

**Building the Plane as You Fly It:
Young Diasporan Engagement in Ethiopian
Development**

*Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

by

Alpha Abebe

St. Antony's College
University of Oxford

Building the Plane as You Fly It: Young Diasporan Engagement in Ethiopian Development

Abstract

Alpha Abebe
Doctor of Philosophy, Department of International Development
St. Antony's College
Hilary 2016

This thesis explores the relationship between identity, social interaction, and social practice, through a case study of *young diasporans of Ethiopian origin* (YDEOs) from North America and their engagements in Ethiopian development initiatives. Specifically, I examine the ways in which people of Ethiopian descent born and/or raised in Canada and the U.S. construct a diasporic identity and engage with Ethiopian development initiatives through a mutually constitutive process. My methods were qualitative and involved conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with 55 YDEOs and attending 8 community events in Toronto, Washington, D.C., and Addis Ababa. All of the YDEOs I interviewed had actively engaged in initiatives (based in North America or Ethiopia) intended to contribute towards the social, political, and/or economic development of Ethiopia.

Their initiatives included fundraising events, establishing local NGOs, volunteer missions, and taking professional positions within the Ethiopian development sector, among others. Utilising an interactionist theoretical framework, I unpack YDEO motivations for engaging in Ethiopian development, the nature of the development activities themselves, and the ways in which these experiences have shaped YDEO relationships, identities, and trajectories in life so far.

Engaging in Ethiopian development was rarely expressed as an extension of a pre-existing sense of Ethiopian patriotism; rather, YDEOs used these practices to explore, test, or build a sense of connection to their country of origin. Further, the development framework made it possible for them to forge a relationship that also resonated with their other social identities, and could even be leveraged to further other personal and professional goals. YDEO engagements in Ethiopian development were not simply interventions; they were fundamentally social processes defined by social interactions. In the process of organising fundraising events, volunteering at orphanages, and working on project reports, YDEOs were also building personal connections, gaining social capital, and redefining attitudes towards their families, communities, development, and Ethiopia itself.

This thesis contributes an in-depth and critical analysis of the diaspora/development nexus – a nexus that emerges as a contested space, where people act and are acted upon, where identities are reified and transformed, and where institutions and social structures are both strengthened and challenged. The insights from migrant descendant experiences, such as YDEOs, highlights the ways in which diasporic identities take shape and are imbued with meaning through social practice, and how these practices are connected to broader human psychosocial needs, aspirations, and behaviours.

*This thesis is dedicated to my phenomenal and tenacious mother,
Azalech Abebe.*

Acknowledgements

Completing this doctorate has truly been a labour of love, though admittedly there were times when it was more *labour* than *love*! I would not have come this far, and in one piece, without the support of so many individuals who have invested their time, resources, encouragement, and prayer. You have all carried me through this process, whether you realised it or not, and for that I will always be grateful.

First of all I would like to thank Oxford's Department of International Development (ODID) for providing me with the opportunity and space to conduct this research. I recognise how fortunate I was to call this my academic home at Oxford, as I have gained so much from the community of scholars, students, and staff at ODID. I am also grateful for the incredible opportunities for learning that came through Oxford's International Migration Institute and the Diasporas Programme.

Thank you to my supervisor, Dr. Oliver Bakewell; you were a great mentor and support. Thank you for seeing the value in my research and for continually pushing me to think and write more critically. Thank you also to all the examiners who provided thoughtful critique and input at various stages of my research process, including: Dr. Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Dr. Mette Louise Berg, Professor Robin Cohen, Dr. Hélène Neveu Kringelbach, Dr. Nicholas Van Hear, and Dr. Ben Page.

Thank you to all of my respondents, who not only offered me their time, but were also generous in sharing their stories and reflections. I enjoyed every minute of speaking with you, and learned far more than I could capture in this thesis. Thank you also to the broader Ethiopian community who

provided support in so many ways, including helping me find respondents for my research, and offering kind words of encouragement over the years. I am truly a child of this community, and I look forward to continuing to document our stories and investing back all that was invested in me.

Thank you to the many friends who have been along with me on this journey. Your friendships have kept me grounded and have been such an important source of fuel and joy. I am particularly grateful to my cheer squad, you know who you are, who checked in often and quite literally cheered me along from beginning to end.

To my family – spread around the world in true diaspora fashion – I have felt your love and support even when we were apart. To my many aunts, uncles, cousins, who have had a hand in raising me and continue to show so much faith and pride in me, thank you! Thank you to my father, Zegeye Abebe, for keeping me curious about the world, it has served me well. A special thanks to my U.K. family unit, Teshale, Seble, Jigsa, and Nimona. Your home cooked injera, debates on politics, and silly antics were the best cure for my homesickness.

To my best friend and husband, Dilnessa Asres, thank you. Your support throughout my educational career has been unwavering. Thank you for laughing and dreaming with me and for being my partner in life.

Now to my mother, Azalech Abebe, to whom this thesis is dedicated...we did it. You put your entire life aside so that I could be free to play, learn, and dream. I share this accomplishment wholeheartedly with you – we did this together.

Finally, I count all of these relationships, experiences, and accomplishments as blessings, and I am so grateful to God who continues to pour out these blessings into my life without measure.

“Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.” Philippians 1: 6



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	iv
Contents	vii
List of Figures and Tables	x
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	11
1.1 <i>Statement of Interest</i>	11
1.2 <i>Overview of Research.....</i>	14
1.2.1 Research Focus and Questions.....	14
1.2.2 Field Sites	15
1.2.3 Terms and Concepts	16
1.3 <i>Rationale and Contributions to Literature.....</i>	19
1.4 <i>Epistemological and Theoretical Framework.....</i>	22
1.5 <i>Methodology and Data Collection</i>	24
1.6 <i>Chapter Overview</i>	27
Chapter 2. Theorising Diasporas and Development: A Literature Review.....	32
2.1 <i>Diasporas and Transnationalism</i>	33
2.2 <i>Development Studies.....</i>	39
2.3 <i>Diasporas and Development.....</i>	46
2.3.1 Shifting Perceptions of Migration and Development.....	48
2.3.2 Claiming African Diasporas for Development.....	50
2.4 <i>Migrant Descendants.....</i>	56
2.4.1 Conceptualising Generational Identity.....	56
2.4.2 Impact of Family Dynamics and Life Course.....	59
2.4.3 Homeland Ties and Transnational Practices	63
2.5 <i>Conclusion.....</i>	67
Chapter 3. Methodology	70
3.1 <i>Epistemological Position</i>	73
3.2 <i>An Interactionist Theoretical Framework.....</i>	75
3.3 <i>Data Collection</i>	81
3.3.1 Instrumental Case Study.....	81
3.3.2 Multi-Sited Fieldwork.....	83
3.3.3 Recruitment, Sampling, and Interview Process.....	85
3.3.4 Participant Observation.....	89
3.4 <i>Data Analysis</i>	90
3.5 <i>Research Considerations</i>	95
3.5.1 Ethical Standards	95
3.5.2 Positionality	97
3.5.3 Potential Limitations of Study.....	100
3.6 <i>Conclusion.....</i>	104
Chapter 4. YDEOs: A Historically Grounded Generation	105

4.1 Ethiopian Political History	107
4.2 International Development in Ethiopia	111
4.3 Ethiopian Diaspora in North America	116
4.4 Ethiopian Diaspora – Government Relations	120
4.5 Young Diasporans of Ethiopian Origin in North America	124
Chapter 5. Connecting the Dots: Motivations and Meaning Driving Engagement	130
5.1 'Start with yourself and work your way out': Spirituality, Career Goals, and Self-Actualisation	133
5.1.1 Spirituality, Purpose, and Meaning	134
5.1.2 Professional Advancement and Learning Opportunities	138
5.1.3 Autonomy and Adventure	142
5.2 'I feel like I can change things when I am there': Making an Impact, Giving Back, and Adding Value	147
5.2.1 Having the Power to Change Things	148
5.2.2 Helping People and Feeling Good	152
5.2.3 Adding Value and Finding a Role	157
5.3 'That was straight up lottery of the womb': Social Justice and Reconciling Guilt and Responsibility	161
5.3.1 Addressing Inequity and Injustice	162
5.3.2 Reconciling Personal Privilege and Feelings of Guilt	166
5.3.3 Sense of Duty and Responsibility to Ethiopia	168
5.4 'I needed to reconcile my identity issues': The Search for Belonging and Becoming Ethiopian	171
5.4.1 Rejection, Racism, and Exclusion in the West	172
5.4.2 Seeking a Sense of Belonging and Community	176
5.4.3 Substantiating an Ethiopian Identity	179
5.5 Conclusion	181
Chapter 6. Doing It Their Way: Modes of YDEO Engagement in Ethiopian Development	184
6.1 'There's something Continent-wide that's happening': Enabling and Mobilising Discourses and Frames	186
6.1.1 Anti-Development Development	188
6.1.2 Africa-Rising Discourse	193
6.2 'That connection to Ethiopia was established': Entry Points and Gateways to Engagement	199
6.2.1 Influence of Ethiopian Diaspora Communities	201
6.2.2 Influence of Structured Ethiopian Initiatives and Organisations	205
6.3 'We are a non-governmental, non-religious, non-everything': Forms and Nature of YDEO Development Activities	211
6.3.1 Remittances and Family-Run Initiatives	215
6.3.2 Initiatives and Fundraisers Based in North America	218
6.3.3 Volunteer and Professional Efforts Based in Ethiopia	221
6.4 Conclusion	227
Chapter 7. Epiphanies and Uncertainties: Shifts and Influences in YDEO Lives After Engaging in Ethiopian Development	229
7.1 'I hold my family much closer now': Shaping Social Relations and Day-to-Day Decisions	232
7.1.1 Influence on Relationships Within the Family	233
7.1.2 Influence on Marital and Career Decisions	237

