a selection of newspaper stories about the homicide victims from several

major Canadian media outlets confirms the participants' claims that the media's reports

routinely refer to the criminal past of young homicide victims and to their Somali origins.

It is revealing that media coverage often emphasizes Somali identity in the headlines

(Table 4), even when the content of the report is generally sympathetic in tone. Part of

the frustration that participants expressed about the media coverage of the violence was

that its victims are being written about as Somalis rather than as Canadians. It was

Somalis, seeking to mobilize support in the crisis, who raised media awareness about the

violence. Both the families of victims and individuals involved with the community as

'leaders' spoke to the media about the violence.

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11 For a summary of the Rob Ford scandal, see Chapter Two, Footnote 3.

Table 4: Headlines about the Violence in Select Canadian Media

Globe and Mail	*Fleeing war, Somali newcomers losing young men to crime* (June 6, 2012) *Why so many Somali-Canadians who go West end up dead?* (June 22, 2012).
National Post	*Somalia North bleeds: Across Alberta, at a 'very, very scary' rate, Somali violence escalates (June 10, 2011)* *Somali-Canadians fear sons radicalized; Missing For Two Weeks (Nov 18, 2009)*
Toronto Star	*Grieving Somali mom's cries becoming harder to ignore: Toronto woman leads push to heal neglected community that has lost six of its young men to violence since June"* (Oct 15, 2012)* *'Our kids are dying': 6 young Somali Canadians killed by guns this summer (Sept 21, 2012)*
Edmonton Journal	*Somalis plead for end to 'carnage'; Police committed to solving gang, youth violence: Boyd (Dec 7, 2008).* *Somalis mourn too many young men; 'It's chaos,' sheikh says (June 11, 2011)* *Fighting for a peaceful future; Transient criminals have claimed the lives of 18 men in five years and horrified the city's Somali community (July 31, 2011)*
Calgary Herald	*Somalis rally to protect kids; Gang fears grow amid mounting violent deaths (March 22, 2009)*
Ottawa Citizen	*Gangs targeting visible minorities; Police chief, social workers say communities must take threat seriously (April 17, 2010)*
CBC	*Somali-Canadian's death sparks call to end gun violence, solve cases (March 30, 2016)*

A significant part of the frustration media portrayals of the victims provoked among study participants, stemmed from the impact of these negative messages on Somali children who, participants felt, are stigmatized by what they see in the media. Some feared the children might internalize the negative messages, or that the negative representations might curtail their access to legitimate opportunities in Canadian society:

"Whenever they see themselves in TV or newspapers, it is either this black child kills somebody or he gets killed. There is no positive role model reflected in the media" (Female Adult2). In 2016, some media reported a case brought to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal highlighting the very worries participants expressed about the impact of media coverage on young Somali men. The case involved the rejection letter a young Somali male jobseeker received from a potential employer. The letter allegedly cited Somalis' *"culture of resistance to authority"* (CBC, 2016) as the reason his application was rejected even though he had the educational competency for the job.

Macro-Level Determinants: Society and Global

The determinants of violence identified thus far, implicate the kind of relationships experienced by Somali youth, the environment in which the youth grew up, and the institutions that neglected, criminalized, or alienated them. Macro level determinants, operating at the societal and global levels can also be identified. Key among these macro level determinants are experiences of racism, the role of gender in violence, and the development of healthy identities.

Racism's oppression

A theme that cut across micro, meso and macro level determinants, and to which participants returned frequently, was racism and its role in the marginalization, not only of young Somali men, but of Somali Canadians as a whole. Participants pointed to a dissonance between Somalis' perception of themselves, as *"self-sufficient and successful"* people (Male Adult3), and their association with violence and stereotyping as non-

contributing members of Canadian society. They spoke of being *"doubly victimized"* (Female Youth2), experiencing prejudice based on being Muslim as well as being black. While being Muslim has been a problem for Somalis since 9/11, blackness was more directly linked to discrimination and marginalization: *"black does not mean just because of your skin, it means also your status in society"* (Male Adult9). Exacerbating these prejudices, is discrimination based on Somali ethnicity which, as previously mentioned, was linked to global events by media reports that mark Somalis as different and consequently *"often put in island on their own"* (Male Youth5).

Young men, in particular, are *"subject to a certain especially nasty kind of racism"* (Official from the Criminal Justice Sector2). Participants were keenly aware of the severe form of racism meted out to young black men. A female youth who grew up with several of the young men killed in Edmonton underscored her awareness of the prejudice to which young Somali men in particular, and young black men in general, are subject:

> *Everyday I tell my younger brother: "Listen, you cannot be caught slipping; your mum might love you, we might love you, but outside does not love you and outside does not want you, outside wants you to be a statistic and you have to not be caught slipping"* (Female Youth1).

On the streets, in the schools, or in society when seeking employment, young Somali men are said to encounter a terrain littered with rejection, bullying and harassment where many, though not all, pursue the illegal drug market when legitimate avenues for employment fail to materialize: *"the very reason why these young men go into these areas could be related to the oppression they face in the communities they live in.*

They did not feel they belonged there" (Official from the Criminal Justice Sector1).

Gender roles and risks

Gender, like racism, was a crosscutting theme. It was even more directly associated with violence by participants. As a micro-level determinant, gender influenced parenting patterns and underscored the importance of male role models. At the meso-level gender influenced boys' interaction with schools, the criminal justice system and media narratives about Somalis and violence. As a macro-level determinant, participants linked gender to society's acceptance of violence and risk-taking as desirable masculine traits, and to the consequences of that acceptance for both boys and girls.

<u>Risk-taking and young men</u>

Societal expectations were said to lead young men, faced with poverty and racism that obstruct legitimate avenues to resources, to join the drug trade or gangs where violence is used to settle disputes. A key informant academic who had closely followed the violent incidents in northern Alberta said that, in fact, young Somali men who join the drug trade are displaying the positive aptitude for entrepreneurship and risk-taking for which Somalis are known: *"Somalis are extremely enterprising people in general. Because they are enterprising, they take a lot of risks... For people who are enterprising, there will always be those who go into the wrong business to make money."*

Participants reported that young Somali men are expected to become independent in order to improve the economic condition of their family. A male elder invoked the concept of *raganimo,* which represents the ideals of Somali manhood, to evoke the

provider role that young men are expected to fulfill: *"Boys feel a sense of responsibility and have a greater need to be independent and to contribute to their family"* (Male adult1). The pressure on young men is heightened by the poverty of many Somali families, especially the many lone female-headed households. A male youth, who was born and bred in Toronto and whose friends and relatives died in the violence, argued that the young men who went to Alberta were *"real men"* who joined the drug trade in order to provide for their own material needs (what he described as *"fab gear"* --fabulous clothes*),* but also to meet their need to contribute to their families: *"A lot of black males, I believe, who get into the drug trade, still want to give money to their families. They just want to provide. Somali males are no different, the ones that went to Alberta"* (Male Youth2).

These societal and family expectations —to be a provider, to be independent and to be tough – according to some participants, lead some young men to pursue illegal and destructive ways to gain the self-esteem they need to thrive. A female youth worker maintains: *"The expectations of what a man is, these boys cannot live up to it. They are shattered. There is this glass ceiling that they cannot reach"* (Female Youth1).

Identities and belonging

Racism, the generation gap, disconnection from Somali language and culture, and the absence of male role models from the lives of young Somali men discussed in the previous sections result, according to participants, in an *"identity crisis"* among these youth. In response, these alienated youth were believed to turn elsewhere to define themselves and seek belonging.

Challenges of reconciling multiple identities

Having a solid identity was believed to be a shield against negative influences and risky behaviours. Somali Canadian youth, however, were said to be navigating multiple and sometimes-contradictory identities. Racism and marginalization were cited as obstacles to integration even for Canadian-born and bred youth unable to fully belong to a shared Canadian identity. Further weakening their sense of identity is the reported inability of some Somali parents to understand the significance of being racialized black and their inability, therefore, to help their children to navigate and negotiate a racially segmented society.

Young study participants displayed an acute awareness of their precarious identities, caught between parents who "*have not clearly defined an identity for their children" (*Male Youth2) and a society that does not accept them. One youth informant, who had arrived in Canada as an infant, equated being Canadian with being "*Caucasian*" and so chose to identify himself specifically as Somali Canadian (Male Youth3). Nevertheless, it was evident from youth in the study that many have found a way to accommodate and inhabit their multiple identities (Canadian, Somali, Muslim and Black). It was also clear that being black emerged as the dominant identifier. Recognizing themselves as black, it was suggested, provides for both admission into a larger group that shares their experience of marginalization, and a place within mainstream society under the label it uses to define and categorize them: "*We are black and blackness is very diverse and there is many manifestations of blackness. I think it creates power because it allows us to analyze issues in a different way*" (Female Youth4).

Belonging through Rap music

A few participants said that children and youth in many Somali households have unrestricted exposure to violent media images. Parents who cannot afford healthier activities for their children use television and video games to keep them occupied and away from the troubles in the streets. A key informant working with such families maintained, *"people have two to three part-time jobs, they are never home. They do not have the ability to supervise their kids, so the kids are watching all types of violent [media] or playing violent games" (*Female Adult2*)*. Some Rap videos, in particular, were seen to promote violence and drug dealing as a way to become rich that youth growing up in poverty, or seeking a way to belong feel they can emulate. In explaining the influence of Rap music, Male Youth3, who had been involved with gangs when growing up in Toronto's low income neighbourhoods, described impressionable youth who *"dream"* about attaining the lifestyle of their Rap idols and accept violence and drug dealing as legitimate means to that end:

> *That is the stuff they sell us on TV. And when they (youth) see that stuff then they are like 'okay, I want do that stuff as well' and that is when you get into that lifestyle. You step into that lifestyle one-inch then you go into it by a mile and it becomes harder to not condone it anymore* (Male Youth3).

The youth who most strongly identify with the messages in Rap videos were said to be those experiencing troubles at home or in their neighbourhoods. For them, the appeal of Rap lies in its articulation of the shared experiences of growing up in poverty and their regular exposure to drug dealers and violence in their own neighbourhoods during their

formative years:

> *There is this draw to the Hip-Hop culture because that is the one thing that you can*
>
> *identify with. These people are often coming from poor neighbourhoods, you can*
>
> *relate to that. Oppression, you can relate to that, systemic barriers that you can*
>
> *relate to* (Male Youth5).

Summary

We have seen that study participants linked the violence that claimed several young Somali Canadians to complex root causes that combined to make youth vulnerable to the risks of violence and participation in crime. Major themes from the study were organized into micro, meso and macro level determinants. At the micro level study participants pointed to individual experiences and relationships as determinant factors. They implicated witnessing and/or participating in drug trafficking and peer influence as well as family related dynamics. The meso level determinants they identified included both the neighbourhoods early Somali arrivals settled in, and the institutions they encountered: the media, the criminal justice system and schools. At the macro level study participants identified societal and global dynamics, racialization and racism, gender (social expectations of boys and men) and migration outcomes (presented above as background context) as determinants of violence. The interplay of these factors was linked in the minds of study participants to the violence that has claimed the lives of an untold number of young Somali Canadian men since 2005, when these incidents first came to light. Taken together, poverty, racism and gender emerge as intersecting determinants pushing the youth towards risky behaviours and violence.

The study participants were also asked to reflect on the impact the violence has had on them, on Somali Canadians in general, and on how they have responded to the violent incidents. The next chapter presents a summary of these less direct outcomes of the violence.

CHAPTER SIX: STUDY RESULTS – IMPACT AND RESPONSE

The young Somali men who left southern Ontario to find work in northern Alberta's oil economy were motivated by their own ambition to better their circumstances, as well as the desire to help their families. While the impetus to move to Alberta was, in part, a sense of family responsibility, the violence they experienced and participated in once there reverberated far beyond its instigators and victims to impact on those families. Against this backdrop, the following chapter presents themes describing the impact of the violence and various actions that Somali Canadians have taken in response to the violence. To contextualize these themes, the chapter first offers a brief account of the perceived magnitude of the problem, the way study participants learned about the deaths, and how various sources represented the victims and the events surrounding their demise.

Magnitude of the Problem

Estimates from various individuals and groups in the community who conducted their own informal counts of the murders claim that between 2005 and 2016 more than 100 young men were lost to the violence. An advocacy group that emerged in response to the violence estimates the number of deaths at 50 over a 5 -year period (prior to 2014), a number that has been oft-repeated within Somali networks, including the study participants:

> When we hear that 50 Somalis are killed, that is a big number because there are no
>
> 50 young men from other ethnic groups who were killed. Somalis are small

*population by comparison. This is an indication that there are problems (*Male

Adult3).

In Edmonton, a participant estimated that between 2008 and 2011, at least 35

young men died, while others reported a *"killing spree"* between 2008 and 2009 (Female

Youth4, key informant):

> *Losing 35 people from a single community within a short period of time is very*
>
> *significant in itself…because it is not like there are a number of communities that are*
>
> *having 35 deaths. It was very significant so that the homicide of Edmonton has gone*
>
> *up because of that (*Male Adult5).

There were differing views about the magnitude of the problem. Overall,

participants believed that there were too many homicides relative to the community's

size, and in comparison to other ethnic/immigrant communities. Some held that, despite

the disproportionate statistics, only a minority of young men had become victims of

violence or were incarcerated and the majority of young men in the community were fine,

despite the challenges reported in the previous chapter. Others saw the

disproportionality as indicative of a crisis. As one study participant observed, while the

actual numbers are small, *"the impact is much higher"* (Male Adult9). Key informants

familiar with crime statistics and trends pointed out that in the absence of data

disaggregated by race and ethnicity, data which are not collected in Canada (except

regarding Aboriginal status), the death rates within distinct groups cannot be ascertained.

Some participants expressed the view that murder rates and the incidence of youth

violence may be similar within other ethnic groups, but that those communities are not

talking about it: *"If you carve out the ethnic background of any set of murders, I would say that the numbers are roughly the same" (*Crime Blogger).

Despite the lack of agreement about the number of deaths, there was a consensus that the violence was indicative of a problem being uniquely experienced by Somali boys and young men. The unexpected violence stirred up something of a moral panic within the community exacerbated by extensive news sharing among Somalis in Canada and elsewhere. The panic deepened when it became evident that all types of young men, not just those struggling in school and troubled with other issues, but also intelligent, educated, and hardworking young men from "*good"* families, could be caught up in the drug trade or became unintended targets of violence.

News-sharing About the Violence

The violence was discussed widely within Somali networks. Several sources contributed to the spread of news about the deaths (Figure 5) including community networks and the mainstream media. Somali Canadians were described as "*a close knit community"* where news, particularly bad news, is widely shared: "*Somali community and families are very close and connected to each other. They share information and anything happening within the community"* (Male Adult4).

The advocacy work of Somali mothers raised awareness about the violence and incarcerations and contributed to spreading the news: "*mothers cried out; they spoke, they went everywhere, they raised the issue. They have done whatever they could* (Male Adult9).

Figure 5: How Participants Learned About the Violence
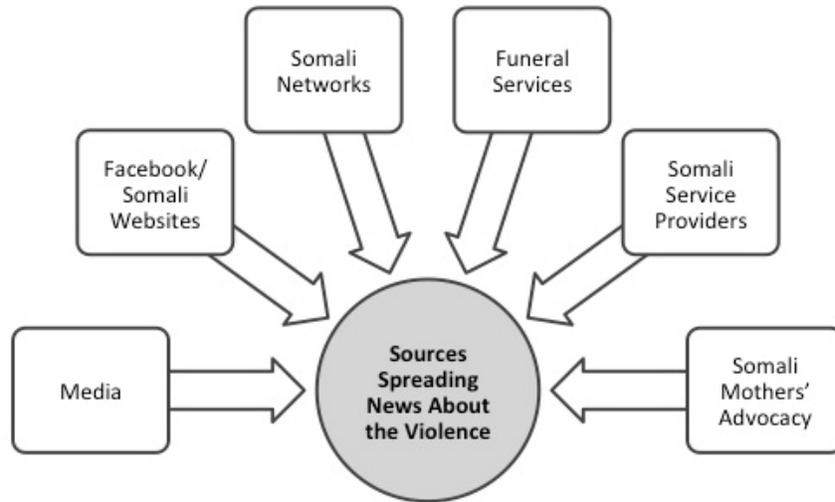
Established Canadian media, as described previously, were the primary sources of information about the violence. Media reports were picked up by Somali news outlets and social media, ensuring that the information not only reached Somalis in Canada but also those elsewhere around the world.

> *If something happens in one part of the country, it will reach the other side the same day. And when people talk on the phone, everything that happened will be shared. Everyone is fully informed. And bad news also travels fast...it flies without wings* (Male Adult2).

News about the deaths of young men, particularly those that happened early on in Alberta, was accompanied by various tropes most often related to the background of the victims and the circumstances surrounding their deaths. Media depictions of the violence and its victims sometimes strayed from the truth surrounding the deaths, as noted. Among Somalis the violence generated strong reactions and much discussion.

Within the Somali community these discussions included expressions of shared grief, and questions about how to prevent other young men from becoming victims of violence. There were expectations of help from mainstream entities, but that help did not materialize. Gathering to grieve became the normal response to each new occurrence of violence: *"It just became something where we meet, cry together and then nothing is done about it. It seems as though with each death we have become more comfortable with it"* (Female Adult4). The looked-for help that never came, or came too late, was interpreted as confirmation of their outsider status; the marginalized 'other' already described, whereby the lives of Somali and black children were perceived to be less valued: *"Sometimes I hear from our people if these were white or wealthy children these issues would be addressed effectively"* (Male Adult2, key informant). This impression led some Somalis to conclude that Canada might not be a safe place to raise black boys. Others described their marginalization as the result of news media where only failure and bad news stories attract attention. They felt that the Somali community had failed to share its success stories: *"What we failed to do is share stories of those who have succeeded, especially those young people who have finished universities, who have come out of those same housing projects, same neighbourhoods and same schooling as the others"* (Male Adult3).

Impact of the Violence

The impact of the violence on Somali Canadians, and especially on families, must be understood within the context of an interconnected community. Kinship ties and family relationships extend well beyond the nuclear family. Those close community ties

have created shared feelings of collective loss, expanding the impact of the experienced violence far beyond the immediate families and friends of its victims: *"Whatever happens to a family has an impact on the community as a whole, even if you do not lose children"* (Male Adult6).

Significantly, the violence re-opened old injuries and woke trauma from the war, *"the PTSD that was not dealt with"* (Female Adult2). The enacted violence and other behavioural problems of male youth resulting in their imprisonment culminated in feelings of helplessness among their elders. The community felt itself to be running out of options to save their boys whom they believed to be at-risk of violence or incarceration. A non-Somali key informant who tracks homicides and who compiled the initial list of Somali homicides in northern Alberta observed that, *"people were saddened but they were also frustrated because they did not know what more they could do. They were desperate for tools"* (Crime Blogger).

The initial surge of violence generated shock in the community. Shock soon took its toll in psychosocial impacts (Figure 6) and worries about the long-term implications of the violence for the wellbeing of Somali Canadians as a community.

Figure 6: Psychosocial Impact of the Violence

Grief

The families and friends of victims used adjectives such as *"sad" "painful"* and

"devastated" to describe the impact of the violence on their own lives. Others familiar

with the violence but not directly related to the victims reported that the impact on the

families of the deceased was *"huge."* They described experiencing impacts on emotional

wellbeing and somatic symptoms (for example, a mother said she had gone to the doctor

more frequently since her son's death). There was relentless self-blame. Mothers in the

study, and others who silently wept at events where community members gathered to

take stock of the violence, wondered where things had gone wrong for their children.

One mother who described her family as not *"fitting the stereotype of the broken family"*

said, *"I ask myself 'what went wrong in your family?"* (Female Adult3). She and her

husband were both well-educated professionals living in a middle-class suburban

neighbourhood.

Study participants also spoke of being in a state of protracted grief where each new

incident serves as *"a reminder of your own child"* (Female Adult 3). A young male study

participant whose friends had died in an incident which his brother survived, described

the impact of the violence on him:

The pain that is within me is something that is not ever going to leave. You remember

their faces, you picture them, you go to the burial sites, you remember their [tombstone]

numbers, like 3032, 2431, 2670. You memorize these things. These things live with you

(Male Youth2).

The grief does not abate. One study participant, the father of the victim in one of

the few cases in which the perpetrator was convicted, said that despite leading to closure, the two years he and his family spent going to court for the trials were *"very difficult"* (Male Adult1).

<u>Fear</u>

Parents in the study described how the death of their sons has preoccupied them and their families. They have become obsessively worried about the safety of their other children. As one mother stated *"you are fearful and you become even harsher on the other children"* (Female Adult4). Fear is contagious; it has created concern for the safety of other male children far removed from the problem: *"Everyone is afraid that the child you have raised all those years will be the next victim, because this child...represents hope"* (Male Adult7). Two concerns underlie the seemingly excessive worries about boys and young men in the wake of the violence.

When some young men who were not known to be involved in any illegal activities became victims of violence (one of these was shot through a door, his assailants shot him without knowing who was behind the door) it unleashed anxieties that the violence could reach even those whose children were thriving. A female youth worker in Toronto knew of such young men who *"had no criminality or anything that has to do with why they would have been dead"* (Female Youth1). Because some of the perpetrators are also believed to be Somalis (a perception, not a fact), when these cases are resolved the impact is felt by not one but two families, and their respective Somali networks: *"We have issues with Somalis killing Somalis, so we lost a brother to death and we also lost another brother who will be incarcerated for a long time; both families are traumatically affected* (Male

Youth7).

Stigma

There was heightened sensitivity to the violence and its implications well beyond the affected families. In particular, participants worried that young Somalis, as noted in an earlier chapter, might experience stigma due to the violence and the references to gangs and drugs prevalent in media reports. The consequence of this association, a service provider who runs a youth skills training and employment programme observed, is that when youth are *looking for a job they have that stigma that they are gang members, so a lot of them are having hard time finding jobs. That is a big impact* (Male Adult5, key informant). This situation has been described as a self-fulfilling prophecy in that their rejection serves as an incentive to turn to the very gang to which the youth are assumed to belong already, and which the job would help them to avoid.

The damage that the violence has done to the image of Somalis, participants report, is most acutely borne by young men. Young male study participants were keenly aware of these negative associations and expressed feeling *"frustrated"* by a mis-representation that effectively ensures that they *"won't be accepted for a really long time"* (Male youth5).

Many young men expressed that being Canadian equaled feeling excluded and ostracized. They also felt called upon to answer for the wrongs of their community, a burden they carried reluctantly: *"Because I am Somali I have to speak for every wrong that our community does. As a young man it does not make me feel Canadian* (Male Youth5).

<u>Lost potential</u>

The violence claimed young men in the prime of their lives; most were in their 20s. The father of one of the victims described his son as having been lost in *"the best years,"* grieving his disappointment at the *"wasted life"* (Male Adult1). While some of the young men lost to violence were struggling, many more had the potential to succeed and, far from being anti-social, were connected to their families and friends. Some were bright and high achieving, some were even mentoring their peers. All of them carried the hopes of their families and were expected to emerge as leaders in their community and contribute to Canadian society: *"Those young men could have been professionals, they could have done something, they could have given something back to this society but now they cannot. It is a big loss for everyone"* (Female Youth5).

The deaths had a discernible impact on the young study participants, particularly the males, because the deceased young men were their age-peers and they could relate to both their struggles and the lost potential. They were also unsettled by the violence and what it signified for them: *"You have Somali kids now realizing... 'all of us are dying; people we know are dying... we are being violently shot'. This is how a lot of the brothers are going out"* (Male Youth2).

These anxieties and fears have given rise to a Somali Canadian grass-roots movement, and what a participant aptly characterized as an *"awakening"* to protect male children from the risks leading to criminality and violence described in Chapter Five.

Community Responses to the Violence

The violence and the ensuing panic about the safety of their male children that galvanized Somali Canadians resulted in fervent action to save their boys. These responses did not come solely from the families and friends of victims, but even from those participants whom the violence had not directly impacted. An academic participant who had closely followed the violence and its effects surmised, "*in the positive sense it galvanized a lot of people to work hard, to change things and also it may have united the Somali people who had a lot of fault lines.*" Some were motivated to prevent future violence by their own loss or struggles. For example, a mother who lost a son shared her experience widely with various groups (police, Somali youth, parents, and teachers). She said her motivation was that "*another mother should not experience*" what she had felt.

Figure 7: Community Response to the Violence

The actions participants described taking encompassed a range of activities aimed at reducing risk determinants; from raising awareness among parents to broader advocacy targeted at making institutions more responsive to the community's needs (Figure 7).

<u>Raising Awareness</u>

Participants who lost a family member or a close friend, and service providers who

spoke to media outlets whenever incidents of violence broke out, led the awareness raising campaign. By far the largest response, emerging from the grassroots and without external funding, was led by mothers who had lost sons or whose sons were imprisoned. Community organizations, particularly in Alberta, also contributed significantly to prevention efforts. Several participants mentioned that a group in Toronto, *Positive Change,* and another group in Ottawa, *Canadian Somali Mothers Association (CSMA),* were responsible for raising the greatest awareness of the issue within Somali Canadian networks and beyond the Somali community. The work of these two groups and the community organizations in Edmonton has improved awareness of the risks faced by male youth, and the best ways to protect them from these risks. As a result, *"awareness has increased and parents' knowledge is better" (*Female Adult4).

The voluntary work of these groups, participants said, reduced the blaming that had silenced affected families. People have begun to talk openly about their problems thereby transforming the community's attitude toward and perception of the problem: *"In the past people used to hide their problems from the community, fearing gossip and criticism of their parenting...Now there is no blaming parents. It is not their fault. What is going on is related to the environment* (Male Adult2).

<u>Advocating for prevention</u>

The advocacy work of grassroots groups, such as the ones mentioned above, also sought to engage the institutions that most impact youth — education, policing, and the media. While the *Positive Change* group directs its efforts towards violence prevention, the *CSMA* supports young men in prison with the goal of preventing recidivism. Both

groups made schools and the criminal justice system the focus of their activism. The twinned effort of these two groups, which would eventually link up to share strategies, has been responsible for enhancing the knowledge of the community about the risks young males face. They have also been responsible for advocacy work within institutions.

Study participants in Toronto shared a specific example of advocacy work with law enforcement. These participants reported "*easy access to weapons*" (Female Adult4) as a significant factor driving up the rate of violent incidents in their jurisdiction. A member of the Toronto advocacy group described the outcome of their work vis-à-vis guns: "*In 2010, in five months, eight young men were killed in Toronto, but after we started our advocacy, the deaths decreased and the year after that it decreased. But on the other end, rate of incarceration increased*" (Male Adult7). Members of this advocacy group noted that the response from law enforcement to the concerns which they had raised was to target homes in their neighbourhoods suspected of harbouring illegal weapons. When members of the advocacy group sought advice from another community in Toronto that had experienced similar gun violence they were advised to improve their relationship with the police. The community looked to Minneapolis, Minnesota for suggestions. There is a significant Somali population in Minneapolis and unlike in Toronto, a number of Somali police officers patrol the city's majority-Somali neighbourhoods. The group that travelled to Minnesota reported that although there are three Somali police officers in the Toronto police force none were assigned to patrol the Toronto neighbourhoods with a large Somali presence: "*That model has lot of positive thing that Toronto and Canada need to learn*" (Female Adult2). The result of their efforts, according to members of the Toronto

advocacy group, is that their relationship with the police unit assigned to patrol their community, the Somali Liaison Unit, improved. The police unit now operates out of the Dixon road high-rises, which, as mentioned in Chapter Two, have a large Somali presence, and, allegedly, a gang unit known as the Dixon-City Bloods.

Although their efforts have not resulted in significant institutional responses the need to continue to raise their concerns with institutions is something the community has come to appreciate: *"It is tough. If you do not organize yourself and advocate for your community, nothing happens although they know there is problem"* (Female Adult2).

Mentoring youth

Younger study participants spoke of the need for youth mentors, in their families and in the community. They were acutely aware of this need either because they regretted the death of a relative or friend whose guidance they missed, or because they had not received such guidance themselves. A reformed young man who had been involved with gangs said he helps other youth now because *"when I was involved in it, no one really intervened... no one tried to facilitate the issues that I had, so I feel that this is an opportunity to try to make a difference; save a life or two"* (Male Youth3). Other participants said youth need access to networks beyond their community. A female participant, for example, described her desire to create a *"platform"* for youth *"to meet people in the right circles"* (Female Adult1). Several of the youth worked to establish mentorship networks for young Somalis, while others used arts and sports such as basketball and soccer clubs that incorporate mentorships and target boys and male youth, to broaden their exposure beyond that which is available in their neighbourhoods and

through the media. There are also mentorship programmes that focus on helping high school students (both girls and boys) with academic studies and career choices, guided by Somali professionals[12].

> *We try to connect kids to successful people in the community as one way that they can see 'this is what I want to be' as opposed to seeing the wrong people and saying 'I want to wear what they wear or want the same car he drives'. That is one way we are trying to help the community in terms of saving the up and coming* (Female Youth5).

Changing narratives

The violence and the media attention it has attracted rekindled sensitivity to the image of Somali Canadians that is widespread in Canadian society. The community is concerned that such largely problematic representations of themselves will negatively impact young Somalis. What is said and written about Somalis matters, it was suggested by study participants, because perceptions stick and preconceptions influence the responses of the wider society to any given minority group, as noted in Chapter Five. Therefore, "*transforming the narratives*" (Male Youth2) about Somalis within Canadian society was said to be an important goal of future community advocacy: "*We must develop a narrative of success. We continue to be perceived as people…involved in crime, creating problems for society. This perception is reinforced whenever a young man dies and is identified as Somali*" (Male Adult3).

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[12] I was a volunteer mentor in 2012-2013 in one of these mentorship projects that operated in Ottawa high schools.

Young study participants passionately expressed their opposition to such reductive narratives, and to the framing of their story and representations of themselves in terms of tragedy: "*It is a personal mission of mine to counter the narrative by... highlighting the successes of young Somalis... We want to define ourselves by accepting the multiple identities [we] carry*" (Male Youth5). Changing the narrative about Somalis was conceived as both strengthening knowledge of Somali culture by "*connecting young people to their roots of... language, dances*" (Female Adult1), and highlighting the resourcefulness and resilience of Somalis and the struggles they have overcome:

> *Sometime when I reflect on it...the circumstances [of Somali migration] are extraordinary: how we got here is extraordinary, how we continue to live to some degree is extraordinary, how we were able to maintain ties is extraordinary, how the community functions is extraordinary, our economic system, our, Ayuuto[13] for example, is extraordinary, how mothers can make do with the so little they have just to make sure their children do not feel alienated economically...is extraordinary (Male Youth7).*

Strengthening community cohesion

Underlying the desire participants' expressed to share Somali success, those "*extraordinary*" triumphs so that future generations could feel proud of their identities and belonging in Canadian society, is the realization that Somali Canadians need to

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[13] Ayuuto, also known as *Hagbad*, is a rotating saving scheme traditionally practiced by Somali women, and also in other parts of the world. Somali women revived the practice in Canada and elsewhere to survive financial hardships (Mohamed, 1999). Women, and increasingly men, pool sums of money for a specified period of time. It is given to a participant on a rotational-basis. There is no interest, and at least in the Somali case, people with emergency needs are given priority.

undertake internal reforms in tandem with the changes they seek from mainstream institutions. Though not all participants spoke about them, some acknowledged that divisions exist among Somali Canadians as a result of the civil war that was responsible for their exodus from the Horn of Africa. These are the *"fault lines"* that the academic participant alluded to:

We are divided into clans. We are divided into sub-clans. We are divided into regions; Somaliland, Puntland... too many lands. But it seems that when those kinds of tragedies happen...basically we realized we are dying because we are Somalis. We are dying because we are immigrants, so therefore that may have in fact reduced the tensions between the Somalis in general.

Another participant urged that it is time to heal the wounds left by the war so as to focus attention on the next generation: *"There is a lot of unforgiveness, a lot of things have happened to the community. Back with the war, all that has happened in Somalia. People, I don't think they have healed* (Female Adult1).

Accordingly, participants spoke about the need to strengthen community cohesion by raising their expectations for the community, and addressing issues within Somali households. A long-time community worker who is also a highly regarded religious counsellor captured these thoughts: *"Even though we are traumatized, we have to become aware that we are traumatized first of all. Secondly... there has to be a higher expectation for everybody, including the parents" (*Male Adult2).

Summary

Somali Canadians have been impacted by the violence that claimed a number of

young men over the past decade and still continues. That they have taken ownership of the problem is reflected in the actions they have taken to end the delinquent behaviours of some of their youth and to work towards creating opportunities for positive youth self-development. The impacts participants shared suggest that the violence had effects beyond the immediate families and friends of its victims and perpetrators. The violence stirred memories of the war from which they had fled and perplexed the struggling community, especially its older adults, who did not entirely understand what had taken hold of their youth, and more significantly, how to protect them.

It was evident both from the interviews and from my observations at community gatherings that Somali Canadians of all stripes have coalesced on one issue: that of saving the young males of their community. It is also evident that increasingly, younger, well-integrated, professional Somalis are occupying the advocacy spaces while their elders have recognized the need for a younger generation, familiar with the struggles of their peers, to lead the movement. There is also recognition that such efforts cannot be left to Somali Canadians alone, after all *"these are Canadian boys; the youth that we are losing [who] would be contributing members to our society"* (Female Youth3).

In the next chapter, we assess the implication of this violence drawing on the interpretations of study participants and the work of other scholars.

CHAPTER SEVEN: ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

The most tragic event to befall Somali Canadians since fleeing the Somali civil war is the spate of violent incidents that has claimed the lives of dozens of Somali Canadian young men since 2005. These incidents occurred in the three Canadian cities where the majority of Somalis reside: Edmonton, Toronto and Ottawa. The violence continues to rattle Somali Canadians, adding to anxiety about the increasing number of young men who are incarcerated (Tiilikainen, 2015). An estimated 80% of Somali Canadians are youth, i.e. younger than thirty years old (Naji, 2012). This fact may be adding to the vigilance about their children's wellbeing that has emerged in response to the violence. The anxieties that I have observed and explored in this thesis trouble not only the families directly touched by the violence, it has also reached those whose children are thriving. The range of activities undertaken, mostly on a volunteer basis, by Somali Canadians of varied backgrounds, is testament to their heightened anxiety. This research set out to explore the contributing factors [hereafter determinants of violence] that have put Somali youth in harm's way and to recommend actions for mitigating those risks.

This chapter aims to situate the study results within the broader context of black youth experiences in North America and Somali settlement in Canada. It will become evident that, despite some realities unique to Somali youth, many of the determinants of violence this research has identified mirror those identified for other marginalized black Canadian youth. In brief, research results indicate that the promise of wealth and the fulfillment of masculine ideals lured youth to the drug trade. The violence emerged in the context of young men contesting their marginality and their inability to fulfill their

material aspirations or safeguard their self-esteem. Thus, it may be suggested based on the study findings, that Somali male youth are experiencing what Gilroy calls "a lived crisis as well as system crisis" (1993, p.9). It would also seem that young Somali males in the diaspora have become at once endangered and dangerous, like his black brethren in the US whose lifestyle he seeks to emulate in his search for belonging (Tilton, 2010).

The next chapter analyses the determinants of violence made clear in the narratives of the study participants. The discussion considers the determinants from three distinct angles. Section one examines the violence experienced by Somali Canadian youth within the more general context of black Canadian youth violence and related trends, as briefly indicated in Chapter Two. Section two focuses on three institutions presented by the participants as determinants of violence in themselves: the criminal justice system, education system, and media. Section three revisits the Somali resettlement experience, specifically that of the largest cohort of Somali refugees who entered Canada in the late 1980s (described in Chapter Two), and the impact of that experience on Somali families. The final section reflects on the 'new racism', discussing its effects on second generation newcomers' sense of belonging and its implications for the self-identification of second generation Somali youth.

Section One: Violence in the Canadian Context

Research on youth violence is hampered by the difficulty of obtaining data on the violence experienced by Somali Canadian youth as compared to the violence experienced by black Canadian youth at large. There is a lack of reliable homicide and/or crime data

disaggregated by racialized status and ethnicity. Although such data are frequently

collected, they are not publicly disseminated (Owusu-Bempah and Wortley, 2014;

Thompson, 2014). Among the explanations offered for suppressing data related to

racialization and ethnicity are concerns about breaching privacy, stigmatizing

communities, or biasing police practice. It is worth noting that the strongest opposition

to the release of such data comes from law enforcement agencies and not racialized

communities (Owusu-Bempah and Wortley, 2014), which suggests that while important,

concerns about privacy and creating bias need to be weighed against the perception of

surveillance and existing bias that interview participants expressed.