7.2 <i>'I have to be realistic about what I can do': Shifting Visions of Ethiopian Development</i>	243
7.2.1 Re-evaluating Their Role and Ability to 'Help'	245
7.2.2 Interest in Private Sector-Led Development	250
7.3 <i>'I am Ethiopian, in my own form': Change in Relationship to and Identification with Ethiopia</i>	253
7.3.1 Becoming Familiar with Ethiopia as a Country	255
7.3.2 Ethiopian Diasporic Identity	259
7.4 <i>Conclusion</i>	262
Chapter 8. Discussion and Reflections	266
8.1 <i>Summary of Learnings</i>	268
8.2 <i>Key Theoretical Insights</i>	271
8.2.1 Development Practice as a Social Phenomenon.....	274
8.2.2 Diasporic Identity Constructed Through Social Practice	276
8.2.3 Transnationalism Among Migrant Descendants.....	278
8.2.4 The Universality of Diaspora Experiences and Practices	281
8.2.5 Class, Race, and Gender as Enabling and Limiting Structures.....	284
8.3 <i>Concluding Thoughts</i>	287
References.....	291
Appendix I – General Consent Form	308
Appendix II – Under 18 Consent Form	310
Appendix III – Interview Guide	312
Appendix IV – Respondent Profile	318

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Picture during community event where we recruited participants for our youth-led study. Photo credit: Alpha Abebe.....	70
Figure 2: Recruitment posting taken from my personal Facebook account.....	86
Figure 3: Screenshot of interview transcription process in F5 Transcription Software.....	92
Figure 4: Screenshot of my descriptive coding structure in NVivo	92
Figure 5: Screenshot of a portion of my analytical coding structure in NVivo.....	93
Figure 6: Image of some of my notes as I documented emerging analytical insights. Photo credit: Alpha Abebe	93
Figure 7: A collage of memories of my grandmothers that sits in my living room. Photo credit: Alpha Abebe	266
Figure 8: The self-perceptions connected to YDEO engagements in Ethiopian development.....	284
Table 1: Examples of YDEO Ethiopian development initiatives	26
Table 2: Examples of YDEO Ethiopian development initiatives	214

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of Interest

At the age of nineteen, I was part of a group of young people who established a non-profit organisation in Toronto. All of us were of Ethiopian origin, and were either born in Canada or had spent most of our lives there. Our parents had their own organisations and cultural events, and while they often tried to engage us in them, it was usually an awkward fit. We saw a need for a space within our community where young people could come together for mentorship, support, and friendship – and more specifically, we saw an opportunity to create this space ourselves and on our own terms. In the early months of our development, we spent countless hours, fuelled by takeout, envisioning and refining the mission and focus of our organisation. We were a like-minded and collegial group of young people; however there were a few things that proved contentious and difficult to agree upon.

One major point of contention was whether any of our activities should extend our reach into Ethiopia itself. There were two camps that emerged among our founders: 1) those that believed we should try and engage with and support young people in Ethiopia; and, 2) those who believed we should limit our focus to young people of Ethiopian descent within our city and region. The first camp believed that we would be compromising our credibility in the community if we had no efforts focused on Ethiopia, and beyond this, that we had a moral obligation to do what we could to support those less fortunate in our country of origin. The second camp argued that the need within our community in Toronto was great enough, and that we may

not have the legitimacy, knowledge or resources to do anything meaningful in Ethiopia.

In the end, we struck a compromise. In order to extend our reach and impact beyond the city, we decided that one of our organisational pillars would focus on creating linkages and partnerships with other Ethiopian diaspora groups across North America. Further, we would work towards strengthening our community in Toronto first, and revisit the possibility of engaging with Ethiopia in the future. I reflect on those early debates often, and wish I could relive them now in my capacity as a researcher. It was a time when we, as young diasporans of Ethiopian origin, were forced to confront and articulate what our relationship to Ethiopia was and how that should direct our own commitments and resources. The heated and drawn-out nature of those debates was illustrative of how consequential these matters were to us, and how little consensus there was even in our small and like-minded group. On the one hand, it was our connections to Ethiopia that brought us together as a collective; however, on the other hand, it was in coming together that many of us began to *actively connect* to Ethiopia (the idea and country) in any meaningful way. Our organisation is still active at the time of writing, and it has gone through several iterations of leadership since we founded it. While the organisation has yet to establish a focus on Ethiopian development, many leaders and participants, including myself, have used it as a platform or training ground for their own individual efforts to engage in Ethiopian development efforts.

By now it should be evident that my interest in the topic of this research stems from a deep and personal connection to the issues explored herein. As a young person of Ethiopian origin born and raised in Toronto, I could very

well have been a respondent in my own research.¹ Over the years, I have become fascinated (sometimes obsessed) with how other people who were born and/or raised abroad like me negotiate and express their identifications and relationships with Ethiopia. I sensed that there was a lot of complexity and nuance to unpack within this, and much to learn beyond the extent of someone's supposed 'assimilation'. While it has become rather trite to state that such cultural identities are socially constructed, less attention is given to the actual *process* of that construction. However, a curiosity about the mechanics and process of diasporic identity formation is in fact what has fuelled much of my research.

I took an important lesson from that debate with my co-founders over cold pizza; I learned that people do not assume diasporic identities through some passive process of cultural osmosis, but rather, through a dynamic and complex process of social interaction and practice. This takes place in a number of different settings, and implicates various actors and institutions. However, as with any research project, I had to find an anchor for my analysis, and ultimately decided to focus on the engagement of young diasporans of Ethiopian origin in Ethiopian development initiatives. As I looked around among my friends and community members, I saw that this was an increasingly common phenomenon, and one that raised a number of interesting analytical questions about the relationship between diasporas and development. Methodologically speaking, the 'engagement in Ethiopian development' provided me with a concrete social practice to examine, and made it safe to presume that the young people I interviewed had an active and meaningful connection to their Ethiopian heritage. The task of my

¹ See Chapter 3 for a discussion about my positionality within this research.

research then became untangling the webs of significance that connected these social identities and practices – or at the very least, making a valiant effort to do so!

1.2 Overview of Research

1.2.1 *Research Focus and Questions*

This thesis explores the relationship between identity, social interaction, and social practice, through a case study of *young diasporans of Ethiopian origin* (YDEOs) from North America and their engagements in Ethiopian development initiatives. Specifically, I examine the ways in which people of Ethiopian descent born and/or raised in Canada and the U.S. construct a diasporic identity and engage with Ethiopian development initiatives through a mutually constitutive process. My research involved over a year of fieldwork conducting in-depth interviews with YDEOs and attending community events in Toronto, Washington, D.C., and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.² I use the word ‘young’ in the term *young diasporans of Ethiopian origin* because given the recent nature of Ethiopian migration to North America, most people born to Ethiopian immigrants are currently under the age of 35, as was the case with my respondents. All of the YDEOs I interviewed have actively engaged in initiatives intended to contribute towards the social, political, and/or economic development of Ethiopia. Some of these initiatives took place in North America, and others involved travel to Ethiopia. Most of the YDEOs that I interviewed while in Ethiopia had moved

² Three of my interviews took place in New York City, and two were conducted via Skype. These were opportunistic interviews with individuals who were heavily involved in Ethiopian development and could therefore provide important insight into my research.

there – either temporarily or permanently – with the explicit purpose of working on development initiatives in some form.

The following research questions have guided my research design, methodology, and analysis:

1. *What is the qualitative nature of YDEO-led activity intended to promote the social, political or economic development of Ethiopia? How and why do they engage in these activities?*
2. *What impacts do these practices have in defining and/or strengthening diasporic identities?*
3. *Which norms, structures and institutions mediate and are mediated by these interactions?*

These research questions were designed to allow for my respondents' experiences to speak for themselves, and left room for my assumptions to be challenged in the process. Rather than taking diasporic identity or the potential contributions of diasporans to development as *a priori*, I explore the discourses, structures, and interactions that shape both of these social processes, and the systems of power and forms of agency that mediate them.

1.2.2 Field Sites

I selected Toronto and Washington, D.C. as field sites because these cities are home to the largest and most significant Ethiopian diaspora communities in each respective country. The YDEOs I interviewed in Ethiopia came from a number of cities across Canada and the U.S., predominantly Washington, D.C., Seattle, and Los Angeles. As I will discuss in Chapter 4, the Ethiopian diaspora in North America was originally constituted by specific political events and migration flows – namely people fleeing political violence after the 1974 revolution in Ethiopia. Ethiopians historically represent the first time Africans have come to the United States as a refugee group (McSpadden, 1987,

pp. 799-800), and they remain one of the main sources of African immigrants to both Canada and the United States (Halie Fenta, Hyman, & Noh, 2006, p. 925). It is estimated that over 70,000 people of Ethiopian origin live in Toronto alone (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2008; Ethiopian Association in Toronto, 2010). As of 2007, the number of Ethiopian-born residents in the U.S. was estimated to be 73,000, and 460,000 if second and subsequent generations are included (Lyons, 2007). While the Ethiopian communities are far more geographically spread out in the U.S. than they are in Canada, there are particular concentrations found in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and New York. The Ethiopian community in D.C. is by far the largest and most established, with some estimating that there are as many as 350,000 to 400,000 in the greater Washington, D.C. area (Lyons, 2007, p. 546; Terrazas, 2007). Washington, D.C. is also noted as being the focal point for the most significant social, political and economic mobilisations in the Ethiopian diaspora, and is often courted by Western and Ethiopian political leaders/hopefuls looking to garner diaspora support or resources. While there are instances when I discuss the particularities of these different cities in relation to my respondents' experiences, my research also speaks to the YDEO experience within North American more generally – including the transnational spaces connecting them across cities and countries.