At the time of this writing, Somali sources *estimated* the number of Somali homicide

cases to be well over 100 (from 2005 to 2016); only three percent of these were believed to

have been solved (Somali Canadians Youth Matter, 2016). By way of comparison, in 2015

in Canada, police reported solving over 75% of homicide cases, having identified the

perpetrators of the crimes (Mulligan, Axford & Solecki (2016). The community feels that

Somali homicides remain unsolved because of a sanctioned indifference to black victims

and their families. Distrust of the police is a key factor in the unresolved homicides.

While witnesses are key to solving crimes within the Canadian judicial system

(Ducharme, 2012), witnesses do not come forward for a range of reasons, including fear of

retaliation on the part of the perpetrators and lack of trust in law enforcement (Wortley,

2008). Over-policing in response to reported crime in impoverished neighbourhoods

works to reinforce the 'no-snitching' code that discourages reporting crime (Anderson,

1999; Walcott, Foster, Campbell & Sealy, 2008). Somali youth have in general adhered to a

code of silence despite the urging of members of the Somali community to cooperate with police (Jibril, 2011; Khalema et al., 2011).

Somali youth violence follows a predictable pattern. Young males commit the majority of homicides in Canada, and the majority of the victims are also young men (Mulligan, Axford & Solecki, 2016). More specifically, young black men both commit and are the victims of the majority of violent crimes (Owusu-Bempah and Wortley, 2014). A study of homicide victimization in Toronto found that the majority of perpetrators were young black men as were 90 percent of the victims (Thompson, 2014). Thus, the perceived crisis among Somali male youth mirrors broader concerns about young black men in Canada (Kenti, 2013).

While the perception that the violence is 'Somali-on-Somali' could not be verified since many of the homicide cases remain unsolved, Wortley (2009, p.351) found that those involved in drug trafficking tend to organize along ethnic or racial lines and that "[e]thnic bonds also act as opportunity structures through which new dealers are taught the 'tricks of the trade.'" Somali Canadians involved in the drug trade also organize along lines of shared Somali identity. However, a *Globe and Mail* report that includes interviews with a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) criminologist and the Edmonton police claims that the structure of Somali involvement in the drug trade differs markedly from that of other ethnicity-based criminal gangs. While other gangs are territory-based with violence occurring around issues of 'turf' and gang boundaries, Somalis involved in the drug trade and similar criminal activities (an estimated 2000 nationally with about 100 'hardcore' members), are said to be national in scope, cohesive, highly mobile, and

operating out of multiple centres in Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Toronto and Ottawa (Mackrael, Appleby, Moore & Morrow, 2012). Also unlike other criminal groups (such as the Mafia), the Somalis are believed to be less hierarchical "offer[ing] considerable scope for the ambitious, money-driven individual who does not have to 'kick the money upstairs' as the loyal Mafia soldier must" (Mackrael et al., 2012). This 'scope' explains the view of my former-gang-member study participant who reported that the intention of many of those who enter the business is to do so for a short-time: *A lot of people from Ontario hear about drug game in Alberta, making easier money...and easy to get on it*" (Male Youth3). It is easy to see that with a lot of money at stake, and little regulation or hierarchical structure to act as a deterrent, envy and opportunism might lead to violence.

Oil patch risks and other drivers of violence

The cohort of young men leaving Toronto and Ottawa for northern Alberta, whether for legitimate or illicit work, had already experienced poverty and discrimination in Ontario (Daniel & Cukier, 2015; Naji, 2012). Employment was an obvious draw. Jibril (2011) reports that Alberta was known to young Somalis in Toronto as *Cashberta;* a common moniker for the province during the oil boom. This suggests that the opportunity to profit from the lucrative and accessible drug trade was the greater incentive, as study participants themselves noted and the earlier literature review reported. The average income of oil patch workers was $91,000/year affording ready access to drugs (or a ready market for drugs) and fueling an environment of drug use (Tetley & Haavardsrud, 2005).

Northern Alberta attracted a transient population of mostly young men who gathered in Edmonton or Fort McMurray for respite and recreation (Cosh, 2011; Tetley &

Haavardsrud, 2005). Edmonton came to exemplify 'youthification' (urban spaces with high numbers of youth concentrated into the inner city core), a demographic shift driven by migration from other parts of Canada (Moos, 2016).

Somalis were vilified simultaneously in Edmonton and Fort McMurray. As the violence in Edmonton gave rise to a sensationalized construction of Somalis as violent (Khalema et al., 2011), in Fort McMurray, the hub of the oil patch, Somalis were seen as having taken all the jobs (Major and Winters, 2013). In fact, contrary to that perception, the best paying jobs in the oil and gas industry require established networks and union memberships. Unskilled and immigrant workers are often stuck on the lower rungs of the industry, working as drivers or in the service sector (Major and Winters, 2013). An in-depth report on Somali Canadians in Edmonton underscored that Somalis have not, in fact, benefitted from the Alberta oil boom and that most Somali men drive taxis or trucks for a living (Ahmed, Jimaale, Roble & Yusuf, 2007).

In an environment characterized by the absence of any sense of community among transient workers, the risk of alienation and dislocation for secondary migrants is a reality. Major and Winters (2013) learned that Somali men who arrived in Fort McMurray often relied on homeless shelters and other Somalis to stave off anomie. It is thus likely that some of the young men my study participants had known as "good" and "law abiding" on arriving in Alberta stayed with either relatives or Somali friends from Ontario who had associations with the drug business until they could secure employment.

To understand the violence in the present case study beyond its obvious associations with the oil patch environment, it is helpful to recall key insights from

Bourgois' (1995) ethnographic research with Puerto Rican drug dealers in Harlem. That study revealed the strong pull that young marginalized men feel towards a lifestyle laden with risks of violence and arrest, especially for street-level sellers. The combination of the low wages paid for legitimate work (especially to those with limited education), the feminized work environment of service sector jobs (perceived by young men as un-masculine and demeaning), and the seemingly easy money associated with selling illegal drugs, made dealing drugs look like a viable economic option (Bourgois, 1995). In particular, Bourgois suggests that feminized service-based work that emphasizes deference to authority or to the client, and uniformity with little room for self-expression (e.g., on how to dress), is alienating for racialized male youth.

Consequently, "they find themselves propelled into an explosive confrontation between their sense of cultural dignity versus the humiliating interpersonal subordination of service work" (Bourgois, 1995, p. 141). Work for these youth, as hooks notes "becomes synonymous with loss of respect" (2004, p.23). Bourgois notes that the rejection of exploitation on the one hand and the need to survive on the other pushes young men into the drug market. Young men who find themselves in the drug trade are not on a lark; violence, substance use and "internalized rage" are all too common (Bourgois, 1995, p. 9). The quest for respect and material wellbeing doubtlessly comes at a hefty price as the Somali case suggests.

Drug trafficking has contributed to the violence under examination in this case study, but it is not the whole story. Violent incidents are more often the result of personal quarrels than of drug-related territoriality (Kelly, 2011). Profit also drives the violence (Hart,

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2014), and as Bourgois observed in Harlem, youth learn from older criminals in their neighbourhoods and from society that "crime and violence pay" (1995, p.76). Peer influence is an important indicator of involvement in illegal or risky behaviour, as the participants themselves emphasized. While peers do not cause each other to act violently: it is when a youth has "nothing to lose and no way out" that peer influence is most persuasive (McMurtry & Curling, 2008, p.20). It is, therefore, likely that the mixture of money, drugs and a transitory young male population created an explosive environment ripe for violence.

Study participants claimed that the neighbourhoods where early Somali refugees settled normalized violence and drug dealing as viable income-generating activities for youth. The literature supports those claims. Neighbourhoods where there is a concentration of poverty have higher rates of violence and crime (Cassidy et al., 2014). Crime and violence flourish in the absence of business and social activities that encourage public circulation in the streets. Less circulation, more violence, the more people remain enclosed in their homes. It is a self-reinforcing cycle (McMurtry & Curling, 2008). Somalis are not unique in being exposed to neighbourhood risks; the risks that accumulate in places of poverty where families encounter obstacles that threaten the wellbeing of their children. However, their case illustrates the paramount importance of neighbourhood safety for refugees who have fled violence.

The above discussion of the proximal factors contributing to violence suggests that Somali male youth were responding to the same set of socio-economic constraints experienced by other marginalized youth in North America who adopt violence in response

to deprivation and marginalization, as was discussed in Chapter Three above (Anderson, 2008; Bourgois, 1995; McMurtry & Curling, 2008; Messerschmidt, 2000; Walcott et al., 2008).

When the youth were asked to explain their own participation in violence, they blamed "adult betrayal and alienation" (Daiute & Fine, 2003, p.12). The next section explores the roots of this alienation, starting with the role of institutions as determinants of violence.

Section Two: Institutions and the Construction of Violence

Somali Canadians have undertaken a range of activities in response to the violence experienced and perceived to have been perpetrated by their male youth. Their actions and advocacy focus on three institutions: the criminal justice system, the media, and the education system. Somali Canadians feel that these institutions contributed to their marginalization, and ultimately to the recourse of their youth to violence, through a combination of profiling, incarcerations, school disengagement, and the persistent media association of Somali ethnicity with violence that destabilized their identity construction.

To make sense of the complaints levelled at those institutions by study participants, Rattansi's (2005) concept of *institutional racialization* provides a helpful lens. The concept draws attention to racism as a complex process operating at multiple interacting levels. It contests the more common concept of institutional racism (or systemic racism, the term participants in this research used), defined as the "reproduction of racism via racialization processes over time and in specific sites… [and the] power

relations involved" (2005, p.288). Racialization and the culture (or enactment) of racism is instead understood by Rattansi to play out differently in different institutions with similarly varied outcomes for different populations:

> In so far as the focus of analysis should be on the complex interplay of these elements, as well as their articulation with divisions of gender and class, it should be clear that what is being analysed is not so much institutional racism tout court, but the workings of processes of racialization within institutions such as schools, hospitals, police forces, and so forth, and those who are in some sense 'outside' the institution, such as parents, or black youth who become the objects of police practices (Rattansi, 2005, p. 289).

The implication, as Philips (2010) explains, is that institutional policies and practices are not constructed in a vacuum. Trends at the societal or global level affect institutional policies and individual behaviour, such that "racialization and inequalities are produced and reproduced at each of these levels in interaction" (p. 175). Such framing draws attention away from individual biases, redirecting critique to practices that constrain individual behaviours within and outside the institutions (Rattansi, 2005; Phillips, 2011).

With that conceptual framing in mind, the discussion that follows provides an overview of how the media is able to construct the violence of racialized men as extrinsic to Canada, rooted instead in an alien culture and history. A more in-depth look at the experiences of young black men within the criminal justice and public school systems

reveals their lasting and deleterious effects on marginalized black male youth. Where

evidence is available, the specificity of the Somali experience will be highlighted.

Media and the emergence of the Somali male (youth) criminal

The bias that participants described as characteristic of media coverage of the

violence manifested in the consistent sensationalization of stories about Somalis,

beginning with their arrival in Canada. The result has been that Somali Canadians have

come to be perceived in terms of one of two reductive stereotypes: that of criminal gangs

and drug dealers or of violent religious extremists (Berns-McGown, 2013). In fact there

was a third representation more prevalent in the early days of Somali settlement which

we saw in Chapter Two above, in which Somalis were depicted as welfare frauds.

Examining the media coverage of a few high profile incidents will suffice to

demonstrate the concerns study participants expressed about the association in the

media of Somali identity with violence and the impact of this constant association on the

self-esteem of Somali youth. The incidents and their coverage were sketched briefly in the

review of Literature in Chapter Two, but warrant greater consideration here.

The first major news item about Somalis in Canada was a widely discussed 1993

CBC documentary titled: *A Place Called Dixon*. *Little Mogadishu,* as the Toronto

neighbourhood is sometimes called, has come to signify the 'culture clash' between its

Somali and white residents. The area consists of several condominium high-rises that

became home to Somali refugees in the early 1990s. More specifically, Dixon came to

exemplify the phenomenon of 'white flight.' Established Canadians fled the area as

Somalis arrived in increasing numbers (Kusow & Bjork, 2007). Walcott suggests that the insertion of Somali youth "into the North American black criminal paradigm" harkens to this period, when the first clashes between Somali youth and building security guards erupted (2003, p.125). The CBC documentary generated tropes about Somalis as people with a peculiar culture that was incompatible with Canadian values.

Two decades on, Dixon Somalis continued to attract unwanted attention. Rob Ford, then mayor of Toronto, was captured on video cavorting with young men who were said to be Somali drug dealers. Barber (2013) commented that the media reporting of that incident was striking for the number of times it referred to the Somali ethnicity of the young men in the video:

> Time and again, in the weeks that followed the allegations against the mayor—in the news, on social media, and in conversation—the ethnicity of those supposedly in possession of the crack video came up in way that it simply wouldn't have if Ford's drug dealer friends had been, say, Irish (2013, para. 10).

The video incident led to a highly publicized police raid on the Dixon St. towers to purge the street gang known as the Dixon City Bloods. The raid, *Project Traveller,* reportedly seized money, drugs and guns, and resulted in the arrests of dozens of young men of Somali descent.

Millet's (2014) review of newspaper reports on Project Traveller found that even though arrests from that police raid included non-Somalis, other ethnic identities were not mentioned in any of the media coverage. Instead, the reports represented Somali youth as specifically prone to violence and criminality, and connected the seized weapons, money

and drugs to the violence in both Toronto and Northern Alberta. A situation that had been

insignificant both in the media and to police became worthy of attention when it

implicated a wealthy white public figure:

> In many ways, Project Traveller has unfolded in the shadow of the Rob Ford crack
>
> scandal and the ongoing police investigation into potential criminality in the
>
> mayor's office. The Dixon City Bloods were practically unknown to the public until
>
> a year ago, when reports emerged that an accused gang member, Mohamed Siad,
>
> was trying to sell a video that allegedly showed Mr. Ford smoking crack cocaine at
>
> a bungalow near the Dixon towers (D'Aliesio, 2014).

In some media reports, these Dixon stories merged with ongoing coverage of the violence

in Toronto and Edmonton. This conflation enabled a specific problem with Somali youth

to be framed more generally as a Somali problem by the media (Khalema et al., 2011).

To be sure, some Somali youth are involved in criminal activities (that involvement

is acknowledged as the focus of this study), but the conflation of Somaliness with

criminality and violence follows a too familiar pattern of seeing black male youth as prone

to criminality. Moreover, the media consistently, and often without evidence, operates

within "a gang culture framework" that explains black youth violence in terms of gangs or

the existence of an "underclass" of purportedly dysfunctional black families, an ideological

rather than factual representation of events (O'Grady, Parnaby & Schikschneit, 2010). It is

therefore not surprising that the young men who died in the violence were rarely described

in media reports as victims (Khalema et al., 2011, p.65). Any criminal past, however minor,

was profiled in news stories about the deceased young men (Berns-McGown, 2013*).*

Participants in this research found the negative narratives to which the press seemed drawn distressing. They felt such narratives could only serve to further undermine the self-esteem of Somali youth. Narratives are not benign; those with the power to create narrative have the power to produce knowledge (Austin, 2013).

There are conventional stereotypes about immigrants and crime that are continuously revived and reinforced in narrative (Jiwani, 2006; Wortley, 2009). Said (1997) noted a preponderance of unchecked prejudice in Western media coverage (and scholarship) of Islam and Muslims. He notes that public tolerance for prejudice against Muslims exceeds that which is acceptable for any other group. That bias has accelerated since the terrorist attacks on the US in 2001. The media have come to normalize an image of Muslims "as essentially savages" (Karim, 2003 p.77). The association created between racialized populations and crime cues the public to fear them, and to isolate these groups from society (Benjamin, 2002). Their association with violence depicts the target populations as morally inferior (Jiwani, 2006).

Most mainstream media, of course, do not set out to be deliberately racist, but are inarguably engaged in the processes of racialization that Rattansi (2005) described. Galabuzi (2009) has surmised that media institutions stigmatize black youth as dysfunctional in such a way that they pave the way for their criminalization and containment. What the media choose to report, what they omit, and how they frame the issues (e.g., choice of headline) are all predicated on an established, historical and socially accepted "common-sense stock of knowledge" about the racialized other (Jiwani, 2006, p.31). What is most relevant here is how these media stories influence the practices of

public institutions (e.g., education, security and policing). As Jiwani (2006) argues, the

media is a powerful institution, keen on maintaining its dominance; the impact of its

messaging is far-reaching, especially for marginalized populations:

> If particular groups are consistently underrepresented or represented in
>
> stereotypical ways as abnormals—criminals, unassimilable immigrants,
>
> undeserving Others, those who don't fit the ideal normative standards, and those
>
> who do not belong to the nation—then it follows that the ruling powers are likely to
>
> use these representations as justification for imposing measures that effectively
>
> curtail the rights of these groups in entering or remaining within the nation (2006,
>
> p. 37).

We will see a little later that even while debate generated by the above-mentioned CBC

documentary was still current, policies were already being crafted to bar further Somali

settlement in Canada. These seemingly disparate events, I will argue, are linked.

The brief review above of the media's portrayal of Somali male youth and other

racialized populations as either violent or criminal influences how the wider society

perceives them and their community (Berns-McGown, 2013). Research participants were

well aware that these representations were neither passing nor trivial, but ultimately

created impressions of their young men as unruly and aggressive in much the same way

that young black males in general are portrayed, giving rise to punitive surveillance

measures to contain them. I turn to that discussion next.

The criminal justice system and the construction of violence

In 2007 a group of mothers in Ottawa whose sons were in jail formed an advocacy

group, the Canadian Somali Mothers Association (CSMA), to respond to a rise in the number of Somali youth in detention (Taylor, 2011). In the absence of ethnicity-disaggregated data for homicides and detentions, already noted, CSMA could not ascertain the exact number of offenders of Somali ethnicity. They could, however, through various requests, receive estimates from Ontario provincial and federal correctional facilities of the number of young men in custody who were Muslim or, more specifically, black Muslims. In 2012, nearly 4% (2,808) of offenders in Ontario provincial institutions (those serving sentences of less than two years) were Muslim. In 2014, 538 inmates in federal institutions in Ontario identified as Muslims, nearly half of these (263) were black. Somalis are among the largest black, Muslim population in Canada (Kusow, 2006). The CSMA inferred that the majority of those who were Muslim and black were likely to be Somali.