1.2.3 Terms and Concepts

The term or concept '**diaspora**', which I invoke often throughout this thesis, is one that remains at the centre of definitional debates among scholars. Some authors have developed and refined classification systems (Cohen, 2008; Safran, 1991), others have deconstructed and abstracted the term (A. Brah, 1997; S. Hall, 1990), while others have expressed concern over its dilution and

questioned its analytical value (Brubaker, 2005). Debates aside, the term 'diaspora' is usually used in reference to groups of dispersed people who share symbolic and/or material associations to an idealised homeland, which may or may not take the form of an existing nation-state. Classic examples include the Jewish and Armenian diaspora; however the contemporary usage of the term often applies to any group of migrants living outside of their country of origin. While I have not adopted a strict definition of diaspora in my own work, there are certain conceptual boundaries that have guided my understanding and use of the term.

I take issue with the conflation of 'diasporas' with 'migrants', particularly because my research concentrates on diasporans who are not necessarily migrants, as they were born in the country where their parents emigrated. I argue that the conceptual value of the term 'diaspora' is most evident when it is applied to a group of people who are not themselves migrants, but have constructed a symbolic and/or material connection to a place other than the one they grew up in. I treat diaspora "as a category of practice, project, claim and stance, rather than as a bounded group" (Brubaker, 2005, p. 13). Therefore, the enactment, consciousness, activation, or 'switch' is particularly important to my understanding of diaspora – that is, I understand it as a *process of identification* rather than a fixed or inherent identity. Given my focus on its intersections with development practice, I also appreciate Hall's (1990) view of diasporic identities as "those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference", rather than being defined by "essence or purity" (p. 235).

In terms of **development**, my research focused on what Cowen and Shenton (1996) have characterised as 'intentional development', which was birthed

with the rise of industrial capitalism in Europe, is rooted in colonial practices, exploded during the structural adjustment period, and matured into a highly resourced and politicised industry today. This is a phenomenon distinct from ‘immanent development’, which is an organic process of change or progress. It is also worth noting, that in my use of the term, I am *not* making any specific reference to housing or other infrastructure development. From an analytical perspective, I adopt a critical approach to development studies that draws attention to the perpetuation of global inequity, and questions the transformative potential of the industry as a whole (including that which engages diasporas). ‘Intentional development’ is historically linked to international actors who act upon or facilitate their development intentions for other nations or communities. More specifically, the common usage of ‘development’ today often refers to “the practice of development agencies intervening in global capitalism to alleviate poverty and other problems, so that development is still applied mainly to certain, other, parts of the world, namely those defined as ‘poor’” (Thomas, 2000, p. 775). While Western states and large development agencies may have laid the foundations, there are a myriad of actors and institutions (including diaspora groups) that have helped to build, reshape, and reinforce contemporary development structures.

The final note on definitions has to do with a term that I have chosen *not* to use in this thesis, though I have built on the work of many scholars who do. However tempting as it was, I chose not to refer to my respondents as ‘second-generation Ethiopians’. The standard definition of ‘second-generation’ “applies to children of at least one immigrant parent who were born and/or raised in the country that their parent(s) settled (Hernandez-Ramdwar, 2006, p. 43). The derivative term ‘1.5 generation’ is used to describe people who

migrated from their country of origin at a very young age, and were raised in the country of settlement. While there are a number of important critiques of this terminology (See Chapter 2), ultimately I decided to part ways with the term because it suggests that 'Ethiopian' is an ascribed rather than adopted identity. Referring to my respondents as **young diasporans of Ethiopian origin** (YDEOs), however long and inelegant the term may be, appends 'Ethiopian' to their origin and leaves room for the process of actually identifying with that country of origin – a process that is at the heart of this research.

1.3 Rationale and Contributions to Literature

While rich debates exist within both diaspora studies (Avtar Brah, 1996; Brubaker, 2005; Clifford, 1994; Cohen, 1997; Gilroy, 1993; S. Hall, 1990; Safran, 1991; Tölölyan, 1991, 2007) and development studies (Booth, 1994; Cowen & Shenton, 1996; Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1995; Kothari, 2005; Mosse, 2005; Munck & O'Hearn, 1999; Pieterse, 2010; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997; Rodney, 1972; Sen, 1999), one struggles to find such critical analysis in the mainstream literature that engages at their intersection. Much of this literature has developed over the last decade, and remains narrowly interested in brain-drain/gain, remittances, and institutionalised expressions of diaspora engagement in development (e.g. hometown associations) (Ankomah, Larson, Roberson, & Rotich, 2011; Brinkerhoff, 2012; Groot & Gibbons, 2007; Ionescu, 2006; Kapur, 2004; Sorensen, 2007). Rather than building upon the analytical insights of each respective discipline, diaspora/development studies frequently lean upon regressive conceptualisations of identity, migration, and social change. Far too often, 'diaspora' is represented as a primordial and bounded

community, and 'development', a benign process of modernisation in which the diaspora *is, can, or should be* participating in.

The rationale for my research emerges from within this theoretical gap – that is, the dearth of literature critically examining the intersections of diasporas and development. There is a particular need for such analysis within an African context, given the level of human, capital, and intellectual resources currently dedicated to the engagement of the diasporas in African development (Mercer, Page, & Evans, 2008; Mohan & Zack-Williams, 2002; Mohapatra & Ratha, 2011; The World Bank, 2012a). When the diaspora/development nexus is actually interrogated, it emerges as a contested space, where people act and are acted upon, where identities are reified and transformed, and where institutions and social structures are both strengthened and challenged.

Early theorisations of diasporas recognised the propensity of these groups to engage in homeland building initiatives, as this literature was highly influenced by the paradigmatic Jewish case. In his typology, Safran (1991) argued that diasporas “believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity” (p. 84). Vertovec (1999) noted that many diasporans are confronted with divided loyalties as they often engage in activities “prompted by their interest in the political plight of a country of origin” (p. 4). As Brubaker (2005) notes however, many subsequent writers sought to de-emphasise homeland orientations and highlighted instead the lateral and deterritorialised connections made within the diaspora. Those thinkers who were inspired by the Black Atlantic experience focused their analysis on diasporic identity as a form of cultural construction and examined the various

ways in which a sense of community was built around a loose political identity (Clifford, 1994; Gilroy, 1993; S. Hall, 1990). However, the contemporary interest in engaging diasporas in development has revived an interest in homeland orientations, specifically those that are expressed in institutionalised and material forms.

These conceptualisations of diasporas – as remitters and development actors – are largely based on the experiences of people who emigrated from their homeland in their adulthood. Thus, the motivations driving diaspora engagement in development are often taken for granted as inherent, and conceived of as a natural consequence of peoples' direct interpersonal and political ties to their homeland. However, in examining the engagements of the children or descendants of migrants, it is no longer possible to take motivations for granted without leaning upon notions of some primordial ethnic identity. For example, when someone who was born in a White suburban neighbourhood in California with very little exposure to Ethiopians outside of their immediate family, then decides to move to Ethiopia and start an NGO (an example based on one of my respondents), the question of the motivation behind that decision emerges as particularly interesting, and also breathes life into 'diaspora' as a categorical and analytical term.

There is a volume of important work that has examined the experiences and practices of the 'second generation' and other migrant descendants (Alba & Nee, 1997; King, Christou, & Ahrens, 2011; Levitt & Waters, 2002; Portes, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2005; Potter, 2005; Wessendorf, 2007a, 2007b). However, in this literature there is often an implicit assumption that the transnational connections and practices of 'first generation' migrants characterise the 'ideal type' of diasporic formation. This then sets a

benchmark, which narrows the scope of analysis and limits potential theoretical insights that could be gained from the examination of young diaspora experiences. Tölölyan (2007) argues that diasporas only begin to emerge “when affect is no longer enough or natural [...] which come[s] no earlier than the second and third generations, when it becomes obvious to the diaspora that it can no longer presume an automatically shared ‘sameness’ with the people in the homeland” (pg. 650). As such, the point at which a group of people connect to the homeland as a matter of *choice* rather than *consequence* is particularly significant to diaspora studies from an analytical perspective. While it is important to recognise that there are various structural factors that shape people’s identities, in the case of the YDEOs I interviewed, it was clear that most individuals came to a crossroads where they made a personal *choice* regarding whether and how to build or strengthen a sense of Ethiopian identity. This enactment of their connection to Ethiopia, through their engagement in Ethiopian development, highlights the role of agency and importance of practice in constructing diasporic identities. In my analysis, I also examine how other social identities, personal ambitions, and social structures intersect with and shape both the nature of diasporic identities and the development practices YDEOs choose to engage in.

1.4 Epistemological and Theoretical Framework

My research is grounded within the *post-positivist tradition*, that is, I reject the notion that the goal of research is to objectively observe, measure and describe a fixed social reality. Prasad (2005) explains that post-positivist research tends to “approach questions of social reality and knowledge from a more problematised vantage point, emphasizing the constructed nature of social reality, the constitutive role of language and the value of research as

critique" (p. 9). Rather than seeing the world as something to be 'discovered', I take an *interpretive approach*, which sees the world as something to be 'understood' and 'represented' through research. I also build upon *critical approaches* to social research, which highlight and deconstruct relationships of power, agency, discourse and knowledge. Often building upon Gramscian and Foucauldian notions of power, critical social theorists generally make "the very givenness of the world the object of exploration and analysis" (Calhoun, 1995, p. 8). Kincheoloe and McLaren (2005) argue, "inquiry that aspires to the name 'critical' must be connected to an attempt to confront the injustice of a particular society or public sphere within the society" (p. 305). In my research, I ask questions about the processes and agents that operate to maintain the status quo – perpetuating inequitable social, political and economic structures – and those that operate to challenge this.