The findings of the CSMA indicate that although acts of violence grab the spotlight, the rate of Somali incarceration may be the more significant problem, constituting a hidden determinant of violence. A brief review of black incarceration rates and Canadian criminal justice trends will suffice to demonstrate the significance of the incarcerations and their implications as a provocateur of violence.

The incarceration rate of Black Canadians is four times that of the general population (Galabuzi, 2009; Owusu-Bempah & Wortley, 2014). Black Canadians are especially overrepresented in federal correctional facilities where they make up one-tenth of all federal prisoners (Owusu-Bempah & Wortley, 2014). Additionally, between 2005 and 2015 there was a significant increase in the black prison population (Office of the

Correctional Investigator, 2015; Zinger, 2016). Though it has yet to be verified, it is likely that Somali males make up a significant part of that increase in prison populations over the past decade (Table 5).

Table 5: Inmate Population and Diversity

	31 March 2006	31 March 2015	Change (no.)	Change (%)
Inmate population	13,488	14,865	1,377	10.2
Aboriginal	2,528	3,660	1,132	44.8
Black	848	1,451	603	71.1
Women	447	676	229	51.2
Caucasian	9,320	8,526	−794	−8.5

Source: Zinger, 2016

Findings from Wortley and Owusu-Bempah (2011) indicate racialized identity, age, and poverty predict the level of police interest in an individual, such that young black men in poor neighbourhoods were stopped and searched more frequently than older, female or wealthier residents in Toronto. Similarly, data on traffic stops over a two-year period in Ottawa found that Middle Eastern and black men were disproportionately targeted for police traffic stops 3.3 and 2.3 times respectively (Foster, Jacobs & Siu, 2015). Though young black men do commit crimes, Wortley and Bempah argue that their crimes are given more selective attention than the crimes of other groups (Table 6). The sharp increase in the black male prison population speaks to the criminalization of blackness in Canada, in particular the prevalence of police profiling targeting black male youth (Maynard, 2017).

Table 6: Percent of Respondents Who Have Been Stopped by the Police in the Past Two Years, By Race and Gender

Number of stops	Black		Chinese		White	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
None	52.8	73.3	70.8	85.3	64.9	76.8
One	15.0	11.7	16.4	11.9	17.8	14.1
Two	8.9	5.7	6.6	2.2	9.1	6.4
Three or more	23.3	9.3	6.2	0.7	8.2	2.7
Sample size	180	333	226	278	208	297

Source: Wortley & Owusu-Bempah, 2011

Wacquant (2005) argued that criminalization is not merely a legal response to crime but an ideological response to the *Other* as embodied in the poor. It is a key component of neoliberal policy, which he describes as '*the return of the penal state*' *(*emphasis mine*)*. While there is a long history of seeing the black man as dangerous, there is now "the accelerating conflation of blackness and criminality" (2005, p.137). Crimes committed by blacks receive the stiffest sentences and the most media attention. This scrutiny is responsible for the incarceration of blacks and other marginalized groups in disproportionate numbers (Wacquant, 2005). Elsewhere Wacquant (2009) argues that one of the key strategies of neoliberalism is to use prisons to veil social problems that would otherwise be visible for public scrutiny:

> ...penalization serves as a technique for the *invisibilization* of the social 'problem' that the state, as the bureaucratic lever of collective will, no longer can or cares to treat at its roots, and the prison operates as a judicial garbage disposal into which the human refuse of the market society are thrown (2009 p.xxii, author's emphasis).
>
> In Canada, a neoliberal approach to crime was enthusiastically promoted by the

Conservative government of Stephen Harper (2006-2015). The Conservatives' 'Law and

Order' platform promoting a 'tough on crime' agenda was inspired by a similar campaign in

the USA that was responsible for massive incarcerations in that country. Zinger (2016,

p.610) contends that while Canadian incarceration rates have not yet reached US levels, the

Harper government, during its decade in office, introduced an "unprecedented number of

criminal justice initiatives" which have left an indelible mark on the Canadian criminal

justice system. The Conservative's 'tough on crime' agenda eroded rehabilitative

programmes resulting in debilitating conditions within Canadian prisons. Recidivism,

which should be treated as a public health issue, continues to be dealt with by more

punitive measures (Zinger, 2016). The paucity of reintegration programmes was one focus

of the Somali Mother's advocacy work, with the aim of finding support for inmates within

and after their release from prison (Taylor, 2011).

Somali parents' questions about why there are not more judicious and effective

policies making drugs and guns less available to their children are not naive. The drug

trade in Canada is a hugely lucrative enterprise in which young Somalis are most likely

mere 'foot-soldiers' or, at worst, low-level suppliers. The drug trade in Canada is a $44.5

billion dollar industry (Criminal Intelligence Service Canada, 2014). Tellingly, the response

from Alberta's Progressive Conservative government to the problem of young Somalis and

drugs was to offer $1.9 million to fund mentorship programmes to teach youth to refrain

from joining the drug trade (Bennett, 2010). Even Somali service providers buy in to the

belief that initiatives targeting individual behavioural change will reduce the risk of youth

involvement in drugs and gangs. Meanwhile, Canadian drug policies consistently fail to

stop the flow of drugs into the country, despite the introduction of harsher and longer

sentences for offenders (Canadian Drug Policy Coalition, 2013).

Gordon's (2006) review of drug prohibition laws in Canada is instructive in that it

points out that successive Canadian governments have waged 'war on drugs' by targeting

immigrant groups and the poor. The opium prohibition laws of the early 20th century, for

example, targeted Chinese immigrants who were depicted as deviant in much the same

way Somali youth and Somali communities are portrayed today: "the state and moral

reformers were clearly concerned that opium was a dangerous expression of an immigrant

culture that showed signs of nonconformity with 'Canadian' order" (2006, p.65). Often,

police 'crack-downs' lead to more arrests and convictions even when there is no related

increase in the number of users and/or seller*s (*Dauvergne 2009*).* Immigrants and

racialized individuals are disproportionately on the receiving end of police raids and

arrests for minor drug possessions (Gordon, 2006).

Impact of criminalization and criminal records

The increase in the black prison population, discussed above, has resulted in a

commensurate rise in the number of former offenders with criminal records. Criminal

records have been described as barriers to rehabilitation and a determinant of youth

violence (Wortley, 2008). Criminal records are not only acquired upon conviction of a

crime, but stick to individuals even after they have been acquitted or the complaint against

them has been withdrawn. Just being questioned by the police results in becoming part of

the electronic database (John Howard Society, 2014). Consequently, a staggering 20 percent

of Canadian adults (4.1 million) over the age of 18-years have criminal records (John

Howard Society, 2014).

Two legislations introduced as part of the Harper era law and order agenda in 2010 and 2012, Bill C- 23A *Limiting Pardons for Serious Crimes Act* and Bill C-10 *Safe Streets and Communities Act,* respectively, impose stringent measures that has been interpreted as continuous punishment, diminishing the chance of rehabilitation for former offenders (Ashby, 2013). Once convicted of a crime, even those who have fulfilled all their conditions of release must still wait years before they can seek the Record Suppression (Pardons) needed to clear their names. How many years, depends on the severity of the offence committed; the waiting period can be up to a decade for serious offences, such as first or second degree homicides (murders), or five years in the case of lesser offences, including sexual and physical assaults. At the end of the waiting period offenders must still demonstrate to an Executive Committee or Board with complete discretion to grant or repeal Pardons that they have complied with all requirements and have not reoffended over the waiting-period.

Both conviction and non-conviction related information is stored in linked federal, provincial and local databases, and shared with prospective employers. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association (2012) has argued that keeping and in particular releasing non-conviction records undermines the principle of the presumption of innocence. Sharing such information with potential employers actively stigmatizes innocent people. There are no guidelines for the length of time such information should be retained, except in cases that involve youth under 18 years.

In tandem with the growing profusion of police records there has been an upward

trend in employer requests for police record checks. For example, in 2010 Edmonton police received 75,782 such requests (Canadian Civil Liberties, 2012). Most of these checks were for employment and/or volunteer purposes. Similarly, a survey of select Ontario companies found that over 51 per cent of employers require criminal check clearance driven by liability concerns, risk aversion and the will to minimize potential harm to vulnerable populations (John Howard Society, 2014). Increasingly, organizations look to police information as an expedient way to determine the trustworthiness of potential employees. The City of Ottawa went so far as to propose periodic background checks for existing employees; a move that was challenged by the Fire Fighters' Association. Their objection was upheld by the court, which deemed the requirement excessive and unwarranted (Canadian Civil Liberties, 2012).

The impact of lingering criminal records on the rehabilitation and reintegration of former offenders cannot be overstated. A "*vicious cycle*" ensues: in which unemployment increases the risks of recidivism and criminal records bar former offenders from work (John Howard Society, 2014). Those labeled as criminals or accused of crime are stigmatized, sometimes for decades, affecting not only how they are perceived by others, but how they come to view themselves (Kurlychek, Brame & Bushway, 2007; Powell & Winsa, 2008). It was that societal rejection that so frustrated Somali service providers in Edmonton. Few employers are willing to train or hire their clients even when those youth showed willingness to reform. Social rejection diminished the choices available to those young men increasing the likelihood that they would revert to illegal activities. Inevitably they came to number among the 'discouraged workers,' who have given up looking for

employment and do not figure in national unemployment statistics (Bourgois, 1995; Corak, 2012).

There is strong evidence demonstrating the national and global decline in full-time stable employment with benefits and the commensurate sharp increase in the number of people in precarious employment situations (Benach et al.,; United Way, 2013). Precarious employment encompasses full-time work without benefits, seasonal work, part-time work, low wage work, work with an irregular schedule, and/or work in which the workers are not able to negotiate better working conditions and/or wages (Benach et al., 2014; United Way, 2013). Chronically precarious work is increasingly understood to be a determinant of health; affecting mental health, family relationships, and community cohesion (Benach et al., 2014; United Way, 2013). The preponderance of precarious jobs serves as an additional barrier to labour market participation for those who desire work. The problem of financial insecurity does not end with landing a job. The euphemism 'discouraged workers' refers to those who had given up searching for work. Their numbers are not reported in national unemployment statistics (Corak, 2012). Saul (2008) sees this hidden unemployment as a deliberate attempt to conceal the true national unemployment rate:

Ottawa kept on changing the definition of *unemployment* (author's emphasis) until 62 percent of the unemployed had been categorized as not the kind of jobless who should be helped... little more than a statistical game aimed at moving people out of the politically sensitive unemployed category, where those in charge of the economy might seem to be to blame, and into the poverty category, where those

who are poor can be abandoned as marginal and somehow hopeless. The situation

is therefore no one's fault (2008, p.186).

Given the extent of this hidden unemployment in Canada, the likelihood of gainful

employment for marginalized Somali male youth is already discouragingly low, even

without the added disadvantages of racialization and racialized criminalization.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the above discussion. Firstly, young Somali

men who have become ensnared in criminal record laws and record check trends have little

choice but to survive in the illegal or grey economy. Their ability to recast drug trafficking

as work may be understood as a demonstration of 'radical pragmatism' (Connell, 2005). It

can also be seen as a possible salve for the humiliation of unemployment. Recall that in this

study, Male Youth2 referred to the young black drug traffickers he knew as "*real men*" who

wanted to provide for their families, and have access to nice clothes, the "*fab gear*" that

would mark their success.

Secondly, the criminal justice system appears unjust to racialized youth such as

Somalis. Since they feel unable to rely on the state to arbitrate in their disputes these youth

normalize violence as the way to settle conflict, as Pinker (2011), cited in Chapter Three,

suggests. The examples of systemic bias cited above (racial profiling, the dearth of

rehabilitation programmes within prisons, the penalizing effects of criminal records, and

stringent requirements for eligibility for Pardons) entrench the marginalization of young

men and diminish their chances of reintegration.

A final observation about the impact of this criminalization is that the incarceration

of young Somali men leads directly to the further impoverishment of their families, as

young able-bodied men are removed from the community and women are left to struggle on their own for extended periods of time (Alexander, 2012).

This cycle is evident in the experiences of Somali Canadians; struggling families must support young men who are often worse off after their release from prison. I observed this reality directly over a six-year period during which I supported two young men (brothers with a widowed working mother) while they navigated the justice system in Ottawa. It became imminently clear that navigating the system requires a high degree of linguistic competence, cultural and social capital inaccessible to most newcomers, and a great deal of time, which their single mother working in the healthcare sector could ill-afford. During that time, I saw other families (parents, siblings, relatives) collapse under the pressures of unrealistic bail conditions requiring the intensive supervision of the accused youth; drawn-out court processes that often leave families perplexed; and parole conditions too difficult for their young men to achieve. It became obvious that the pressures on everyone in the family were extreme. Stress was evident in the decline in health of the parents (the mother in my case was hospitalized with a heart problem) and the neglect of the rest of the children in the family as siblings were drawn into supporting roles and, in some cases, assumed huge responsibilities. There is still more stress on the family when the cost of legal counsel is taken into account. Many of the families I observed through the work of Somali Mothers could not afford the exorbitant fees of a criminal lawyer, especially as these cases often last two or three years. The impact of administering justice and punishment is felt not just by the accused but also by their families.

Public schools and black boys: 'pipelines to prisons?'

Like the criminal justice system and the media, study participants claimed that public schools also worked to marginalize and alienate Somali boys. Somali Canadian parents value education for their children. In Ottawa, for example, they established homework clubs in the early 1990s in which Somali university students tutored school-aged children and youth (Mohamed, 1999). Parental concerns took on greater urgency in the wake of the violence and incarcerations such that the school experience came under scrutiny. As noted in the review of literature in Chapter Two, pressure from families resulted in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) appointing a Task Force to investigate claims of underachievement and high dropout rates specific to Somali students. The Task Force's findings confirmed the community's fears documenting both high underachievement and dropout rates, which were greater for boys than girls (TDSB, 2014).

Although Somali student graduation rates have been improving since 2000 (Figure 8), the concerns raised by the experience of Somali boys need to be reviewed within current debates about the school experiences of black boys in Canada that identify the same set of issues: disengagement, underachievement and dropout rates (Cooper 2015; James, 2012). Notably, an academic has referred to the estimated 60 percent black pupil dropout rate as "a national disgrace" (Cooper, 2015). The limited scope of this research does not permit an in-depth exploration of these debates, but a brief review of the main issues will suffice to show that schools (and indeed the education system) remain sites of contestation for black pupils.

Figure 8: Somali-speaking and TDSB Students' Overall Five Year Graduation Rates, Grade 9 Cohorts 2000-05 to 2008-13
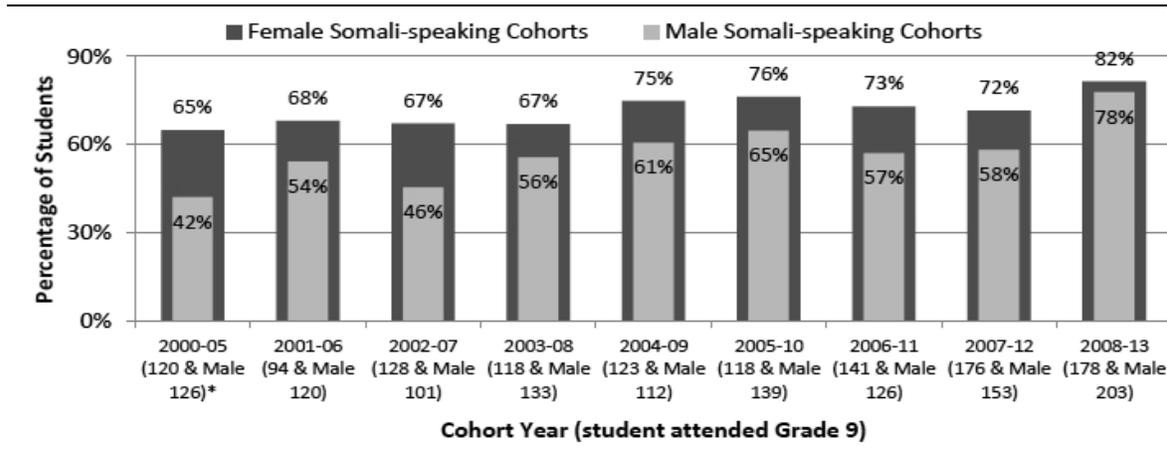
The debate about the state of black boys' experiences in school, broadly described as disengagement, can be distilled into two issues. James (2012) has identified the first issue as the consequence of labelling black boys as "at-risk". James describes several stereotypes that mark black boys as unable to learn and consequently consign them to special needs programmes and/or subject them to harsher discipline. These include: coming from immigrant or foreign cultures that do not prioritize education, even when the boys are second or third generation Canadians; being fatherless and thus lacking male role models and resources to augment their learning; being stereotyped as possessing greater physical aptitude for sports and thus less mental capacity for academics; being viewed as prone to anti-social behaviours; and lagging behind other students in academic achievement. These labels affect the boys' self-esteem and influence teachers who may feel disinclined to proffer meaningful supports (James, 2012).

The perception that black boys lack intellectual acumen (a stereotype that extends to girls, but sticks more persistently to boys) may be the reason why significant numbers

175

of black children in American schools are overlooked for gifted programs (Grissom &

Redding, 2016). Grissom and Redding attributed this in part to teacher bias; black

teachers were more likely to identify and assign black children to gifted programs than

non-black teachers. The experience of alienation that is blamed for student

disengagement has been linked to the behaviour of individual teachers who see black

pupils as lacking intellectual aptitude, and institutional policies derived from a neoliberal

view of education, oriented towards discipline and control.

The second issue that has been linked to the alienation of black male pupils from

schools relates to 'Zero Tolerance' polices, similar to the 'tough on crime' agenda

described previously. Zero Tolerance policies were instituted to make American schools

safer, and imported to Canada for similar purposes (Winton, 2013). Zero Tolerance

policies were introduced under the Conservative government of Premier Mike Harris

(1995 - 2002) as part of a broader transformation of Ontario schools that included the

introduction of new curricula, the reduction of high school from five to four years, and

the requirement of literacy tests for graduation (Johnstone & Lee, 2014). Specifically, the

high suspension and expulsion rates that most visibly impacted black pupils has been

attributed to the Safe Schools Act of 2000 (Winton, 2013). The Act sought to make schools

safer by giving school administrators the authority to remove students considered

disruptive to the learning environment from the classroom, and to involve police when

necessary (Salole & Abdulle, 2015). The implementation of that Act has been described

variously as a form of "systematic violence" against already marginalized children"

(Johnstone & Lee, 2014, p. 214-215), and as a "school to prison pipeline" (Salole & Abdulle, 2015).

School (dis)engagement and male role models

    Discussions about school disengagement on the part of study participants recognized the value of school connection as a protective shield: dropping out, underachieving, and being susceptible to negative peer influence become less likely when a student is invested in school. Evidence supports the participants' assumptions. School connection, defined as, "the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals," results in positive education and health outcomes for children (CDC, 2009, p.3). Moreover, school attachment buffers against the influences of adverse family situations as well as other negative behavioural triggers (Loukas, Roalson & Herrera, 2010). Students from racialized and low-income backgrounds in particular feel a greater sense of belonging and are less likely to engage in risky behaviours when they have a positive relationship with teachers, counsellors and administrators at school (Daly et al., 2010).

    Somali parents, as noted above, place a high value on education but their ability to provide the kind of 'helicopter-parenting' and parental advocacy that has become the norm for contemporary Canadian parents was (and still is for many) simply unrealistic, even for parents with fewer children and greater resources than average within the Somali community. Nevertheless, Somali parents' education expectations mirror those of other immigrant groups. According to a survey by Childs, Finnie and Mueller (2015), the children of immigrants have higher postsecondary attendance rates than non-immigrant

Canadians. This is particularly true of Asian and African (including Somali) populations.

That difference is attributed to parental aspirations and a "culture" of valuing

postsecondary education (Childs, Finnie & Mueller, 2017).

In 2011, 84 percent of all elementary and kindergarten teachers, 97 percent of all

early childhood educators and assistants, and 59 percent of secondary school teachers in

Canada were female (Statistics Canada, 2016). This 'feminization' of schools, meaning the

preponderance of female teachers, is sometimes blamed for schools failing boys in

general, not just Somali or black boys (Abraham, 2010). The assumptions underlying these

claims take seriously the biological differences between boys and girls and argue that the

presence of more male teachers and a diversified curriculum would make schools better

for boys (Martino, 2011). In his critique of this assumption, Martino (2011) points to the

risk of essentialism inherent in giving so much weight to the male-female dichotomy, and

the still greater danger of reinforcing existing gendered stereotypes by giving so much

value to the male role model; he is concerned specifically with the "risk of exacerbating

and supporting the very versions of masculinity which... limit boys' human potential and

capacity for building the broader repertoire of skills needed to navigate a changing, post-

industrial world" (2011, p.19).

The assumption that more black male teachers will make everything right, a view

also held by Somali Canadians, is problematic because it implies that female teachers (or

indeed non-black teachers) are not capable of establishing rapport with marginalized

black boys or building the connections that foster school attachment. As Tavares' (2013)

research shows, black female Canadian teachers, and indeed black females, have a long

and successful track record of mentoring and supporting marginalized pupils, including black boys, which the emphasis on male role models as the panacea conceals. Additionally, the call for black male teachers comes with an "impossible expectation" which has discouraged black males from entering the teaching profession (Tavares, 2013, p.30). In essence, black male teachers are expected to become "surrogate fathers for Black Boys" as a salve to immediate concerns, while structural inequities, the determinants of violence that this work has brought to light, remain unaddressed (Martino, 2015, p. 65). Diversity among teachers is of course important, but the emphasis on male role models is, as Martino points out, part of a neoliberal agenda devolving social problems to individual responsibilities. In this case burdening black teachers rather than addressing structural inequities.

Neoliberalism's forays into Canadian public education

I stated in Chapter Three that neoliberalism is fundamentally concerned with individual responsibility without regard for systemic power imbalances. Focusing on individual behaviours deflects critique from the societal structures that create and perpetuate inequalities (Bishop, 2005). Individuals working for institutions are, of course, responsible for their behaviours but they are influenced by institutional policies. Bishop explains how the interaction between institutional cultures and those who work within them shapes individual behaviours:

> Institutional structures have internal cultures and ideologies, complete with goals, values and a range of acceptable behaviour. There are always rewards and punishment to encourage desirable actions and enforce limits. If an individual

does not belong to a contrasting culture outside the institution, it can be difficult

to be conscious of these norms. Many are subtle, just 'the way things are done'

(2005, p. 72).

Neoliberalism has reshaped public education into a training ground for a high

performing workforce capable of competing in a global job market. Neoliberalism's forays

into Canadian public schools have been funneled through American think tanks and

promoted in Canada most effectively by the Fraser Institute whose school ranking (their

education 'report card') has significantly influenced schools and parents alike (Gutstein,

2010). The Fraser Institute, and ideologically aligned individuals and institutions, have

worked to erode public trust in public education. Paring down public confidence in

collective education is intended to pave the way for the privatization of schools under the

guise of choice, allowing parents (through vouchers) to opt for the school of their

choosing (Gutstein, 2010).

Neoliberalism's impact on education is most obvious in Ontario (Johnstone and

Lee, 2014), Canada's most diverse province and home to the largest population of black

Canadians. Upheaval in Ontario's education system has rebranded education as a

commodity, introducing practices borrowed from the business sector where the customer

can expect a standard product and quality assurance (Johnstone & Lee, 2014). Already

effected by reduced spending on education, teachers' abilities to support individual

student's learning needs were further curtailed by the introduction of standardized tests

which leave little room to consider equity or exercise creativity in engaging students

(Johnstone & Lee, 2014). Public education in Canada was not intended to mold students

into the narrow confines of economic productivity and competition. The original aims were loftier, reflecting the nation's aspirations for its citizenry who were expected to be literate and informed and to use public education, a common public good, to improve their socio-economic status (Johnstone and Lee, 2014).

Whether the current education system is fulfilling those promises is a debate beyond the scope of this thesis. More pertinent here is education's role in sowing the seeds of belonging and citizenship. Clarkson (2014) posits that public education was conceived to support state building in Canada; to cement citizenship and inspire belonging in immigrant populations with ostensible loyalties to former homelands. Anticipating that experiencing discrimination hinders newcomers' integration and self-identification as Canadian, Clarkson argues that "without public education, we cannot have a cohesive society, a society with shared values" (2014, p. 179).

The neoliberal incursion into Canadian education seeks to undermine these collectivist aspirations:

> The anti-public social formation that has emerged with neoliberalism has no interest in fostering the educational conditions in which it becomes possible for young people to imagine another world outside of the economic Darwinism that now bears down on every aspect of their lives (Giroux, 2012, p.165).

The explanations for the alienation of black boys provided above may seem deterministic, describing it as something imposed on them and inevitable. Their disengagement, and even the rejection of higher education by some youth, can also be seen as an expression of their agency, rejecting school as too uncomfortable, and the

promised "good job" to follow as too unlikely. The values being promoted in Canadian schools sometimes elicit push-back from those working to reconcile irreconcilable worldviews. It is possible to imagine that this struggle is costly enough to make school uncomfortable, even without the additional disincentives of perceived exclusion and discrimination, especially if youth also observe their university graduate siblings struggling to attain employment.

To understand the agency that resides in opting out of schooling it is helpful to recall Will's (1977) study of working class 'lads'. Will's young men constructed their identity around opposition to school rules that they saw as entrenching class divisions rather than helping them to advance. Black students, also see the racialization processes and institutionalized racialization working to entrench divisions. They resist by enacting various strategies, including but not limited to, school truancy (Sefa Dei & James 1998). Thus, if some Somali youth do not see school as a place that provides belonging as Canadians, and do not see it leading to the social mobility their parents and society laud, it is not unreasonable that they should reject school in favour of pursuits that allow "their talents to take root elsewhere" (Wills, 1977 p.x).

The reality and impact of racism must also be taken seriously, especially given the compounding effects of gender, migration and poverty. Their added weight not only intersects with the baggage of racialization but "is lived or felt or perceived as being all together and all at once" (Bannerji, 2005, p.144). Once alienated from wider society and its public institutions, the lives of black boys play out in the streets where they encounter violence and harassment from each other and from police (Galabuzi, 2009). As hooks

articulates "if you only have the streets, you encounter violence on all sides: black on black violence, the violence of addiction, and the violence of police brutality" (2015, para. 17). Somali youth encounter discrimination and hostility on multiple levels; anti-black/anti-Somali racism, virulent anti-Islamism, and the conventional prejudices against the poor in a class-based society.

The above discussion of the role of institutions in making Somali male youth vulnerable to risks was intended to show how macro trends, such as neoliberal ideologies, have an impact at the micro level on individual lives. Institutional policies that allow little latitude for individuals to rebalance inequalities become the status quo. The oppression experienced by Somali youth in the classroom and in the street is the result of individual racism, institutional racialization, and prevailing ideological forces operating in concert. Ultimately, as Bishops notes, "an institution's self-interest lies in the preservation of its own essence, which comes from its history and is expressed in its deepest values and structures, particularly its methods of granting, maintaining and regulating power" (2005, p.89). For that reason, individuals within the institutions and the institutions themselves are accountable for the inequities they generate and perpetuate. Society must acknowledge the ways in which our institutions discourage and even punish those that seek to change them (Bishop, 2005).

This section has illustrated the role of the media, criminal justice system and schools in contributing to the vulnerability of Somali youth, leaving them open to violence and criminality. In the next section I consider the pre-existing vulnerability of their families, their status as refugees, their construction as the extreme 'other', and the

ways in which their integration into Canadian Society was actively discouraged. I also

discuss the consequences of their struggle to integrate on the identity formation of

Somali Canadian children.

Section Three: Racism, Marginalization and their Impact on Identities

The discussion in the preceding sections focused on placing the violence in the

broader Canadian context, particularly highlighting the role institutions have played in

creating vulnerability in black male youth who are too often alienated from school,

subject to criminalization or constructed as deviant in media messages. This section

returns to the earliest days of Somali Canadian settlement where, according to my study

participants, the 'root causes' of the violence are to be found. Our discussion will

examine, in particular, the intersecting themes of racism, gender and poverty. The

discussion will encompass the construction of Somalis as the extreme 'Other,' and

ultimately, the impact of that construction on the identity formation of Somali Canadian

male children.

Somalis as the 'neo-Gypsies'

As described by various studies reviewed in Chapter Two, the majority of Somali

refugees who entered Canada in the late 1980s and early 1990s were Convention refugees

who claimed asylum within Canadian borders. Unlike sponsored refugees who receive

concrete settlement support, Somali refugees, consisting mainly of women and children,

received limited resettlement help and were thus left to navigate Canadian life on their

own (OCASI, 2016). Significantly, the Somali arrival in Canada coincided with one of the

worst recessions in recent Canadian history. The early 1990s was a time of high unemployment and underemployment (Thiessen, 2001). As previously discussed, the early Somali years in Canada were marked by extreme deprivation, with many children growing up in poverty (Ornstein, 2000). Children's successful transition to adulthood is determined by a number of factors, including the conditions in which they grow up and the social and economic capital of their parents (Bingley, Corak & Westergård-Nielsen, 2011).

The observation on the part of study participants concerning the absence of a prior Somali settlement in Canada is important. The preexistence of ethnic enclaves in a country of migration has been shown to facilitate the integration of newcomers by mitigating the emotional toil of settling in a new place (Abdi, 2015; Beiser, 1999; Gordon 2006). Even so, Somali study participants maintained that their settlement difficulties were not perceived as insurmountable. Kinship networks were recreated and reconfigured to deal with the new challenges, particularly by women, as noted in Chapter Two. The perceived inequity vis-à-vis their settlement in comparison to the support offered to other refugee populations that my study participants expressed is borne out in the evidence. Not only were Somalis not supported as other large cohorts of refugees have been (e.g., Southeast Asians and Syrians), their presence in Canada was, in fact, actively discouraged, especially once they came to be perceived as people who could not be integrated into Canadian society (Carriere, 2016).

In particular, Bill C-86 (already described) is seen to have had a negative impact on Somali re-settlement, particularly affecting women and children by deepening poverty

and delaying family reunification (Bassel, 2012; CCR, 2015; Pratt & Valverde, 2002; Spitzer, 2006). Bill C-86, and other immigration policies that followed, put Canada in violation of its obligations under the Geneva Convention on the Protection of Refugees (Mohamed, 1999). There is little doubt, as the Canadian Council for Refugees has written (2015), that Somalis were the target of the 1990s immigration reforms. At the same time as these anti-Somali immigration policies were being crafted and publicly debated, Canada brought in 26,000 refugees from the former Yugoslavia. Their refugee claims were expedited without the restrictions imposed on Somalis and Afghanis (Spitzer, 2006). The inequities were not lost on refugee advocates, or Somalis, but Canadian government officials were unapologetic in their response to allegations of preferential treatment. As Pratt and Valverde report: "Bernard Valcourt, then Minister of Immigration, explained that the Somalis' situation was less compelling owing to the fact that they were 'nomads' who didn't want to come to Canada anyway" (Pratt & Valverde, 2002, p.149).

Canada has a history of regarding newcomers with suspicion rather than welcome, which has, over time, given rise to policies of exclusion and discrimination. In 1911, legislation barring blacks from immigrating to Canada was enacted; the first of its kind by a Western country (Knowles, 2007). Muslims, even prior to the 9/11 attacks, were depicted as "pre-modern and barbaric" (Razack 2008, p.174). That Somalis would be drawn into these existing representations was to be expected. Therefore, neither their experiences of exclusion nor the character of those exclusions (e.g., poverty, racism) are surprising. I suggest only that the extreme Othering expressed in the claim of one study participant that Somalis are "*often put in an island on their own*" (Male Youth5) had consequences

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that were foreseeable. Somalis have been portrayed as incompatible with Canadian

values ever since their arrival in this country (Walcott, 2003). From the beginning they

were depicted, not as deserving refugees, but as potential criminals who came to Canada

to defraud a generous welfare system.

Based on their analysis of official political party reports, Think Tank documents,

and media coverage in the early 1990s (including the aforementioned Dixon clashes),

Pratt and Valverde contend that Somalis became the target of a convergence of

generalized anti-immigration sentiment, neoliberal "anti-poor" and "tough on crime"

agendas, and racism of the Orientalist variety: "Their [Somalis] experience illustrates the

material results of the 'demonic' combination of right-wing racist discourse,

governmental moves to tighten access to permanent resident status, fears about

criminality and 'dependency,' and neoliberal moves to restrict claims upon the state"

(2002, p. 151).

Pratt & Valverde claim that in official reports, Somalis were described as "desert

gypsies" and "masters of confusion" who were funnelling money to warlords; a "nomadic"

people who would soon move on to seek greener pastures:

> The overall result was to turn Somalis precisely into 'desert gypsies' — unreliable,
>
> shiftless people without home or hearth, living nomadically just like gypsies but
>
> roaming the desert rather than the cities of Europe and, like the older negative
>
> stereotypes of the gypsies, living not by wage labour but through shady financial
>
> transactions (Pratt & Valverde, 2002, p.152).

The 1993 Canadian Peacekeeping scandal (the 'Somalia Affair') and the subsequent

media coverage of the torture and killing of a teenager (Shidane Arone) by members of

the Airborne Regiment serving in Belet Huen (Belet Weyn), Somalia, put Somalia in the

news and cemented the image of Somalis as inherently incompatible with Canadian

values. Razack asserts that in news coverage Somalis were characterized as people

afflicted by primordial tribal rivalries, "neither properly grateful nor deserving" (2004,

p.69) of the Canadian military assistance. Perversely, an inquiry into the military abuse of

power generated tropes about Somalis as "a primitive people, beset by warring tribes, a

society that mysteriously descended into chaos" (Razack, 2004, p. 144). Media narratives

emphasized Somali "tendencies towards clannishness" contrasted with the "inborn

niceness and civility" of Canadians (2004, p.135). Spitzer (2006) has also written about

how the coverage of the Somalia Affair morphed into the casting of Somalis as either

"blood thirsty or quaint". They were reportedly in Canada only to usurp national

resources for their primitive feuds (2006, p.49). Razack concludes that the Somalia Affair

and the intense media coverage it generated deepened the alienation of Somalis in

Canada and raised questions for all black Canadians about the value of black lives in

Canada: "Our children and loved ones ... are asking questions about their value as persons

in this country in view of the atrocious events in Belet Huen" (2004, p. 149).

Cultural difference as the 'new' racism

It is tempting to interpret the opposition to Somali settlement in Canada described

above as run-of-the-mill nativism of the sort that emerges in times of economic

uncertainty. It is true, as noted, that a debate about immigration was already underway in

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the 1990s in response to the economic downturn (Pratt & Valverde, 2002). What distinguishes the Somali case is that cultural difference rather than 'racial' difference was invoked to argue their incompatibility with a real or imagined Canada. The old construct of racial difference, no longer acceptable in public discourse, had been sublimated into the idea of cultural differences. Grosfoguel and Mielants (2006) point out that cultural racism targets the "usual suspects" from the formerly colonized regions: "Cultural Racism is a form of racism that does not even mention the word 'race'. It is focused on the cultural inferiority of a group of people. Usually it is framed in terms of the inferior habits, beliefs, behaviours, or values of a group of people" (2006, p.4).

Conflating culture with race, itself a construct, can lead to the false impression of everyone within a society being "the same"; established groups with access to resources are lumped together with newcomers with less social and economic capital (Jiwani (2006). The depiction of Somalis as clannish, susceptible to economic dependency, and ill-suited for a society such as Canada that valorizes individualism, is the result of such conflation. Somalis *are* diverse and divided along clan lines (Kusow and Bjork, 2007; Berns-McGown, 1999, 2007) and those divisions, as a study participant who lost her son observed, hampered community organizing in the early days of settlement. Even then, Somali mothers collaborated across clan lines to overcome the problems present in their Toronto, Regent Park neighbourhood (Berns-McGown, 2007). Seen from another perspective, it was clan and kinship ties that helped Somali refugees weather the challenges of the resettlement discussed above (Carriere, 2016; Ahmed et al., 2007). Without those ties, I would argue, their circumstances would be far worse. Those ties

were vital in the absence of state support or prior Somali settlement to provide the necessary orientation. It is also true that Somali kinship systems are "highly democratic" (Razack, 2004, p. 136) allowing individuals wide latitude and freedom within a system of reciprocity. The problem here is one of supposed binary opposition suggesting that if Somalis adhere to kinship-based traditions, they cannot also possess the attributes of modern, rational and law-abiding individuals.