My theoretical framework has been informed by the sociological literature on *symbolic interactionism* (also referred to more broadly as 'interactionism') (Blumer, 1969; Denzin, 1992; Fine, 1993; Plummer, 2000; Serpe & Stryker, 2011; Stryker, 1980). At the heart of the interactionist approach is the assertion that both *society* and *self* emerge through a process of *social interaction*. 'Society', at both a micro and macro scale, is made up of webs of interactions, which are held together by various shared and contested interpretations of cultural *symbols*, such as spoken language, images, artefacts, belief systems, stereotypes, gestures, etc. The meanings and values associated with these symbols are created, prescribed, institutionalised, and changed through processes of social interaction. As a theoretical framework, interactionism offers an integrated method of deconstructing identity, action, and social change. It also draws attention to the ways in which individuals *act* to verify

their conceptions of who they are in relation to the roles, expectations, and commitments associated with relational and generalised 'Others'. Adding a structural lens to this framework means appreciating how these processes happen within contexts both mediated by and in resistance to institutions and other social structures. Interactionism was the most suitable theoretical framework for my research, as it is an actor-centred approach that examines social phenomena through the meanings that individual actors attach to their own behaviour. This framework proved to be particularly useful in examining the intersections of diasporas and development by drawing my attention to the complex dynamics between identity formation, social formation, and social action. Finally, interactionism is a framework that is steeped in the post-positivist and interpretive traditions, which provided a unified epistemological and theoretic lens with which to interpret and analyse my data and observations.

1.5 Methodology and Data Collection

I have employed qualitative methods in order to capture the texture and nuance of the narratives and issues I examine in my research. I approach YDEO engagement in Ethiopian development as an *instrumental case study*. In instrumental case studies, the purpose of examination is primarily to provide insight into a wider issue or to draw generalisations, as opposed to intrinsic case studies, which see the value of the research wholly in the chosen case itself (Stake, 2005). While 'the case' plays a supportive role in this approach, it is still looked at in depth,

its contexts scrutinized and its ordinary activities detailed, but all because this helps us pursue the external interest [...] Case researchers seek out both what is common and what is particular about the case, but the end product of the research regularly portrays more of the uncommon (Stake, 2005, pp. 445, 447).

This approach provided the scope to do in-depth and detailed analysis of a broader social phenomenon and also fit within the limits of one research project. While I was initially drawn to research YDEOs for more intrinsic than instrumental reasons, I see the *theoretical* value in my research stemming from the insights that can be drawn towards a broader understanding of the diaspora/development nexus, and the relationship between social identities and practice. It is also important to note that while there is a certain level of specificity and coherence to the experiences of YDEOs in North America that justifies approaching this as a 'case', they still represent a heterogeneous and complex group of individuals with varied lived experiences (See Chapter 4).

My primary data was collected through 55 in-depth semi-structured interviews with YDEOs who had or were in the process of engaging in Ethiopian development initiatives. I also attended 8 community events that were related to my research in the various cities, where I played the role of a participant observer. 15 interviews were conducted in Toronto; 15 interviews were in the Washington, D.C. area; 3 interviews were in New York City; 20 interviews were conducted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; and, 2 were conducted via Skype. Overall, 30 of my respondents were female and 25 were male, and the average length of the interviews was around 1.5 hours (see Appendix IV for details of all of my respondents). Almost all of the interviews were conducted in cafés or restaurants, all of them were recorded, and most of them were fully transcribed. I developed an interview guide that I followed loosely (see Appendix III), however I also allowed discussions to follow tangents when they appeared analytically useful. The following table includes examples of the Ethiopian development initiatives that my respondents were engaged in.

Working in the development sector • Working at Ethiopian branches of INGOs and multilateral organisations • Studying International Development with the intention of helping Ethiopia in the future • Working within the corporate social responsibility unit of a company based in Ethiopia
Awareness and fundraising initiatives based in North America • Creating virtual platforms to mobilise funds and raise awareness about poverty and injustice • Auctioning art in the U.S. to fund a home for children with HIV in Ethiopia • Organising a fashion show in Toronto to raise funds for water projects in Ethiopia • Raising funds and collecting books for Ethiopia through university student club events and initiatives
Volunteer and missions trips based in Ethiopia • Taking a sabbatical to work as a medical doctor in a rural Ethiopian hospital • Going on a Christian missions trip which included visiting orphanages • Volunteering at a local human rights organisation providing pro bono legal support • Accepting a quasi-volunteer secondment at a department within the Ethiopian government to provide policy support
Establishing Ethiopian development organisations and initiatives • Establishing education focused NGOs in Ethiopia • Creating an investment firm to seed local Ethiopian businesses • Partnering with corporations in North America to send school supplies to Ethiopia • Establishing a volunteer placement organisation that sends young people in Ethiopian diaspora to local Ethiopian NGOs

Table 1: Examples of YDEO Ethiopian development initiatives

My transcripts were supplemented by notes from my fieldwork journal, where I reflected on what stood out for me from each interview. My notes also included candid accounts of times when I felt conflicted, confused, inspired, and affected by the research process in various other ways, feelings which I discuss in more depth in Chapter 3. As a YDEO who has engaged in Ethiopian development initiatives, my research is as much about my own

experiences as the people I have interviewed. I continually reflected upon how I was positioned as a researcher, community member, practitioner, student, Westerner, Ethiopian, African, woman, insider, and outsider, and how this framed my interactions, perceptions, and analysis.

I have also collected a series of web-based material that I draw on throughout this thesis – from policy documents, to literary pieces, to organisational overviews. This supplementary material helped to contextualise my respondent narratives within broader discourses and social structures. Finally, I used the software NVivo to organise the data from my transcripts and other documents, and coded these under themes that emerged through my analysis. The coding process was iterative and I continually returned to the themes as I reviewed the literature and wrote, and rewrote parts of this thesis.

1.6 Chapter Overview

I believe that academics are also in the art of storytelling, whether we recognise it or not. At every step of the way along our research process, we are interpreting, editing, and structuring a narrative that is informed by the data we collect. Therefore, the act of structuring a paper, including this thesis, is not simply a matter of organising information – in many ways the structure in itself is part of that information we are conveying. I state this here as an important preface to my chapter overview below. Structuring my thesis involved making decisions about what to highlight, what to leave out, and ultimately, what story to tell. I have made every effort to let the ‘data lead’ my analysis, and settled on a structure that I felt best reflected the narratives and insights from my respondents. However, it is important to recognise that this is ultimately one version of a story that could be told in many different ways.

Following this introduction is Chapter 2, which includes a review of the literature that has informed this research. I discuss the evolution of *diasporas* and *transnationalism* from two concepts to two overlapping bodies of work that continue to inform, sharpen, and challenge each other. While diaspora and transnationalism studies emerged out of different intellectual traditions, they were both responses to an increasingly globalised world, and attempts to adequately account for the social identities and practices that were now characteristic of this world. I then turn to a review of *development studies*, which is a highly politicised and interdisciplinary body of work. Beginning from the modernisation theories in the post-WWII and Cold War era, to twenty-first Century post-colonial theorists – development studies remains a battle ground for competing and normative ideas about what is wrong with the world, how the world should change, and who should be part of that process.

A new field of study has emerged, which examines the intersection of *diasporas and development*. I discuss the emergence of this literature, including the shifting perceptions of migration and development among policy makers and scholars. I then look more specifically at the discourse and practice focused on engaging African diasporas for African development. States and international institutions have seemingly awoken to the sheer size and potential of African diaspora remittances and other forms of capital, and have fuelled a scholarly shift and interest in this issue. Finally, I review the literature that has examined the experiences of *migrant descendants*. I look first at the various ways in which generational identity has been conceptualised in the literature, including the seminal work on ‘second-generations’. I also discuss the impact that family dynamics and personal life course has on

shaping their diasporic 'awakenings' and transnational practices. The chapter concludes with a review of the burgeoning body of work that examines migrant descendant homeland ties and transnational practices.

In Chapter 3 I discuss the qualitative methodological process that has shaped this research. This includes a detailed account of my data collection methods, namely multi-sited fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and participant observation. I then provide key demographic information about my respondents before turning to a discussion about my data analysis process. Finally, I enter into a discussion about the ethical considerations guiding my research process, my own positionality within this work, and the potential limitations of this study. Chapter 4 presents the historical context to this research as it relates to my respondents. I discuss political events in Ethiopia that precipitated the post-1974 mass emigration, constituting the Ethiopian diaspora in North America.

I also review contemporary social, political, and economic events and processes in Ethiopia, including subsequent political shifts and international development interventions in the country. After providing this context, I present data about the migration and settlement patterns of the Ethiopian diaspora in North America, and also discuss the complex relationships within these communities and between these communities and the Ethiopian government. Finally, I conceptualise young diasporans of Ethiopian origin in North America as a 'historically grounded generation' – borrowing the term from Berg and Eckstein (2009). This involves weaving the pre- and post-migration experiences of their parents' generation in with the lived experiences of YDEOs, and analysing the ways in which these intersections shape YDEO social identities and practices.

The subsequent three chapters represent the core of this thesis, and include the bulk of the empirical analysis. The insights from this research suggest that there is a meaningful relationship between the process that shapes YDEO diasporic identities and that which shapes their Ethiopian development efforts. Therefore, the analytical data is organised in this thesis in a manner intended to draw out this dynamic and demonstrate how these processes connect with and/or reinforce each other. Chapter 5 describes and deconstructs the motivations to engage in Ethiopian development, as described by YDEOs themselves. While many respondents described their motivations as part of a desire to identify with Ethiopia, this process often served as a mechanism with which these individuals were wrestling with broader questions about their personal ambitions, values, and place in the world. Engaging in Ethiopian development served as a mechanism to engage with the country on their own terms and in a way that felt accessible, legitimate, and meaningful. Further, the development framework made it possible for YDEOs to forge a relationship that also resonated with their other identities, and could even be leveraged to further other personal and professional goals. This chapter provides an important foundation for the subsequent two, as YDEO motivations fundamentally shaped the nature of their engagements in Ethiopian development, and also framed their post hoc interpretations of these experiences.