There is evidence of Somalis' potential to flourish in the modern global economy, which, though often overlooked in Canada, is acknowledged elsewhere. They have demonstrated an aptitude for entrepreneurship with successful business enterprises in Africa and elsewhere in the Arabian Gulf, as well as in the US and even in Canada (Abdulsamed, 2011; Ahmed et al., 2007; Carlson, 2007; Carrie, 2016; Steinberg 2015). Steinberg (2015) has written about Somali businessmen's high tolerance for risk-taking, establishing thriving businesses in the South African townships, in the face of violent backlashes from the local populace. Somali businesses in Kenya, in a large Somali enclave known as Eastleigh, have become a business hub. They connect traders in the Arabian Gulf with Eastern and Central Africa, contribute to the local economy and are (ironically) even touted as a model for integrating refugees into host countries (Abdulsamed, 2011; Carrier, 2016). Similarly, Carlson (2007, p.182) writes about Somalis in Minneapolis, USA, saying: "Anyone visiting the Somalis in Minneapolis will be impressed by their industriousness, entrepreneurial thrift and belief in the future." In Edmonton, according to one source, over 50 Somali-owned businesses sprang up, transforming the area (Ahmed et al., 2007). Despite the perception that Somalis arriving in Canada had little

social or cultural capital, Canada received a largely educated and urban cohort of Somalis. They were people who had sufficient means to escape the war, but they could not convert their social and cultural assets into employment (Houssein, 2015; Murdie, 2003).

Kinship networks, which have become transnational since the war, provide a foundation of trust, which has enabled the successful entrepreneurship described above (Carrier, 2016). That same interconnectedness has allowed Somalis to survive a quarter of a century of civil strife subsisting on remittances from the Somali diaspora (Abdi, 2012; Horst, 2008). In our study, participants displayed awareness that their talents have been overlooked. The academic participant connected entrepreneurial success to an aptitude for risk-taking, the very risk-taking presumed to lead to Somali youth's criminality. Interestingly, Somali youth incarcerated for drug offenses thought of themselves as having leadership qualities, which they described as 'courage', and which they had proven in the pursuit of legal or illegal ambitions (Somali Canadian Cultural Society of Edmonton, 2014).

Refugees, as Beiser (1999) has written, are already successful when they arrive in Canada having demonstrated the resourcefulness needed to survive perilous journeys, but these attributes are rarely the subject of media stories. Saul (2008) repeats the sentiment:

> No matter how impossible the situation at home, to leave it and make a new home requires conscious consideration and courage. Even the most desperate of refugees must struggle with such a profound change. It is that proven consciousness and courage that has driven Canada forward for centuries. There lies our real resource of renewable energy (2008, p. 317).

Somalis are no exception. Rejecting the "self-marginalization and resigned self-exclusion" that are the natural outcome of discrimination (Ramadan, 2010 p.78), Somalis opted to engage and advocate in a decidedly Canadian way, evidenced by their challenge against Bill-C86 that came to benefit other refugees (Bassel, 2012; Carrière, 2016). A group of Somali women in Toronto similarly challenged a policy excluding refugees from access to social housing (Mohamed, 1999; Affi, 1997).

To insist that Somalis came to Canada with pre-existing cultural and social capital is not to discount the important differences in values which Beiser (1999) links to the tensions that arise between established Canadians and newcomers, nor does it diminish the unrealistic expectations immigrants have of arriving in 'paradise.' Exaggerated expectations have a negative impact on integration outcomes when those expectations inevitably fail to materialize (Abdi, 2015). I am pointing out the significant assets with which Somalis refugees arrived in Canada in order to highlight the dangers of reductive stereotypes about newcomers and their consequences even for the integration outcomes of their offspring. Integration is a "two way street" (Berns-McGown, 2013), and there is little evidence of Canada's participation on the receiving side. Somali integration was not facilitated in the way that other influxes of refugees have been helped to settle. While "the entire country was there to welcome" the Vietnamese refugees of the 1970s (Thuy, 2015), Somali refugees, deemed undeserving of care and compassion, received no such welcome.

I am also suggesting that Somalis, from the very beginning, had to battle deliberate obstacles and advocate for themselves, their energy spent on surviving the

intense opposition to their presence. If some immigrants to Canada are left to "operate in an atmosphere of benevolent neglect…to get on with our lives" as Clarkson (2014, p.181) states, while others are extended a warm welcome, Somali refugees were met with policy and public discourse that sought to bar them from citizenship and a sense of belonging. I would thus suggest that the alienation and criminalization of young Somalis was preceded by the alienation and 'Othering' of their community.

Like fathers, like sons?

The family breakdown participants connected to youth violence can also be linked to the difficulties of those early years—economic tensions adding to the stresses of migration and the barriers to settlement described above. While it was said that in their new environment women could foresee opportunity, even freedom, despite the barriers littered in their path, (Mohamed, 1999), resilience and resourcefulness did not entirely buffer against poverty which "produces tensions, injustices, and violence" of its own (Giroux, 2012 p. 158). For men, the drastic social and economic changes were especially difficult to cope with, many appearing to lack the deftness with which women adapted to displacement. Somali women's increased independence and men's commensurate loss of privilege at home, however, is a small part of the whole picture.

Somali masculinity, discussed in Chapter Two, is embodied in the concept of *raganimo,* encapsulated in the role of breadwinner. It carries a significant demand to contribute broadly to the affairs of kin well beyond the household. As a hegemonic type, Somali masculinity consists of "a core set of exacting ideals" requiring continuous maintenance that are often difficult to attain and to maintain: "Somali manhood, if

achieved, is not a milestone like fatherhood or adulthood. It is a dynamic concept—elusive,
changing and fragile, dependent on social recognition, validation and verification"
(Gardner & El-Bushra, 2016, p.2).

Fatherhood is similarly complex and subject to rigidly gendered expectations of
fathers who are ultimately responsible for the success or failure of their children, as the
head of the patrilineal household (Gardner & El-Bushra, 2016). Pre-existing ideals of
fatherhood were further complicated in the new Canadian context where their economic
struggles gave rise to reductive stereotypes of Somali men. Blaming the absentee or
disengaged fathers for their sons' troubles indicates that Somali study participants had
internalized the long running narrative of failed black fatherhood (Walcott, 2009). It
must be noted that working-class black fathers have also internalized the idealized norms
of white, middle class masculine fathering. Many strive to fulfill that role, and often
succeed, equipping their sons to navigate a racist environment (Allen, 2015). A real
limitation, as this study notes, is the barrier to resources that black fathers encounter,
leaving them ill-equipped to perform to script the aspirational heterosexual male role.

Although study participants' saw children and the home as the responsibility of
women alone, they were ready to attribute the failure of children to a failure of fathering.
Arguably, what has been under-appreciated and even neglected in analyzing Somali
settlement in Canada, is the extent to which war impacted Somali men, and the specificity
of their vulnerability; the violence they experienced, and the mental health difficulties and
addictions to which many succumbed (Gardner & El-Bushra, 2016). Somali men, unlike
women, have been vilified for a host of problems emerging out of the Horn of Africa's

geopolitical turmoil (piracy, extremism, warlords and clan conflicts). They have been

associated with aggression and violence in Western popular culture and state policies.

Walcott (2009) observes that the tropes of endangered black masculinity and dangerous

Islamic extremism have converged since 9/11, resulting in Islamophobia. The comic image

of failed fathers sitting in *Tim Hortons* coffee shops overlooks their immense losses and

the constricted social space in which they now exist. I would posit that the trials of Somali

male youth, to the extent that such things can be generalized, were preceded by the

tribulations of their fathers.

The crisis of masculinity is not, of course, limited to Somali men. There is broad

recognition of "the serious crisis that is affecting men in the modern era" owing to many

factors including the transformation of traditional gender roles (Ramadan, 2010, p.94), and

the feminized nature of contemporary work discussed above. Unemployment and

addiction are correlated, as much symptoms as causes of the malaise. Singer et al. (1992),

link the onset of heavy drinking among Puerto Rican men in the US to a number of

upheavals in their lives, including their displacement following the loss of agricultural

work in Puerto Rico, migration to inner cities in the US, and the erosion of stable,

unionized jobs. Men whose identity is tied to their role as provider experience both a loss

of self-respect and dignity at home, and status among their male peers when they cannot

fulfil that role. Among the Puerto Rican men in the study, excess drinking serves as a

coping mechanism to soothe, however briefly, their feelings of failure (Singer et al., 1992).

Unlike Puerto Rican culture in which little stigma is attached to drinking per se, in Somali

culture, drinking and all forms of addiction (even the traditionally accepted use of *Khat*)

are taboo, and drinkers are often ostracized by the community. Somali men are given little room in which to express their pain. Neither my study participants nor the emergent narratives about the role of men in the diaspora allow for their trauma. The figure of the tireless Somali woman of the postwar era is juxtaposed with the figure of the irresponsible, criminal and emasculated man.

Economic marginalization has been deeply threatening to men whose self-concept remains invested in work and realized in the role of provider (Abdi, 2014). The loss of that role has cost not only status, but any meaningful way for them to redefine their identity and self-worth. After all, Somali men are expected to function in a society, in Canada, where the ideal masculine role is still that of breadwinner. hooks (2004) critiques the dangers in linking men's self-worth to work to the exclusion of all other socially desirable ways that they could make contributions. What is more, as Sidanius and Pratto (1999) discuss, in social hierarchies men more often vie with each other, and not women, for dominance and power. Drawing on the experiences of black men, they note that subordinate men are frequently in direct confrontation with other men who have the power to mete out discipline or deny them access to resources and social status. Consequently, they are subject daily to direct aggression or institutional surveillance to control them. The insight provided by study participants, that girls and women have integrated better because the "*system*" is "*a little kinder*" to them, attests to the persistence of a colonial construction of the violent and criminal Somali male. It was colonized men, against whom white masculinities were appraised, who were construed as threatening (McClinctock, 1995; Razack, 2004). In contrast, colonized girls and women were perceived

as submissive in need of saving from the tyranny of backward men and traditions (Rajiva, 2010).

The nuclear family is the standard-bearer of neoliberal family values because it is "nuclear hetero-patriarchal families that operate like states unto themselves" (Walcott, 2009. P.78.) Such families are self-sufficient, and make limited demands on the state. There is nothing inherently magic about the two-parent nuclear family that inoculates it against dysfunctional behaviours, or instills "democratic virtues" in its offspring (Clarkson, 2014, P. 93), but strong families stand in the public mind as the best environment for ensuring healthy, well-rounded children. Poor black families are seen to fail against a standard that even wealthy parents struggle to attain, while the poverty that undermines their efforts goes unacknowledged. Clarkson recalls that in Canada, even in the 1960s "the words black and poverty were inextricably linked" (Clarkson, 2014, p.103). It is not surprising that despite the many barriers Somali families *did* overcome, their failure to shelter their children from the risks that lead to violence is what stands out.

Add to the backdrop we have been describing, other obstacles to social integration that no one foresaw, that, for example, young Somali men would be lured into a fringe economy and engage in risky behaviours unfamiliar to their community, and the emergence of violence and risky behaviour on the part of some of the boys becomes predictable. Thus, the vulnerability of Somali male youth to violence and risk-taking is a reflection of the vulnerability of their families, itself emanating from migration losses and the "unacknowledged role of the state in making people vulnerable" (Bassel, 2012 p.93). Vulnerability born of strife and trauma had a significant role in the breakdown of families

and thwarted the ability of parents to protect their sons from risks.

The Impact of racism and marginalization on youth identities

Study participants connected the struggles of first generation Somalis to the

weakened self-identities of their youth, and thus to their susceptibility to risky

behaviours. Youth, they said, sought belonging in the streets and in the counterculture

promoted by some Rap music. Forman (2001) observes that in the 1990s, when Somalis

were still new to Canada, young Somalis' were already responding to the strong pull of

Rap music and peer pressure. Rap music has since emerged as a powerful commercial

industry with global reach and black youth continue to be the key target of its messages

(Hill Collins, 2006). It is described as a source of empowerment for marginalized youth

(Beaubien, 2007).

Identity formation in the children of immigrants, as mentioned in Chapter Two, is

often tenuous and negotiated in tension with both their parents' heritage and the

mainstream culture (Berry, 2008; Maira, 2002). The catchall 'black' identity has been

accepted with some ambivalence, even wariness, by first generation Somalis, and the

second generation continues to grapple with its effects. Somali immigrants found

themselves in a new system of social classification where race was the most salient marker

of group identity, to the exclusion of all other meaningful markers (Abdi, 2012; Kusow,

2009). Kusow contends that blackness, while an inescapable label with which immigrants

from mainland Africa must contend once they are in North America, is a social category

that is not meaningful to those immigrants:

For Somali immigrants in Canada or the United States blackness does not provide

a meaningful category for social understanding. Given this, the taken-for-granted understanding of blackness in North America is at once challenged by the non-racially-based classification systems employed by the contemporary African diaspora (Kusow, 2006, 548).

The significance of ethnicity as a determinant of identity formation and integration outcomes is quite relevant to its consideration as a determinant of violence in the present study. I have argued that ethnic Somali identity has been the target of negative press, and, by extension, met with a negative policy response on arrival in Canada. Jedwab (2008) suggests that a sense of belonging in Canada and attachment to an ethnic identity are directly correlated; those with a stronger ethnic identity also have a stronger sense of belonging as Canadian. Although it would seem likely that second generation immigrants should have a stronger sense of belonging in their country of birth, Jedwab found that the reverse is true: "It is age rather than generation that should be the focus when it comes to examining gaps in identity and belonging to Canada" (2008 p. 31). Berry (2008) uses the term acculturation to denote that bidirectional process in which an immigrant's natal culture and adopted culture converge. He distinguishes between four acculturation strategies that an individual or a group may adopt to negotiate their interaction with the dominate culture based on whether there is a preference for being part of the dominant culture or retaining their distinct identity.

Those wishing to be part of the dominant culture and uninterested in maintaining their minority identity opt for an assimilation strategy. When an individual or group seeks to maintain its own culture with little interest in the main culture, it adopts a

separation strategy. Those wishing to maintain affiliation with both cultures may enact an integration strategy. Lastly, a marginalization strategy disconnects the individual from both his or her own cultural identity and the hegemonic culture. Marginalization is the result of discrimination (Berry, 2008, p.51). Predictably, in Berry's work more girls than boys conformed to the integration strategy, while more boys showed marginalization tendencies (Berry, 2008).

In a study exploring mental health outcomes for Somali refugee youth in the United States, Ellis, et al. (2010) learned that boys more often construct their identity in relation to mainstream American society than to their Somali ethnicity. They also found that boys experience better mental health outcomes upon successful integration into the mainstream culture. Boys were also more directly exposed to discrimination, especially if their clothing connected them to African American Hip-Hop culture. In contrast, girls, incorporated into the activities of the Somali community much more than boys, were shielded from discrimination as a result. Girls who identify with their Somali ethnicity show better mental health outcomes, even though some experience religious-based discrimination for wearing the hijab. Both boys and girls who construct their identity in relation to mainstream society, and exhibit weak Somali/Muslim identity, were more directly exposed to discrimination without the buffering effects of cultural belonging. Ellis, et al. (2010), and my female study participants, report that, for girls, there is an added layer in the work of identity construction. Girls who stray from expected gender roles may encounter rejection from other Somalis. "Thus, for immigrant youth, social identities are constructed at the intersection of acculturation and gender, and social

identity is the lens through which their experiences of being valued or devalued are filtered" (Ellis et al., 2010, p. 567). Ellis, et al. also found that Somali youth experienced discrimination more frequently than other black youth because of their Somali identity.

The theory of *segmented assimilation*, described above, posits that the integration/assimilation outcomes of second-generation black youth make them indistinguishable, over time, from inner city black youth whose behaviours and values they adopt (Portes & Zhou, 1993). A recent study of second generation immigrants challenges this theory. Imoagene (2017) proposes instead a *beyond racialization theory* arguing that deploying ethnicity to mitigate the debilitating effects of racialization, could lead to more successful integration outcomes for youth of second generation African-descent (Imoagene 2017). Citing the case of second generation Nigerians in the US and Britain, this study highlights mechanisms that have given the Nigerians more choices and more positive assimilation outcomes than key second-generation assimilation theories predicted. These mechanisms have their genesis in the extreme selectivity of first generation Nigerian immigrants. The social capital they generated using resources from within their own communities have created human capital and ethnic-group consciousness in the second generation (Imoagene, 2017, p.18).

There are many factors, as the study notes, that complicate the integration outcomes of the second generation, including factors specific to the new country: its history (colonial relations), the closeness (geographic, cultural) of the newcomers to an already present marginalized black community (the 'proximal host'), and the strengths of its transnational ties, particularly to the former homeland.

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While it is true that a self-selecting immigrant population (like the Nigerians in Imoagene's study) cannot be compared to a refugee population (such as the Somalis in our study who were neither self-selected nor prepared to migrate), it is also true that Somali refugees had different integration outcomes in the Arabian Gulf and Eastern and Southern Africa, than Somalis who migrated to the West (Abdi, 2015; Carrier, 2016). This difference supports the contention of this thesis, that the "context of reception" (Imoagene, 2017, p. 29) plays a significant role. It would appear that, in Canada, the Somalis were unable to capitalize on their ethnic (and religious) identity to improve their offsprings' integration outcomes, but it was not for lack of trying.

The young Somali men who are the focus of the present study exhibit both the marginalization profile described by Berry (2008), and the integration outcomes associated with segmented assimilation as described by Portes & Zhou (1993). Studies of Somali youth integration in the US find a similar pattern (Abdi, 2012). The youth are not conversant with Somali culture and, some, are even embarrassed by their Somali heritage. They are not attached to the ethnic identity and culture which, as noted above, might have protected them from the effects of discrimination as well as other risks. Nor are they integrated into the mainstream culture, due to racism and poverty. Thus, they gravitate towards the more accessible (and so attractive) 'counter-culture' (or oppositional culture), which comes with its own set of problems, most notably some Rap music's glorification of drug dealing and violence. One male youth (Male Youth2) told me that when he was growing up in Toronto, attending school with many Caribbean students, Somali youth were emulating the dress, speech and mannerisms of their Caribbean peers,

who were considered 'cool'. The influence of 'host' peers is a key ingredient in the identity construction of both newcomer and second generation African youth (Forman, 2001; Imoagene, 2017). Peer influence can undermine the concerted efforts of any parent. Somali parents, working to instill stronger Muslim identities in their children (being Muslim and being Somali are both inherent to Somaliness) were working against the influence of peers in a secular culture (Berns-McGown, 1999; Collet, 2007).

The implication of these studies is that when youth have a positive identification with their ethnic group as well as with mainstream society they have a greater sense of belonging to Canada and thereby become better Canadian citizens. These findings suggest that the alienation which young Somali men in particular experience is not a consequence of failure to integrate, but rather the result of failed attempts at integration. In his ethnographic work with inner-city African American youth, Anderson (2008) found that marginalized black youth adopt a deliberately tough indifferent posture as a defense against the expressions of rejection they encounter every day.

One young study participant (Male Youth3) equated being a *'real Canadian'* with being *'Caucasian',* displaying his own keen awareness of the tiered citizenship ladder on which, though he has Canadian citizenship, he is not fully Canadian. He chooses to identify himself as something which is neither and both: 'Somali Canadian'. The implied hybridity suggests that the identity construction of second generation youth, such as Somalis, is not a passive process and such youth may very well be at "the forefront of creating new identity constructions" (Collet, 2007). Meanwhile, Berns-McGown's (2013a) study of second generation Somali youth demonstrates that, despite the outsider status

which mainstream society ascribes to them, these youths embody the fundamental Canadian value of tolerance.

To summarize, this chapter examined the violence that has claimed the lives of some young Somali Canadian males since 2005, in light of the reports of study participants and literature about the black male youth experience, as well as the settlement experiences of the first generation of Somali refugees. This work argued that the community's early struggles, distinguished by poverty and experienced racism, had inter-generational effects. They are manifest in the second generation as a weakened self-identity, troubling ties with both their ethnic community and the larger Canadian society. I argue further that the seeming rebellion of some Somali male youth is rooted in the social rejection that they encounter. This is easiest to argue when the rebels visibly identify with the black youth subculture that surrounds them in their segregated urban neighbourhoods, in an obvious bid for belonging. Notably, that subculture is rejected by both mainstream society and by most (older) Somali Canadians. This compounded alienation, from both the Canadian and Somali communities means that a generation of Somali youth has grown up rootless, seeking solace in short-term gratification with devastating consequences.

The final chapter provides a concluding summary and makes broad recommendations about how best to address the determinants of violence based on elements of the population health framework proposed in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to identify the determinants behind a spate of violent incidents that claimed the lives of more than 100 young Canadian Somali men in Alberta and Ontario, between 2005 and this writing. The violence initiated conversations about an emergent crisis endangering male children in the Somali Canadian community, a phenomenon that I had been observing for nearly a decade. The proximate cause of the violence was assumed by community, academic and media sources to be the drug trafficking that some of the young men engaged in, as northern Alberta brought together a transient youth population and the temptation of illicit activities. Findings from my research argue that the distal or ultimate causes are more complex. The violence and the general delinquency of some youth is the manifestation of a quarter of a century of struggle endured by Somali families, including poverty and exclusion. This research argues that the criminalization of young men, heralded by the 'tough on crime' laws of Conservative governments espousing neoliberal ideology, is also a key determinant of violence. Specifically, the expanding criminal record requirements and prolonged waiting periods for Pardons were found to impede the rehabilitation and reintegration of former offenders (and some non-offenders) even after time served in prison or dismissed charges.

The violence experienced by Somali male youth was also traced back to the poverty Somali refugees faced in the early days of settlement in Canada, which had enduring consequences. Immigration policies such as Bill C-86, the Somalia Affair military scandal, and the Dixon stories impeded Somali efforts to integrate. Somali

settlement coincided with the recession of the 1990s. Without the support of social networks to facilitate employment it was a particularly difficult time to enter an already diminished job market, further impeding their efforts to integrate and contextualizing the violence experienced by Somali male youth.

Through a socio-ecological population health violence prevention framework, it was possible to highlight both the health effects of violence and possible intervention points, while addressing the limitations of this framework by augmenting it with other social science perspectives. The violence exclusively involved young men, implicating the social construction of masculinity. The intersection of gender with racialization and marginalization called for analytical reinforcement from intersectional theory. Rather than speak broadly about 'Somali youth', I sought to articulate the specificity of the Somali male youth experience. Important elements of that reality include: the role of the 'War on Terror' dragnet, the enduring traumatic effects of displacement, and the identity construction and acculturation of the children of immigrants (the second generation). The research found, and I further argue, that the lives of Somali boys play out at the busy and dangerous intersection of racialization, ethnicity, gender, marginalization, religion and migration (even without accounting for the complexities of sexuality and/or disability, which would doubtlessly bring additional burdens to bear on a young man caught in the intersection).

The media's implication that violence is a foreign import that Somalis brought with them to Canada, an assertion that particularly troubled many study participants, cannot be supported. As Berns-McGown (2003) has shown in several studies since the

1990s, Somali women used religion to steer their children away from violence and the proximal determinants and behaviours that have been associated with violence (selling drugs, violence, addictions). These are behaviours the participants in this research, particularly parents, were reluctant to discuss, referring to them obliquely as *howshan,* a piece of work or a hassle; revealing a sense of shame about these unspeakable things.

Alternatively, media narratives about the Somali youth violence draw on stock narratives about diasporic black families (e.g., the prevalence of single mothers, men who are lackadaisical about their role as fathers, and youth inclined to criminality). Even if there is some truth in these stereotypes, they belie the diversity of Somali Canadians' lived realities, and deny the way that modern-day Canadian racism ensnares all those designated 'black.' The plea from a mother in this study (Female Adult3) who wondered what had gone "*wrong*" in her family (which did not "*fit… the stereotype of the broken family*") is instructive in that being from a well-educated, middle-class family does not automatically protect black boys. Somali ethnicity, which might have offered a buffer against discrimination, as acculturation theories suggest, was so negatively cast in media coverage of both the male youth violence and geopolitical events in the Horn of African (e.g., religious extremist and piracy) that youth were further alienated from that identity.

If there is one trope that has been consistently applied to Somalis since their arrival in Canada, it is *difference*. It was not lost on Somalis (or any black Canadian) that the warm (and proper) welcome extended to Syrians, and to Southeast Asians and Kosovars before them, was (and is) not extended to any black African immigrant, even as they continue to arrive through various immigration channels (e.g., refugee conventions

and private sponsorships). Somalis are *different* in an unwelcome sort of way. This claim

risks edging onto troubled ground, engaging an uncomfortable truth about difference and

othering in Canada. Identity, after all, implies difference, whether one chooses and

assumes that identity and its *difference*, or it is ascribed and externally imposed (Sefa Dei

& James, 1998). The statement of a participant in this study, that Somalis in Canada are

'*put in an island on their own*' (Male Youth5) articulates the extreme sort of 'apartness'

that Somali Canadians have experienced. This is the kind of difference that Said (1977)

wrote about, describing the relationship between Islam and the West: an irreconcilable

sort of difference. O'Donnell & Sharpe's observation that "history and contemporary

events suggest that it is not wise to understate the degree of hatred and brutality that

focus on 'race' and ethnicity" (2000, 58) resonates with the Somali experience in Canada.

Young Somali men have 'become black' (Sefi Dei & 1998), an ascribed identity they

have come to terms with, its adoption demonstrated by participation in crime and

violence, and the resistance strategies they enact in rejecting school and the society that

devalues them. Their oppositional behaviour is in keeping with the hegemonic masculine

type associated with young black men on both sides of the Atlantic (Anderson, 1999;

O'Donnell and Sharpe, 2000). As this research findings suggest, the violence of Somali

male youth follows a similar pattern to that of other marginalized racialized youth.

The pressure to keep up with peers in a capitalist consumer society and the added

pressure to live up to the expectation of an immigrant community, thwarted by the

absence of legitimate avenues for employment makes the pull of illicit activities

irresistible for some disadvantaged youth.

Violence might be a means to protect a fragile self-esteem, or an asset with which

to 'make hegemonic bargains' (Messerschmidt 2000). As Male Youth3 observed: "*either*

you are the shark or the seal; that is what it comes down to. If you do not get respect you

are more likely to be the seal." If these young men had access to other avenues for

enhancing self-esteem and did not feel they had to assert themselves and predator and

not prey, would they behave differently? If they were not "*demolished in high schools*"

(Male Youth2), not subject to a "*system of policing and surveillance*" that watches even the

law-abiding (Male Youth 5), if they saw some positive representations of themselves in

national narratives, would they still pursue illicit activities that cut their young lives

short? These are the questions Somali Canadians have been asking since the outbreak of

the violence.

Implications of the Findings

This research found that the violence had a significant psychosocial impact on the Somali Canadian community and stoked fears about the safety of Somali Canadian male children, leading to a troubling narrative of Canada as an unsafe place for Somali boys. This narrative converges with existing black Canadian anxieties about the wellbeing of their male children (Walcott, 2005). Somali Canadians have responded to their fears with a range of programmes, actions and advocacy. These efforts are now in the hands of second generation Somali Canadians, better attuned to the struggles of their peers. The Somali Canadian community, although better resourced and more skillful than when they arrived in Canada as refugees nearly three decades ago, remain vulnerable to poverty, discrimination and the resulting exclusions. All indications are that the brunt of these determinants of violence will continue to be borne most heavily by male youth, and collaterally by their families, if they remain unaddressed.

The determinants of violence for young Somalis that this research sought to delineate—from the settlement barriers faced by their parents to youth alienation from the school system—increased the risk of their exposure to violence. Explanations for the violence indicate that societal inequities, in terms of the distribution of power and resources, create the conditions for violent behaviours to occur. Violence is costly to society. Its impact is felt far beyond the young men whose lives are cut short or those who survive with injuries, although their lives alone are sufficient reason for taking action. The psychosocial impact of the violence and incarcerations on families, and the impact on

women in particular that the loss of a male breadwinner to jail engenders, cannot be overlooked (Alexander, 2010).

The travails of the Somali community over the nearly three decades since their settlement in Canada may not have been entirely avoidable considering the trauma which those fleeing war and displacement experience. The lingering impacts could, however, have been minimized so that a generation of productive Canadians was not lost, and the immense suffering of many families avoided. Others have observed the impact of the more recent violence on Somali Canadians: "The aftermath of the deaths for young Somali-Canadian men has ushered a very unsafe environment for family members who do not have answers to the calamities...the community is victimized every time one of their sons is killed" (Khalema et al., 2012 p. 65).

There are many excellent and evidence-based recommendations for youth violence prevention such as those proposed by the Ontario Ministry of Youth (McMurtry and Curling, 2008), the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (2006), and Ngo et al.'s (2015) comprehensive recommendations for gang-involved youth from immigrant backgrounds. I offer here a brief consideration of recommendations from those reports, and other studies, that are most relevant for Somali Canadians, drawing on my research findings. In doing so, I use elements of the population health framework proposed in Chapter Two, which identified the need to address determinants of violence at three clear and intersecting levels — micro (Individual and Relationships), meso (Community and Institutions) and macro (Societal and Global). Essentially, the recommendations call for addressing the determinants of violence rooted in the social, economic and political

conditions in which youth live, with specific attention also given to fostering healthy

relationships.

Figure 9: Socio-ecological Framework for Violence Prevention
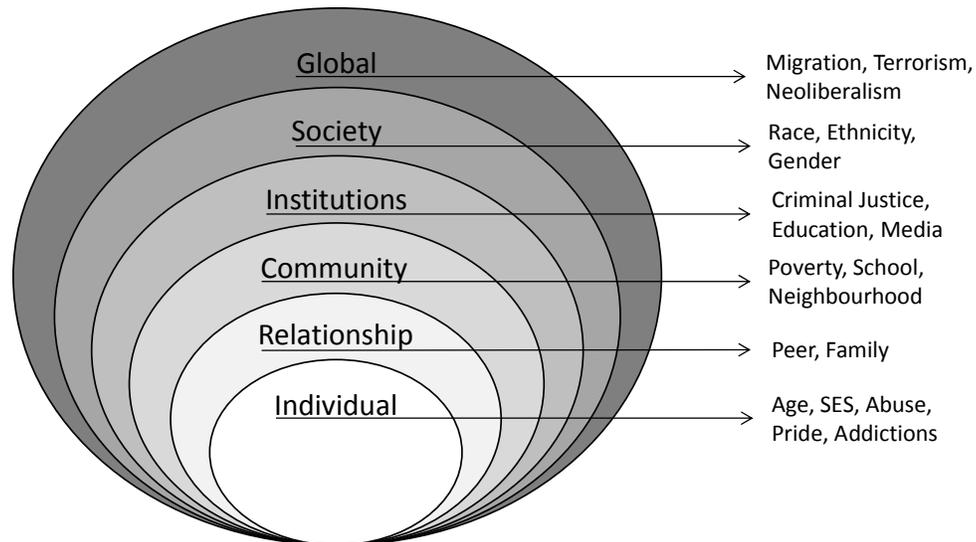
Source: Adapted from CDC, 2002; Krug et al., 2002

The social-ecological framework is amenable to adaptation in order to apply to specific

populations. I have modified the framework to identify specifically issues salient to the

study population as significant determinants of violence; namely 'race', ethnicity and

gender. The modified framework (Figure 9) includes two additional levels relevant to the

Somali youth population under study. The first is the role of global events. Key among

these are migration, the War on Terror, and the hegemony of neoliberal ideas. Being heirs

to the struggles of migration and re-settlement have affected the integration of second

generation Somali in Canada. The global 'War on Terror' has also impacted Somali

integration because it has had such a marked influence on majority perceptions about

Somali immigrants.

The second addition to the framework is the institutional level. Three Canadian institutions, education, the media, and the criminal justice system, have played significant roles in shaping the experiences of Somali male youth and obstructing their self-identification as Canadians. The framework distinguishes between the interactions of youth and their parents within neighbourhood schools, and the provincial education system and its structures. The local and the broader institutions both play a part. Canada's media and criminal justice system also contributed to the construction of Somali male youth violence and criminality; by linking Somali identity with crime, and violence with young racialized black men and youth, and through a profusion of criminal records that impede rehabilitation of former offenders.

Individual and relationship determinants of violence

Youth's susceptibility to risky behaviour and to negative peer influence can be mitigated by enhancing self-esteem, strengthening self-identities, providing addiction counseling, encouraging help-seeking, and promoting life skills. Immigrant parents may be unaware of the signs or lack the time or language skills needed to support children exhibiting behavioural problems, being bullied in school, misusing substances or suffering mental illness. Schools, community health centres, and ethno-cultural organizations are best positioned to implement programming as part of a broader youth wellbeing (rather than youth-at-risk) strategy. Relatedly, healthy family relationships in which violence is discouraged and other avenues for resolving conflicts are offered are crucial for youth violence prevention (Messerschmitt, 2000).

Robust evidence suggests that early interventions reduce behaviour problems and address inequities in the long-term: "There is a thread of cause and effect that runs from poor child development through low educational achievement, low incomes, insecure employment, stressful working and living conditions, unhealthy lifestyles, and poor health" (Marmot, 2016, p. 24). For refugees, immediate, culturally appropriate and long-term mental health supports and counseling would reduce the likelihood of the traumas that made them refugees being passed on from parents to offspring. The lessons from other large cohorts of refugees, such as the Southeast Asians, highlight the significant positive impact of supports offered in the early years of settlement on the long-term mental health of refugees (Beiser, 1999).

Community settings as determinants of violence

Study findings suggested that neighbourhoods and schools were strongly associated with predicting or even promoting violence and exposure to risks. Both of these settings, in turn, were associated with the concentration of poverty and with increasing the exposure of marginalized youth to risks, such as gangs and drugs. Moreover, poverty reduces parental choice: the choice of neighbourhood in which to live and the choice of schools for their children. The Somali Canadian experience demonstrates that housing refugees in neighbourhoods and sending them to schools that undermine their successful integration undercuts the significant investments that are made to resettle them in the first place. Unless neighbourhoods and schools become safer and more nurturing for all children, the problems this thesis identifies will continue to occur.

A systematic review of place-based interventions identified two that showed particular efficacy in reducing youth violence. *Resettlement interventions*, moving families out of neighbourhoods with concentrated poverty and into more affluent ones, were the most effective in reducing violence as this exposed youth to diverse people with higher socioeconomic status, wider world experience, and more opportunities. Watching people manage options and opportunities served as positive role modelling. (Cassidy, Iglis, Wiysonge & Matzopoulos, 2014). The authors, however, note that although the overall wellbeing of the family improved, the stigma of growing up in poverty and the loss of friends and other meaningful social ties may actually exacerbate youth behavioural problems.

Another promising intervention focused on the built-environment. *Urban upgrading*, which does not entail resettlement in higher socioeconomic neighbourhoods, involves improvements to the design of streets and the creation of more green public spaces to encourage residents to interact. Public circulation in the streets contributes to a decline in crime and violence. The informal surveillance of adults in common neighbourhood spaces was found to discourage criminal activities (Cassidy et al., 2014).

Institutional determinants of violence

Findings from this research showed key institutions (education, criminal justice, and the media) to be determinants of violence. Government, embodied in restrictive immigration policies also had a lasting impact on Somali families. *Public schools* are vital for marginalized children and youth, not only in educating them but also for inculcating a sense of belonging. Public education is a common public good and one that should

promote equity and fairness, because "[T] he point of having a civilized society focused on

equality and on the common good is to create a structure in which people do not have the

chance to behave badly" (Clarkson, 2014, p.102). Yet, public schools continue to alienate

black boys, particularly in Ontario, which is home to the largest black population in

Canada, including Somalis. Moreover, high school abandonment (dropping out) is costly

to Canadian society in terms of social service use (healthcare, social assistance), crime,

lost tax revenue and employment insurance, which are estimated in the billions annually

(Hankivsky, 2008).

The latest report on black students from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB)

points to anti-black racism as responsible for the poor performance of some black pupils,

for black students being streamed into less rigorous course work (the applied stream)

making them less likely to be admitted to a university, and for the tougher disciplinary

measures that result in expulsions or dropping out (James & Turner, 2017). The most

salient finding of that report is that second and third generation black children "have

worse educational outcomes than their first-generation counterparts, with third-

generation Black students having the worst outcomes" (James & Turner, 2017, p. 32). The

implication here is that not only do the disadvantages of the earlier generation get passed

on; but the high expectations and aspirations immigrants and refugees have for their

children are not sustained. The TDSB report recommends collecting race-based data

within school boards, recruiting diverse teaching personnel to better reflect student

populations, developing alternative disciplinary measures that do not result in expulsions,

and committing to a set of anti-racist policies and programs (James & Taylor, 2017). These

recommendations have implications for improving the school experience of black

children and youth well beyond Toronto.