In Chapter 6 I examine the ways in which YDEOs became involved in Ethiopian development initiatives, and the nature of the activities themselves. A range of factors, including the availability of resources, and personal skills and interests influenced the methods and mediums of engagement that individual YDEOs chose. In my analysis I also discuss how these activities do

and do not reflect the discourses and objectives that motivated YDEOs to get involved in the first place. These Ethiopian development initiatives ultimately took a myriad of forms ranging from familial remittances, to fundraising events, to volunteer placements in Ethiopia. These development activities were a space for YDEOs to envision and work towards creating a less political, more equitable, and more prosperous Ethiopia, and this animated their relationships to the country and its people.

Following this, Chapter 7 examines the reflections of my respondents as they described the ways in which their engagements in Ethiopian development have shaped or changed their lives. Various aspects of YDEO psychosocial lives, including their relationships to Ethiopia, were reinforced, challenged, or supplanted through the interactions and experiences that defined their engagements in Ethiopian development. My respondents' narratives demonstrate that their engagements in Ethiopian development were not simply *interventions*; they were fundamentally social *processes* defined by social *interactions*. In the process of organising and working on their various development initiatives, YDEOs were also building personal connections, picking up on cultural nuances, learning new skills, and challenging their previously held assumptions. Finally, Chapter 8 brings the various insights from the previous chapters into conversation, and highlights the key theoretical implications of my research. I also reflect on my personal experience in this process, as both a researcher and subject in this research. Building off of these insights as well as the limitations of my research, I conclude this thesis by presenting opportunities for further research and analysis.

Chapter 2. Theorising Diasporas and Development: A Literature Review

As with any research, there is a vast body of literature that can be considered relevant to my research in one way or another. The literature I review below is certainly not exhaustive, however it includes a discussion of the key thinkers, schools of thought, and empirical work that I build upon or seek to challenge through my research. Over the last decade, a specific body of work has emerged that examines the engagement of diasporas in homeland development. This literature is of course particularly relevant to my research and is accordingly reviewed below. However, I only enter into this discussion after reviewing the antecedent debates and insights within diaspora, transnationalism, and development studies. As I will discuss below, the contemporary diaspora/development literature frequently leans upon regressive conceptualisations of identity, migration, and social change, and often ignores the analytical insights that have emerged through debate in each respective discipline.

There is often an oversimplification of diasporic identity and a depoliticised perspective of diaspora engagement in homeland development within diaspora/development literature. I find this particularly problematic, as the nature of diasporic identity among migrant descendants such as YDEOs is anything but simple and therefore deserves thoughtful analytical examination. Further, a depoliticised perspective of diaspora engagement in development rests upon the assumption that a coherent, predictable, and benign international development system exists. However, as the literature reviewed below demonstrates, this in fact is not the case. Instead, it is complex,

historical, and inequitable intersections of political and private sector interests that shape the development industry and ecosystem we have today.

Finally, while migrant descendants are (or should be) included in broad conceptualisations of diasporas, there are many historical, environmental, and personal factors that are distinct from émigrés and should be accounted for in examining migrant descendent experiences and social practices. Therefore, this chapter also includes a review of the literature focused on migrant descendants, which has explored how and why these groups organise their lives, build social attachments, connect with their countries of origin, and engage in transnational practices. The experiences of people born and/or raised outside of the 'homeland', and the nature of their connections and identifications with their countries of origin, is of inherent research value. However, this research also holds broader theoretical relevance particularly as it relates to the conceptual value of 'diaspora' above and beyond other migration related frameworks.

2.1 Diasporas and Transnationalism

In 1983, Benedict Anderson published the first edition of *Imagined Communities*, a book that is now in its fourth edition and one that has become a classic text within the social sciences. Anderson's (2006) definition of 'the nation', as an "imagined political community" (p. 6), has been so widely accepted, cited, and appropriated that some have placed it among "the commonest clichés" of the literature on nationalism – suggesting also that "invocation [of the concept] has, in some cases, been a substitute for analysis" (Hague, 2004, p. 19). Anderson (2006) himself complained about "the vampires of banality [which have] sucked almost all the blood" out of

'Imagined Communities' (p. 211). Nonetheless, he made important contributions that shed light on the historical roots of the modern nation-state, and the psychological, technological, and economic forces that have shaped the way that so much of the world organises itself socially and politically. By characterising nations as 'imagined', Anderson's intention was not to be dismissive. On the contrary, he argues, "nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time" (Anderson, 2006, p. 3). What he was drawing attention to was the socially constructed nature of nation-states, and that it was the perceived sense of belonging that held these communities together more so than actual interpersonal relationships or day-to-day interactions. His ideas opened up important theoretical space within which to conceptualise contemporary political communities; however his highly structural and macro lens made his framework limiting, particularly as processes of globalisation reconfigured the world in increasingly rapid and unpredictable ways.

Diaspora and transnationalism studies emerged out of a need to *place* the experiences of mobile and dispersed communities, particularly within a body of literature that relied so heavily upon the efficacy of 'the nation' that it was often blind to the social, political and economic formations that transverse or reinterpret national borders. Bauböck and Faist (2010) have characterised these two concepts, diaspora and transnationalism, as 'awkward dance partners':

Although both terms refer to cross-border processes, diaspora has been often used to denote religious or national groups living outside an (imagined) homeland, whereas transnationalism is often used both more narrowly – to refer to migrants' durable ties across countries – and, more widely, to capture not only communities, but all sorts of social formations, such as transnationally active networks, groups and organisations. Moreover, while diaspora and transnationalism are sometimes used interchangeably, the two terms reflect different intellectual genealogies (p. 9).

The conceptual roots of diaspora studies can be traced back to the Greek

translation of the Bible, where diaspora breaks down into *dia* and *speirein*, meaning 'to scatter', 'to spread' or 'to disperse'. While the term traditionally referred to the historical dispersion of the Jewish people, it was 'rediscovered' in the 1990s, as a number of cultural theorists adopted the concept in their analysis of communities beyond the archetypical Jewish Diaspora (Avtar Brah, 1996; Clifford, 1994; Cohen, 1997; Gilroy, 1993; S. Hall, 1990; Safran, 1991; Tölölyan, 1991; Vertovec, 1999). As Tölölyan (2007) notes, diaspora studies emerged "as earlier disciplines dealing with nation, ethnicity, race, migration, and postcolonialism felt the need to adjust their methods and categories to the pressures of new transnational and global phenomena; ironically, they found a twenty-three-hundred-year-old concept, 'diaspora,' to be suitable to their needs" (p. 647).

Diasporas can be understood as groups of dispersed people who share symbolic and/or material associations to an idealised homeland, which may or may not take the form of an existing nation-state. This breathes new life into Anderson's notion of 'imagined communities', while adding more weight, nuance, and agency to the actual *process* of imagination. Clifford (1994) argues, "the term diaspora is a signifier, not simply of transnationality and movement, but of political struggles to define the local, as distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement" (p. 308). In an attempt to provide structure to this deconstructive concept, Safran (1991) created six criterion for defining a diaspora, which were extrapolated from the 'ideal' Jewish type. These included: dispersion from a centre; a collective memory or narrative around the homeland; an experience of alienation in the host society; intentions to return to the homeland; commitment to the maintenance or restoration of the homeland; and, a personal identification and

consciousness centred around this homeland (Safran, 1991, pp. 83-84). Cohen (2008) offered a 'tweak' to Safran's model, which reflected a more flexible interpretation and included important contributions such as 'deterritorialised diasporas'. Early critiques revealed a hesitation to such "recourse to an 'ideal type'" (Clifford, 1994, p. 306). However in the period of time since the first edition of the journal 'Diaspora' was published in 1991 (which serves as an epochal moment in the field), the proliferation and appropriation of the concept has raised other concerns. As aptly captured by the title of Brubaker's (2005) article "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora", the term has crossed semantic, conceptual, and disciplinary boundaries, causing concern over the dilution of its explanatory and analytical value. In view of this sudden explosion of 'diaspora communities', Brubaker (2005) suggests that the task at hand is not to "'deflate' diaspora, but rather to de-substantialise it, by treating it as a category of practice, project, claim and stance, rather than as a bounded group" (p. 13). This challenges researchers like myself to deepen our analysis by moving past the conception of diasporic identities as fixed or inherent, and examining instead the *process* of diasporic *identification*.

Many conceptualisations of diasporas have been critiqued for placing "too much emphasis on 'origin' and ethnicity as well as tending to ignore internal power dynamics and differences, especially in relation to issues of gender and social stratification" (Kleist, 2008, p. 308). The literature on transnationalism offers important contributions in this respect. Scholars from this academic tradition have traditionally focused on the fluidity of migrant ties, networks, and transactions across national borders, as well as the social structures that mediate these processes (Basch, Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994; Bauböck & Faist, 2010; Avtar Brah, 1996; Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Portes, Guarnizo, &

Landolt, 1999; Schiller, Basch, & Cristina Szanton, 1995). In their seminal work, Basch et al. (1994), define transnationalism “as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement” (p. 7). Building on these ideas, Levitt and Schiller (2004) define a ‘transnational social field’ as “a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organised, and transformed” (p. 1009). The authors draw attention to institutions, organisations, and social structures that mediate both ascribed and chosen identities. While the transnationalism studies literature emerged as a challenge to the efficacy of state boundaries, many have found it difficult to truly think beyond these boundaries within their own work – a limitation termed ‘methodological nationalism’ (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). This has generated calls from within the field for “research to go beyond descriptions of transnational communities as locations that exist between (literally, trans) nations and as locations defined with respect to the established geographies of nation-states [but instead] to consider postnational transnationalisms that are constituted in an abstract space of uncertain sources of power and unfixed meanings” (Bailey, Wright, Mountz, & Miyares, 2002, p. 140). This is a particularly important insight for my work, as much of the ‘transnationalism’ of my respondents was about building social spaces that connected them with other YDEOs online and between cities. While this may have involved moving or communicating across national borders, crossing these borders was not the defining feature of their social practices.