Similarly, the *Criminal Justice System* in Canada has deepened existing inequities

for black male youth who have disproportionate contact with that system, in addition to

being the victims of violence. For Somali Canadians, resolving the open homicide cases is

an important step to reducing experienced inequities, as it would provide closure for

families and relief from the over vigilance of boys that has emerged as a result of the

violence. The main defense proffered by the Edmonton police for not solving the

homicides is the failure of the Somali community to come forward as witnesses. The

community is neither monolithic, nor well versed in Canada's criminal justice system.

The onus should be on the police to educate people about their rights and responsibilities

as well as take seriously the concerns potential witnesses have about possible

repercussions for "snitching", and the need to feel safe. There is a strong perception

among Somali Canadians that the murders remain unsolved, not because of a lack of

resources or of witnesses, but because of police indifference to the loss of black lives.

Overcoming those suspicions is the responsibility of policing institutions.

The 71 percent spike in the black population in federal prisons during the same

time frame as this study (2005-2015) leads me to infer that Somali Canadian youth are a

significant part of that population trend. This inference cannot, however, be verified

given the dearth of data disaggregated by racialized identity or ethnicity. Making such

information available, as community advocates and researchers alike have recommended,

would enable informed prevention and intervention efforts. The proliferation of criminal

record checks constitutes continuous punishment even after sentences have been served. Criminal records drive further marginalization, which in turn incites violence as a response. Picard's (2017) argument that the criminal justice system, and in particular the prolonged use of segregation in prisons, is a public health matter is consistent with the position of this thesis. What is needed is a shift in societal understanding of violence and incarcerations as more than a public safety issues. Beyond simple policy prescriptions, Picard raises questions about human rights, the limits of punishment, and the need for offender rehabilitation: "Most prisoners will be released back into society, so it makes sense—ethically, economically and practically—to rehabilitate" them (2017, p.75).

A shift in the way the *media* covers youth violence is especially needed. There is some indication that some media outlets have responded to the community's concerns about publishing the ethnic background of homicide victims. I learned this from a community source in Edmonton, repeated by similar advocacy groups in Toronto and Ottawa. It is a helpful step. This research demonstrated that media coverage of the Somali youth violence fomented panic about the safety of male children, and fed fears that all young men were at-risk when in reality many young Somali males continue to thrive. Media organizations, as part of their corporate and ethical responsibilities, must consider the impact of their reports on the wellbeing of populations. Repeated coverage of violence may be triggering for survivors of war; recalling that some study participants referred to the Somali youth violence as a *'war'* similar to the one they fled. With such vulnerabilities in mind, reporting guidelines similar to those governing media coverage of suicide should also exist for reporting violent crime. There should be a ban on the

identification of the ethnic origins and presumed criminal past of *Canadian citizens* who are victims or perpetrators of violent crime. Carding and other racial profiling policing practices criminalize people who have not committed an offense, saddling them with the label *'known to the police,'* which the media wittingly or unwittingly reports without context.

The evidence cited throughout this research indicates that media coverage of Somali struggles since the beginning of their settlement, including issues of geopolitics in the Horn of Africa, have contributed to a public perception of Somalis as inherently violent. These depictions impact youth identities and stigmatize the community. Whilst Somali Canadians have begun to actively challenge this narrative and to create alternatives, "[L]egitimizing different forms of narration involves institutional commitment. It also involves the transformation of the very practices and organization of media institutions" (Jiwani, 2006, p. 60).

Societal determinants of violence

Racism continues to mark the lives of black Canadians, and black males in particular, even as anti-racism programmes recede to the back burner of policy focus in Canada (Benjamin, 2002; Walcott, Foster, Campbell & Sealy, 2008). Yet, as this study argues, racism and ethnic alienation have social repercussions and long-term health consequences (Krieger, 2006). Racism undermines citizenship and a sense of belonging, as well as the development of positive youth identities.

The United Nations' Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent has recognized that the "Members of the African Diaspora face unique forms of

discrimination" linked to legacies of slavery (2017, p.13). Somalis encounter additional

ethnic and religious discrimination. Overcoming historical injustice will require anti-

oppression commitments from various levels of government, and communities willing to

hold those in positions of power accountable. Among the UN Working Group's

recommendations following a visit to Canada in 2016, is the need for federal governments

to ensure that there is a department responsible for documenting and acting on issues

specific to African Canadians. This is timely advice and would mirror Ontario's Anti-

Racism Directorate established in 2016.

Gender, an acknowledged determinant of health, was also closely associated with

violence, particularly the hegemonic masculine roles to which boys and young men are

socialized and which imperil their lives. It is thus imperative to prioritize the safety of

male youth who are often coerced into situations of violence as a pre-emptive response to

fears of being victimized, particularly in schools and on the streets where masculine

contests are waged (Anderson, 1999). But masculinity, and thereby violence, is most

visible when it intersects with class and racialization (Connell, 2005). Without addressing

both the economic deprivation of black youth and men, and the racism that is often

directed at them, the violence this study explored will continue to occur.

Global trends as determinants of violence

Somali study participants were intimately aware that geopolitical events on the

global stage influenced their lives in Canada, in particular the 'War on Terror' which has

led to the over-surveillance of young Muslim men, including Somalis, who have been

profiled as potential recruits for Al-Shabaab and ISIS extremist groups. In addition, the

rise of global neoliberalism has generated "conditions of extreme inequality" (Labonté & Stuckler, 2016, p.316), thereby contributing to the criminalization of social problems, such as drug abuse and addiction. These two trends work in conjunction to depict black and Muslim young men as anti-citizens, paving the way for policies of containment. Such policies are counterproductive and serve to push an already marginalized population to the fringes of society where risks of engaging in violence increase.

A practice this thesis has attempted to challenge is the labelling of people in terms of 'deficits' (Giroux, 2012); a practice commonly applied to the poor and unsparingly applied to Somali refugees and their offspring. Representations of the Somalis in Canada cast them as 'have nots', despite the fact that Somalis have established robust transnational networks, such as the aforementioned Eastleigh district in Nairobi which has been recognized as a model for harnessing the strengths and potential of refugees. Eastleigh serves as an example of best practice to future host countries as global migration continues to be a key factor in geopolitics into the future:

> Eastleigh is a concrete manifestation of contemporary mobility and global connectivity, and demonstrates the power of migrants to transform urban landscapes and urban livelihoods. It is a vibrant and successful economy built on transnational networks that connect it both to the West and to the East (Carrier, 2016 p.11).

As Canada continues to seek solutions to its aging population, it looks to immigration as a source of renewal. The most recent Canadian Immigrant Summit, for example, considered innovations to its immigration policies to attract more immigrants (El-Assal,

2017). Sustaining the hope with which newcomers arrive in Canada and channeling their energy and that of their children towards a shared nation-building vision is of paramount importance.

In conclusion, the above recommendations for addressing the inequities that gave rise to violence—the socio-economic and political determinants of health—recognize the imperatives of prevention and early intervention. The recommendations also reflect a social justice position that would widen the "circle that welcomes" (Saul, 2008) and reform existing social structures to ensure more equitable supports and better outcomes. Although these recommendations for policy and programming arise from the Somali Canadian experience which was the focus of my study, they may have wider implications for preventing violence among other marginalized youth, particularly racialized and immigrant youth.

Study Limits, Future Research and Dissemination Plans

As in any research work, this study had to set arbitrary limits; to decide where to stop collecting data, and when to stop asking questions. Resource constraints did not permit spending extended periods of time in Edmonton to carry out the kind of observations I was able to do in Ottawa and Toronto. For that reason participants in that city were chosen for their in-depth knowledge of the problem.

I set out to sketch the varied determinants that contributed to the emergence of violence among Somali male youth, the experiences and preconditions that made them vulnerable. Clearly, in-depth exploration of any or all of the key determinants I presented in outline would illuminate more clearly the experiences of marginality of Somali male youth and Somali Canadians in general. The school experience is one specific example. In 2015, 43 per cent of black high school graduates did not apply to a college or university, compared to 26 per cent of white students. Black students who do attend postsecondary institutions report feelings of generalized alienation (James & Turner, 2017). Moreover, Somali study participants claimed that youth who dropped out of high school or graduated but did not apply to university, could not secure employment due to the high Somali youth unemployment rate. These youths are most likely to have joined the drug trade or other precarious informal economies. This situation warrants further study.

A follow-up study targeted at families who raise successful male children under the same set of constraints could prove invaluable in addressing the vulnerability of displaced populations more generally and for building protective interventions more specifically.

This research raised questions outside its scope. For example, it did not permit more than a glance at the critical concerns (e.g., mental health, patriarchal expectation and violence) that young Somali women encounter and the gendered burdens which they bear. This study did indicate that their issues have been marginalized in light of the overwhelming attention that has been paid to boys and young men in the wake of the violence. Observations from this study suggest that many young women are supporting families just as their mothers did a generation earlier. Exploring how they are interpreting and grappling with their responsibilities, expectations and identities would provide rich data about the work of resettlement.

I pursued this thesis research with the aim of contributing to and furthering the existing evidence related to the determinants of violence and the vulnerability of marginalized male youth, using the recent violent incidents involving some young Somali men as an entry point. The Somali Canadians I met and interviewed prior to and during this research expressed a need for more evidence-based intervention to prevent or mitigate the risks to which youth are exposed in their daily lives. Given this need, I intend to share the study findings widely and with various audiences including but not limited to Somali Canadians in Edmonton, Toronto and Ottawa, Boards of Education, immigrant advocacy organizations, and criminal justice and immigration policymakers. I have already (in 2017) presented my findings to members of Ottawa's Somali community. National and international conferences on gender and health and/or the African diaspora are also potential vehicles for knowledge transfer. I intend to publish the thesis findings in an appropriate peer-reviewed journal.

One key outcome I hope to achieve, funding permitting, is to create vignettes summarizing the key determinants of violence and vulnerability for a variety of audiences. I also hope to translate the findings into formats accessible to Somali parents, using video or podcasts. The learnings from this research might also be useful to the recent cohort of Syrian refugees (and inevitable others to follow) who, despite the concerted settlement support they have received will still encounter blind spots as they too become overwhelmed by the enormous task of resettlement.

Research Contribution

This research proposed a population health framework for youth violence prevention, adapted and modified from the framework used by the World Health Organization and the United States Centre for Disease Control and Prevention. The strength of the framework lies in explaining the determinants of violence at intersecting Micro, Meso and Macro levels, and framing youth violence explicitly as a population health problem. The contribution of this research is that it connects the various elements and issues that other researchers have explored into a framework of determinants of violence that could facilitate prevention efforts. The modified framework adds two key determinants specifically relevant to marginalized/racialized youth (institutions and neoliberalism), outlining their role in marginalizing families and communities. My contention has been that the struggle of Somali families and the subsequent troubles of some of their male youth cannot be delinked. The Somali Canadian experience has been one of sustained marginalization since their arrival in Canada, and the violence can be explained in part as an outcome of that deprivation.

There is a robust literature, particularly from gender studies, linking poverty, racialization and gender to youth violence. This research contributes to that already significant body of literature by connecting masculinity, racialization, ethnicity and class to weakened identities. The patriarchal expectation of boys that they will be risk-takers and independent exposes them to situations of risk. It is young men who most often respond to oppression by rejecting its narrow confines, since the oppression is most acutely felt in the contest between males vying for domination and the attainment of

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finite resources. My research also makes a contribution to the emerging field of Somali masculinities.

A final contribution of this study is to point out the social costs of failing to support refugees as they arrive in Canada. I touch on the contrast between two settlement experiences and their different integration outcomes. The settlement of Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s is an example of successful integration, while the Somali Canadian experience provides ample lessons on the costs to society of failing to support refugees. Arguably, the unwanted presence of Somalis elicited a response that ran contrary to the image of Canada as a compassionate and caring nation. This statement should not be understood to mean that Somalis have not benefitted from their presence here, they have: but the trauma they brought with them from the war remained unaddressed and their wounds from war, temporarily covered over in the hopeful years, were re-opened by the violence and the other troubles of the second generation. The children of refugees and their integration outcomes will ultimately determine hope's survival in the resettlement process. They are *'renewable energy',* as Saul (2008, my emphasis) recognized, and must be protected for the benefit of all. It is the failure to protect and support a vulnerable group at a critical moment in their resettlement, and the consequences of that failure, that this thesis explored. It is hoped that the lessons drawn from this study will inform the welcome received by future refugees who will, without doubt, seek safety and inclusion in a future Canada.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Approval from the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board

Université d'Ottawa   University of Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche   Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Ethics Approval Notice

Health Sciences and Science REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Role
Denise	Spitzer	Social Sciences / Women's Studies	Supervisor
Ronald	Labonté	Medicine / Medicine	Co-Supervisor
Hodan	Mohamed	Health Sciences / Others	Student Researcher

File Number: H11-13-05

Type of Project: PhD Thesis

Title: Dangerous or endangered? Exploring and conceptualizing violence experienced by Somali Canadian male youth

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
12/18/2013	12/17/2014	Ia

(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)

Special Conditions / Comments:
N/A

Université d'Ottawa   University of Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche   Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Ethics Renewal Notice

Health Sciences and Science REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation	Role
Denise	Spitzer	Social Sciences / Women's Studies	Supervisor
Ronald	Labonté	Medicine / Medicine	Co-Supervisor
Hodan	Mohamed	Health Sciences / Others	Student Researcher

File Number: H11-13-05

Type of Project: PhD Thesis

Title: Dangerous or endangered? Exploring and conceptualizing violence experienced by Somali Canadian male youth

Renewal Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
12/18/2014	12/17/2015	Ia

(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)

Special Conditions / Comments:
N/A

1

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Appendix B: Letter of Information for Study Participants

Letter of Information

u Ottawa

Working title of the study: **Dangerous or endangered? Exploring and conceptualizing violence experienced by Somali Canadian male youth**

Université
d'Ottawa
Institut de
recherche
sur la santé
des
populations

University of
Ottawa
Institute of
Population
Health

Ms. Hodan Mohamed (**Researcher)**
PhD Candidate
Institute of Population
University of Ottawa
1 Stewart Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 6N5

Dr. Denise L. Spitzer (**Research Supervisor)**
Associate Professor
Institute of Women's Studies
University of Ottawa
120 Université FSS 5034
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5

Dr. Ronald Labonté (**Research Co-supervisor**)
Professor, Faculty of Medicine
Institute of Population Health
University of Ottawa
1 Stewart Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 6N5

Invitation to Participate: You are invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Hodan Mohamed, a graduate student at the University of Ottawa.

Participation: Your participation will consist of participating in an interview or focus group session (according to your choice), which will not last longer than 2 hours at a location and time that is convenient for you. Participation will be on a first come/first served basis.

Purpose of the Study: This research will help us understand what social factors and conditions contributed to the violent deaths of young Somali men in Alberta and Ontario and how those deaths impacted Somali Canadians. Results will be shared widely with Somali community members, service providers and policy makers.

Benefits: This study provides Somali Canadians an opportunity to share their stories and concerns about the wellbeing of their male children; in particular, how the violent deaths of dozens of young Somali males in Ontario and Alberta since 2005 impacted their lives. The study is meant to be engaging and empowering so that services providers and policy makers, whom will be targeted for the dissemination of results, hear community's perspectives.

Risks: There is no risk to you from this study, but talking about your experiences of losing a family

member to violence may cause you emotional or psychological distress. If that occurs, you may ask me to stop the interview immediately. You may decline to answer further questions and request to have information you have shared deleted permanently from record. Should you withdraw at some point from this study or end an interview early you may decide at that point if I may use any of the information you have already provided.

Confidentiality and Anonymity: The information that you will share will remain strictly confidential and will be used solely for the purposes of this research. The only people who will have access to the research data are the researcher, Hodan Mohamed, and her thesis supervisors, professors Denise Spitzer and Ronald Labonté. Your answers to open-ended questions may be used verbatim in presentations and publications but neither you nor your organization will be identified in the final report (unless you want your organization's name included in the final report). Anonymity is guaranteed since you are not being asked to provide your name or any personal information.

Conservation of data: Your information will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the researcher at the University of Ottawa. Electronic data will be encrypted and password protected.

Compensation (or Reimbursement): There is no monitory compensation for you to participate in this research.

Voluntary Participation: You are under no obligation to participate and if you choose to participate, you may refuse to answer questions that you do not want to answer. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form before the interview begins.

Information about the Study Results: Results will be available to you after the study is completed. Knowledge translation activities will be undertaken to share findings with community members, service providers and policymakers. You may request a copy of the study after it has been completed**.**

If you have any questions or require more information about the study itself, you may contact the researcher or her supervisors at the contact information provided above.

If you have any questions with regards to the ethical conduct of this study, you may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5, tel.: (613) 562-5387 or ethics@uottawa.ca.

Please keep this form for your records

Thank you for your time and consideration.

_____   _____
Hodan Mohamed, Researcher   Date

1 Stewart
Ottawa ON
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Appendix C: Interview Guides

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS (Individuals knowledgeable about issue, including formal community leaders who have addressed the violence, service providers who work with Somali youth, etc.,).

1. How did you come to know and seek understanding of the deaths of young men?

   1.1. Can you tell me, based on your knowledge, what explains these events?

2. What differences have you observed in how the story is told by different sources?

   2.1. How are victims represented?

   2.2. What patterns are these representations taking?

3. What do these deaths tell us about male roles generally or young Somali men and masculinities?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

1. In your networks of relatives and friends, do you know of any young men who have died in Alberta or Ontario?

   1.1. Tell me how you've learned about the deaths?

      1.1.1. How did you feel when you heard the news?

      1.1.2. What feelings did others in your networks/circles, express to you about these deaths?

2. Tell me, in your opinion, what explains these deaths?

   2.1. How was the news discussed among members of the Somali community in your networks? How have they heard the news?

2.1.1. How did the media talk about the deaths?

3. What types of responses, actions, did these events garner/generate in your life or that of others you know?

4. How do you understand the difference between young Somali men and young women in the context of this violence?

   4.1. Is there something uniquely different in the masculine roles in which young Somali males are growing up?

5. What questions do you have about these events that remain unanswered?