Diaspora studies have conceptual roots within the humanities, while transnationalism studies came largely out of the social sciences. This

intellectual heritage has shaped both bodies of literature in slightly different ways. Early diaspora studies drew on insights from the arts and cultural theory, and therefore tended to explain the fluidity and complexity of identity with greater ease and depth (Chambers, 1994; Clifford, 1994; Gilroy, 1993; S. Hall, 1990; Rushdie, 1991; Tölölyan, 1991). However, postmodern theoretical tendencies have shaped some of this literature in ways that make it overly abstract and sometimes disconnected from the lived experiences of the people that it seeks to describe. Transnationalism studies, on the other hand, usually draw insights from empirical studies of everyday practices, which helps to map the diverse social relations that connect people across the world (Basch et al., 1994; Faist, Fauser, & Kivisto, 2011; Goldring, 1998; Levitt & Waters, 2002; Ong, 1999; Portes et al., 1999; Schiller et al., 1995; Wessendorf, 2008). This descriptive function, however, can keep scholars stuck within existing modes of thinking and limit the possibilities for truly deconstructive and imaginative analysis. Ultimately, the lines between these two bodies of literature are quite blurred, and I would argue that the tension within and between diaspora and transnationalism studies has been a healthy one. It has expanded the application of both concepts, while also inspiring attempts to refine them. It has served to illuminate and validate the experiences of marginalised communities, while also drawing attention to the perpetuation of inequitable global power structures. And finally, it has opened up space to analyse a plethora of non-state actors that are shaping local, global, and imagined spaces in important and interesting ways. In the following section, I discuss the academic genealogy of the study of international development. Like diaspora and transnationalism studies, development studies is a multidisciplinary and contested field, however it has been politicised in

historically specific ways.

2.2 Development Studies

'Development', in the broadest sense of the term, can be used to describe a whole series of global processes of social, political, economic, and infrastructural change. However, the term has a particular historical context within the social sciences, public policy, and civil society, and different interpretations have evolved out of varying ideological roots. Most development theorists trace the birth of development as a field of practice to the end of WWII. In his edited book, *The Development Dictionary*, Sachs (2010) proposes "to call the age of development that particular historical period which began on 20 January 1949, when Harry S. Truman for the first time declared, in his inauguration speech, the Southern hemisphere as 'underdeveloped areas'" (p. XVI). In his account of the history of development studies, Harriss (2005) describes the 1940s and 1950s as 'the era of the positivist orthodoxy', which was characterised by state-led development planning influenced by the macro-policy instruments established at Bretton Woods (p. 19).

While states were clearly changing or 'developing' before this point, the post-1945 period marked a particular juncture that has become a signpost within development studies. It is during this Cold War period that capitalist ideology took shape, largely through the process of binary rhetoric and normative distancing from communism. Walt Rostow's (1960) *The Stages of Economic Growth: A non-communist manifesto* was particularly emblematic of this new tide in thinking. His conceptualisation of development as 'stages of growth' from traditional to modern, led development thinking at the time.

The policy implications of Rostow's stage theory were clear: traditional societies wishing to develop had to copy the already proven example of the West. "Backward and traditional" societies should encourage the diffusion of innovation from the advanced modern societies, should adopt freer markets as the mode of economic integration, and should welcome U.S. aid, investment, and corporate involvement (Peet & Hartwick, 2009, p. 129).

While Rostow's (1960) framework was critiqued at the time, and continues to be critiqued today, the contemporary *ring* to this discourse reveals the staying power it has had within mainstream development discourse.

'Mainstream' or 'traditional' development is characterised by the ideals of liberal capitalism, and the belief that a nation's health is measured by the extent to which it is progressing in that ideological direction. Classical neoliberal ideology is built upon the notion that capitalist-led economic growth is synonymous with – or at the very least, leads to – wider spread development. The Washington Consensus served to entrench these neoliberal ideals through structural adjustment policies that included cuts "in public expenditure to meet basic human needs, for instance, health and education, and also withdrawal from programmes in the areas of food, agriculture and rural development" (Pronk, 2004, p. 16). This in effect mandated the disinvestment in the capacities of many developing countries to address their own poverty; however it was marketed as a foolproof anti-poverty strategy. The package of neoliberal ideas and policies was very powerful, and it continues to yield power throughout the world today. However, competing ideas emerged that served to critique and challenge the status quo within development thinking.

Theories of 'dependency' and 'underdevelopment' stand as a rebuttal to mainstream notions of capitalist development. Rodney's (1972) *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* was particularly influential within these schools of thought. He argued that, "the operation of the imperialist system bears major

responsibility for African economic retardation by draining African wealth and by making it impossible to develop more rapidly the resources of the continent” (Rodney, 1972, p. 27). While the terms ‘dependency’ and ‘underdevelopment’ have largely gone out of vogue, the core ideas have been kept alive by contemporary critics of capitalist-led development practice. A robust body of literature has emerged since the 1990s, which takes a particularly critical approach to the study of international development. That is, rather than trying to describe or design development processes or projects, these scholars draw attention to the systemic nature of global inequity, and often challenge the efficacy and integrity of the international development industry as a whole (Booth, 1994; Cowen & Shenton, 1996; Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1995; Kothari, 2005; Mosse, 2005; Munck & O’Hearn, 1999; Pieterse, 2010; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997; Rodney, 1972; Sen, 1999).

Many such scholars agree that development, as in “genuine, widespread transformation has proven an elusive goal”, at best (Davies, 2010, p. 138). There are several more ardent positions within this camp, which suggest that the Western-led development project is an extension, if not a perpetuation, of the colonial project. Kothari (2005) argues, “We need to be wary of histories of development that deny this colonial genealogy and attempt to create distinct and artificial boundaries between exploitation of empire and the humanitarianism of development” (p. 50). Kothari (2005) builds this argument through the life histories of former administrators who were employed during the late colonial period and then went on to join the development industry upon decolonisation. “These personal and collective historiographies provide evidence for the institutionalised links between colonialism and development and how they became embodied in the

individual” (Kothari, 2005, p. 55). Sachs (2010) describes a shift in the mid-Twentieth Century, when the British government began to build out a ‘dual mandate’ that conflated its colonial and ‘humanitarian’ roles. In 1939, the “Law of Development and Welfare of the Colonies” was established, replacing its precursor, the “Law of Development of the Colonies” (Sachs, 2010, p. 5). As Sachs (2010) goes on to argue, “economization and colonization were synonymous. What Truman succeeded in doing was freeing the economic sphere from the negative connotations it had accumulated for two centuries, delinking development from colonialism” (p. 14).

While the heyday of fatalist anti-development literature was in the 1980s and 1990s, many scholars remain highly sceptical of 'mainstream' development. Part of the mainstreaming process within contemporary development discourse has been distancing related policy and practice from much of the historical context described above. However, even progressive attempts to sanitise development are implicated in the processes and institutions responsible for making development what it is today. As Sachs (2010) argues, “no matter the context in which [‘development’] is used, or the precise connotation that the person using it wants to give it, the expression becomes qualified and coloured by meanings perhaps unwanted” (p. 6). Further, as Peet and Hartwick (2009) explain, development is inherently optimistic and utopian (p. 2). The discourse takes shape in varied ways – from ambiguous claims about ‘making a difference’, to specific claims about what nations should be developing towards. These “normative agendas within development [draw] our attention to structures and relations”, all of which are shaped by dynamics of power, politics, and agency (Davies, 2010, p. 134).

Cowen and Shenton (1996) make a distinction between 'immanent development', an organic process of change or progress, and 'intentional development', which was birthed with the rise of industrial capitalism in Europe. One of the discursive implications of 'intentional development' has been that development is often framed as a response to crisis and disorder.

The burden of development was to compensate for the negative propensities of capitalism through the reconstruction of social order. To develop, then, was to ameliorate the social misery which arose out of the immanent process of capitalist growth (Cowen & Shenton, 1996, p. 110).

There is an entire industry of state, parastatal, and civil society actors that has emerged as a response to this call to intentionally 'develop'. In fact, the common usage of 'development' today refers to "the practice of development agencies intervening in global capitalism to alleviate poverty and other problems, so that development is still applied mainly to certain, other, parts of the world, namely those defined as 'poor'" (Thomas, 2000, p. 775). Cowen and Shenton (1996) describe the processes by which the 'intent to develop' is expressed through the exercise of trusteeship over society. "Trusteeship is the intent which is expressed, by one source of agency, to develop the capacities of another. It is what binds the process of development to the intent of development" (Cowen & Shenton, 1996, p. IX).

While it is often couched within language of altruism and benevolence, the culture of trusteeship within development practice can feed imperious pursuits that have destructive rather than constructive consequences. This point is exemplified by the lasting and negative social, political, and economic impacts of structural adjustment policies in Africa (Easterly, 2005; Herbst, 1990; Mkandawire, Olukoshi, & Codesria., 1995). Over the years, the multi- and bi-lateral systems have emerged as the premier institutional frameworks for international development. A key manifestation of this has been the

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the mobilisation power these goals have had at all levels of development practice including, international, national, and grassroots levels. The “global rallying call” of the MDGs was “goal 1 – target 1: halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day” (Hulme, 2003, p. 403).

Hulme (2003) argues that the MDGs were successful in terms of increasing global awareness about poverty, and mobilising resources in the name of addressing the issue. However, the primary goal “encourages the conceptualisation of the poor as a single homogeneous group whose prime problem is low monetary income and has led policymakers and their advisors to search for ‘the policy’ that increases the income of ‘the poor’” (Hulme, 2003, p. 403). This serves to mask and depoliticise the conditions of global poverty by diverting attention away from geopolitical forces that often drive and sustain this poverty. In this respect, campaigns like the MDGs can serve to exacerbate conditions of poverty in the developing world by creating snapshots out of what are in fact very complex issues. This becomes problematic when institutions, states, organisations and other actors decide to then *act* upon these limited snapshots.

One of the most important actors within the development sector has become institutionalised nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). While NGOs predate the formal development industry and have existed around the world in various forms, they have been significantly ‘empowered’, if only economically, within the current international political system. As Thomas (2000) argues, “community and local organisations are here to stay alongside national governments and international organisations as agents of national development” (p 785). Both large and grassroots NGOs are often positioned

as friendlier more responsive alternatives to official development agencies, such as the World Bank and the United Nations. They have been credited for having “greater diversity, credibility, and creativity than official agencies”, and are expected to produce a form of development that is “characterised by equity, democracy, and social justice as well as economic growth” (Peet & Hartwick, 2009, p. 215).

Lewis (2005) writes an informative paper that takes a critical approach to development sector NGOs, examining both issues relating to practice and discourse. He argues that much of the NGO literature that exists was produced with a “normative bias, a sense of parochialism, predominantly non-theoretical content and a strong emphasis on managerialism” (Lewis, 2005, p. 200). His analysis is important because it maps the rise of the modern NGO onto the rise of multilateral development frameworks and neoliberalism. Lewis (2005) argues that in the early 1990s, NGOs were explicitly recognised within the unfolding neo-liberal development agenda, as multilateral institutions came to view them as ‘cheaper’, ‘better’, and ‘faster’ development agents. The core of Lewis’ argument is less of an indictment of the existence of NGOs, and more a call for scholars to engage with NGOs in theoretically rigorous way. He argues that one should analyse NGOs “as part of ongoing debates about development as neo-liberalism and globalisation, as both instruments of, and sites of, resistance to the transformations of principles within these current paradigms” (Lewis, 2005, p. 200).

Lewis’ (2005) paper offers an important perspective for NGO research, but also for research on other development actors such as diaspora groups. Whether diaspora actors organise themselves as NGOs, loose familial networks, or individuals, their homeland development interventions

implicate them within this historical field of power and politics. The presumed altruistic goals and ancestral connections do not make diaspora engagements in homeland development any more innocuous than any other international intervention, and therefore deserves thorough and critical analysis. Unfortunately, many of the same limitations found within the NGO and broader development studies literature have also plagued the emergent research on the intersection of diasporas and development. Rather than asking questions about why people engage, who engages and who does not, to what end and in what pursuit they engage, what the actual impact of their engagement is, or what social functions this engagement serves – much of the current research focuses on *harnessing*, *tapping into*, and *professionalising* diaspora-development efforts. In the following section, I review this literature and call for less descriptive and more rigorous and analytical research within this emerging field.

2.3 Diasporas and Development

Early theorisations of diasporas often focused on homeland building initiatives, as this literature was highly influenced by the paradigmatic Jewish and Armenian cases. While the literature has broadened considerably since then, contemporary interest in engaging diasporas in development has revived this classical focus. Much of this literature has developed over the last decade, and remains narrowly interested in brain-drain/gain, remittances, and institutionalised expressions of diaspora engagement in development (e.g. hometown associations) (Ankomah et al., 2011; Brinkerhoff, 2012; Groot & Gibbons, 2007; Ionescu, 2006; Kapur, 2004; Sorensen, 2007). While rich debates exist within both diaspora studies and development studies, one struggles to find such critical analysis in the mainstream literature that

engages at their intersection. Rather than building upon the analytical insights of each respective discipline, diaspora/development studies frequently lean upon regressive conceptualisations of identity, migration, and social change. Far too often, 'diaspora' is represented as a primordial and bounded community, and 'development', a benign process of modernisation in which the diaspora *is, can, or should be* participating in.

While this recent literature is markedly optimistic in its characterisation of diasporas, it is important to put this into its proper context. Processes and products of migration, such as diaspora communities, are always interpreted and politicised in geographically and historically specific ways. There are a number of socio-political and economic factors that shape different mainstream perceptions of the movement of groups of people, particularly when that movement is between nation-states. Often, the movement and/or transnational practices of some groups of people are demonised in one historical period, while they are celebrated in another. Similarly, some groups find that their movement and/or transnational practices are encouraged and facilitated, while others are simultaneously controlled and criminalised. These differences often correlate with shifting geopolitical forces, historical events such as 9/11, racism and discrimination, and austerity measures brought on by economic uncertainty. In addition, many who have promoted the engagement of migrants in development efforts have often been driven, deliberately or otherwise, by agendas to stifle mobility and control the flow of 'undesirable' people (Bakewell, 2008; de Haas, 2006). More often than not, the trends within scholarly literature also come to reflect the perspectives of migration embedded within public discourse, policy, and practice.

2.3.1 *Shifting Perceptions of Migration and Development*

For decades, scholars have sought to theorise and predict the relationship between émigrés and the health and wealth of their countries of origin. The debate, in its most reduced form, has often centred on whether migration is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ for development. Ultimately, attempts to articulate a grand theory of migration and development have either fallen flat or have made claims that have not held up well against critical analysis. Faist et al. (2011) offer a useful historical synopsis of shifting normative views on the relationship between migration and development. They argue that the “conceptualization of the nexus between migration and development mirrors the dominant development paradigms and their changes over the decades with migration always playing an important but changing role” (Faist et al., 2011, p. 5). The authors identify three phases in this respect. The first, ‘migration and development’, was predominant in the 1950s and 1960s, and was characterised by a general optimism about the relationship between migration and development. The issue was represented as a win-win-win situation, where sending and receiving countries, as well as migrants themselves, stood to benefit from migration (Bakewell, 2008). Remittances were a key consideration during this phase, as were the prospects of migrant return. Ultimately critics asked questions about the extent to which migration was significant enough to have the intended benefits, and the consumption patterns of remittances also came under scrutiny (de Haan, 2006; Faist et al., 2011).

The phase that followed in the 1970s and 1980s stressed the relationship between underdevelopment and migration. The literature and debate during this time has been described as ‘pessimistic’, and largely focused on the

poverty that drives mass migration and results in brain drain from peripheral to core states (Faist et al., 2011). The third and current phase, 'migration and (co)development', began in the 1990s and is described as a "celebration of transnational circulation", where the migrant is represented as a key and particularly instrumental development agent (Faist et al., 2011, p. 8). Sørensen (2007) describes this as a shift towards an "[exploration] of the complexity of migratory experiences, social remittances, human capital potential, and diaspora and transnational networks" (p. 3). While there may in fact be a general shift in perception, as Van Hear (2010) argues, there is nothing close to a consensus in the literature today. There are still fundamental divisions that remain unsettled within migration studies, including relations between "societies and communities of origin and destination; between positive and negative effects of networks and social capital; and between transnationalism and integration" (Van Hear, 2010, p. 1532). Sørensen (2007) suggests that much of this debate has remained theoretical, and argues that the "the actual link between migration and development [remains] an empirical question to be studied in concrete situations" (p. 4).

There is a natural relationship that exists between 'migration' and 'diasporas'; however not all migrants form a diaspora and many diasporas are partially or wholly made up of people who were never themselves migrants (see Section 2.1). While the two terms are often used interchangeably in contemporary public and academic discourse, the term 'diaspora' has become particularly popular especially with reference to its intersection with development. I would argue that this shift is not circumstantial or mere semantics, but rather, related to the resurgent interest in 'harnessing' the networks and resources of transnational communities to facilitate economic development. Many states,

institutions, and scholars have gravitated towards the term 'diaspora' due to its inclusive and flexible nature, as this casts a wider net around people who might feel connected enough to a country to engage in its development efforts. Pattanaik and Sahoo (2014) note that the scope of 'diaspora' as a concept has expanded over the years:

As a result, it has wider applicability in the contemporary economic, social and political contexts. It has introduced new ways of looking at human migration in the international domain. It no longer implies relations of diaspora as a memory of the loss of resources; rather, it invokes the potential of diasporas for resource mobilization (p. 2).

Migration is an increasingly virulent and politically sensitive subject, and tense debates around border control and national security are a regular part of public and political discourse. While there is some literature that examines the potential adverse nature of diaspora/homeland engagements (Faist et al., 2011; Lyons, 2015; Lyons & Mandaville, 2013; Van Hear & Cohen, 2015), much of the contemporary literature is markedly celebratory of diasporas and focused on their perceived or potential positive contributions. Often, engaging diasporas in development is framed as an opportunity to distil the 'best' of migration, even while migration itself continues to be characterised as problematic.

2.3.2 Claiming African Diasporas for Development

As Bastia (2013) argues, the literature on migration and development "continues to be couched in binary assumptions, in which some countries are represented as developed while others are represented as underdeveloped and therefore in need of 'development'" (p. 4). Consequently, a significant amount of human, monetary, and intellectual resources are currently dedicated to the engagement of African diasporas in African development (Mercer et al., 2008; Mohan & Zack-Williams, 2002; Mohapatra & Ratha, 2011;

The World Bank, 2012a; Yin, 2009). Several scholars, including Copeland-Carson (2012) quoted below, have drawn connections between the decrease in traditional foreign aid resources, and the increasing interest in capitalising on diasporas as resources for African development.

Reflecting downward trends in philanthropy overall during the Great Recession, data from 2009 and 2010 suggest notable declines in U.S. Philanthropy to Africa from both foundations and individuals. The case examples above suggest that transnational remittances and social enterprises, from the African Diaspora and elsewhere, are increasingly important sources of alternative funding for Pan-African development (Copeland-Carson, 2012, p. 130).

While much of the literature is focused on state and institution led efforts to mobilise the African diaspora, the hidden – sometimes overtly expressed – assumption is that African diasporas will themselves privilege this instrumental relationship to Africa given the compelling developmental needs found on the Continent. Chikezie (2011), the founder of African Foundation for Development (AFFORD), illustrates this in his assertion, “Today, if there is a big rallying point for the African diaspora, it is probably the fight against poverty” (p. 262). Arthur (2010) also envisions a central role for African diasporas in Africa’s development. He argues that African immigrants have positioned themselves at “the forefront of social changes in Africa”, and that these communities are “defined by the altruistic theme and belief [that they] have pivotal roles to play in the (re)building of Africa” (Arthur, 2010, p. xiii). Chikezie (2011) and Arthur’s (2010) sentiments are emblematic of the wave of optimism within the literature concerning the potential contributions of diasporas towards Africa’s development, which in turn reflects trends within international public policy and discourse.

In 2003, the African Union (AU) decided at its Executive Council meeting that it would seek to actively engage the African diaspora. This precipitated a series of meetings, initiatives and proclamations illustrating this new

commitment, and in 2005 the AU designated the African diaspora as “the sixth region” within its formal structure (Ratha & Plaza, 2011). In an effort to operationalise this new relationship, the AU convened an expert meeting in 2005 for member states to prepare a definition of the “African Diaspora”. After much debate and iteration, the following definition was adopted:

African Diaspora consists of peoples of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union (African Union, 2005, p. 7).

The proceedings note that one of the guiding principles agreed upon by those at the meeting was that of ‘simplicity’. “It was emphasized that a definition of the Diaspora must be simple and straightforward and must be free of any ambiguity” (African Union, 2005, p. 6). There was also agreement that the definition should highlight some form of “commitment to the African cause”. The meeting proceeding notes reveal that ‘African origin’ was intentionally defined loosely in order to capture anyone with a recent or distant ancestral connection to the Continent. However, this connection is only validated to the extent that it can be marshalled to serve African development objectives. Building on these developments, a consultative meeting titled “Mobilizing the African Diaspora for Development” was held at the World Bank in 2008, which included African governments, the AU, USAID and other donors in attendance. At the meeting, Erastus Mwencha, the Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission, reflected on the AU’s recent efforts to engage with the African diaspora, and emphasised, “they have a place at the table and a voice” (The World Bank, 2008).

Gamlen (2014) describes the role that international actors and “global decision-makers”, such as the World Bank and United Nations, have played in proliferating the ideas around diaspora engagement that have been taken

up by states so rapidly over the last few decades. “In 1980, only a handful of diaspora institutions existed; now, over half of all states in the United Nations have one” (Gamlen, 2014, p. S182). He suggests that origin states are increasingly pressured by aid organisations to “take more responsibility for making migration work for development”, and are consequently “emulating the models that international organisations and think tanks showcase [and] responding to the empowerment of diaspora groups by developed-country donor organizations” (pp. S204, S201). Bréant (2013) uses a case study of Togolese migration to make a similar argument. He suggests that the increased interest in engaging diasporas in development reflects the new requirements of international partners more so than a genuine commitment on the Togolese government’s part; nor does it necessarily reflect a growth in interest from the diasporas themselves. “Few associative structures are actually created and migration trajectories and histories are first and foremost thought of in an individual or familial frame, far from social imperatives of community development” (Bréant, 2013, p. 99). While African governments and members of African diaspora communities have led many of their own diaspora/development initiatives, international institutions have often taken it upon themselves to drive the diaspora/development agenda forward, and forward in particular ways.

For example, in 2007 The World Bank launched the African Diaspora Program (ADP), with the mandate to “further enable and enhance the human and financial capital contributions of African Diasporas to the economic development of their home countries” (The World Bank, 2011). The program represents a portfolio of activities funded, supported or facilitated by The World Bank in partnership with the AU, African governments, other donors,

and African Diaspora Professional Networks and Hometown Associations. Since its launch, the ADP has identified a number of ‘action areas’, including calls to “formalize working relations with the AU”; “exploit the benefit of Diaspora remittances for development”; and, “create the ‘enabling environments’ for Diaspora engagement” (The World Bank, 2012b). This language is consistent with the lexicon historically used by The Bank to describe other economic development strategies, except in this case, the resources being “tapped into”, “harnessed”, and “exploited” are diasporas.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has also played an instrumental role by commissioning surveys and publishing policy documents, background papers, and communications material aimed at sharing ‘best practices’ with governments interested in engaging their diasporas in development. In 2012 the IOM partnered with the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) to publish a book titled, *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for policymakers and practitioners in home and host countries*. While the book makes references to examples of failed initiatives, the overall tone is as ambitious and optimistic as its title suggests. The authors state, “The pivotal question now facing many policymakers is not so much if diasporas can benefit their countries of origin but how they do so and what kinds of government policies and programs can foster these relationships” (Agunias & Newland, 2012, p. 13). As Page and Mercer (2010) argue, diasporas have been analysed within an “economistic framework, which has privileged and measured the rational acts of individuals,” such as remittances (p. 104). However, when one looks at the broader narrative around African diasporas and development, it is diasporas

themselves that are conceptualised as economic units, not just their contributions.

One of the implications of this has been a systematic depoliticisation and homogenisation of African diaspora-homeland relations. That is, while diasporas continue to engage with Africa in diverse, symbolic, and politicised ways – these interactions have become delegitimised or masked by the narrow interest in their economic transactions with the Continent. For example, in a report for The World Bank, Ratha and Plaza (2011) suggest that remittances are “the most tangible and the least controversial link between migration and development” (p. 7). While there have been efforts to examine diaspora contributions to development ‘beyond remittances’, these contributions are generally still conceptualised in economic terms. As Agunias and Newland (2012) note, “terms such as brain gain, brain bank, brain trust, and brain circulation have entered economists’ lexicon, highlighting the value of diasporas’ transferrable skills, knowledge, and networks, which are integral to the development of a modern, knowledge-based economy” (p. 13). However, diaspora skills, knowledge and networks are awarded value to extent that these advance distinct economic developmental goals. This is reflective of many contemporary diaspora/development initiatives, which attempt to incorporate diaspora-homeland relations into a market ideology amenable to particular states and international institutions.

Framing the issue as a matter of cajoling diasporas to ‘give back’ masks the incredibly complex relationships that exist between diasporas and origin states. As Sidel (2007) notes,

Diaspora philanthropy cannot be isolated as a policy issue by itself—it is intimately bound up with policy toward a state's diaspora, and toward remittances. In many countries it is complicated by religion, politics, tax policy, and other complex and controversial issues that implicate a state's policies toward its emigrants and emigrants' ties to the state (Barry 2006; Chander 2001; Chander 2006). Governments can adopt overlapping, and sometimes even conflicting, policies toward giving by their compatriots from abroad (p. 27).

Sidel's (2007) observations are very important; they demonstrate that diaspora-homeland ties are not simply transactional, but also political, contingent, ambiguous, and often wrought with historical grievances and mistrust. In addition, "this treatment of diaspora as a resource may seem limiting, as the central values of cultural identity, symbolic belonging, sentimental ties, etc., are not accentuated" (Weinar, 2010, p. 86). While early conceptualisations of African diasporas were critiqued for being too abstract and immaterial, I argue that contemporary actors have framed the discourse in ways too narrow and materialistic. Reducing diaspora-homeland relations to policy tactics and financial transactions obscures the landscape in a way that depoliticises these relationships, homogenises groups, and excludes the experiences of actors whose engagements do not fit within the preconceived notions embedded with this discourse. In the following section, I discuss the experiences and conceptualisations of migrant descendants, including the ways in which their homeland engagements challenge the prevailing diaspora/development discourse.

2.4 Migrant Descendants

2.4.1 *Conceptualising Generational Identity*

Given the relative novelty of diasporas and transnationalism as fields of study, the literature on migrant descendants³ remains limited in scope and

³ The term 'migrant descendant' could in fact apply to anyone if it were interpreted loosely since most people can trace their ancestry to a person who migrated from another part of the world. However, I use the term in this dissertation to refer primarily to the early

depth. Much of the research that does exist focuses on the 'second-generation', the standard definition of which "applies to children of at least one immigrant parent who were born and/or raised in the country that their parent(s) settled (Hernandez-Ramdwar, 2006, p. 43). The 'classic second generation' concept used by scholars has often included the '1.5 generation', those born in their parents' country of origin but raised in the country of settlement (Levitt & Waters, 2002, p. 12). Early work on the 'second-generation' (Alba & Nee, 1997; Portes, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001) tended to focus on their trajectories of assimilation, integration, and incorporation. Initial 'straight-line assimilation' theorists maintained that integration was a linear and generationally driven process, which was a necessary prerequisite for the successful incorporation of immigrants. The subsequent 'segmented assimilation' thesis proposed that there were three patterns of adaptation for both contemporary migrants and their children:

One path involves increasing acculturation and subsequent integration into the white middle class. A second path predicts downward mobility and incorporation into the underclass. A third pattern involved rapid economic advancement through the preservation of unique ethnic traits (Levitt & Waters, 2002, p. 2).

Transnationalism scholars have however tended to view these as more dynamic processes. For example, in their highly cited volume, Levitt and Waters (2002) advance "a theoretical perspective stressing the synergy, rather than the antagonism, between assimilation and transnational practices" (p. 5).

A number of scholars have argued that 'second-generation' is a flawed concept and limited in its analytical value. For example, Hernandez-Ramdwar (2006) points out that the term "second generation immigrant" is a misnomer:

descendants (i.e. first and second genealogical generations) of migrants, who were born and/or raised in the country of settlement. There are instances where I use other terms, such as 'second generation', when this is the term used by the author whose work is being referenced.

If many of the second generation are born in the diaspora, how are they "immigrants"? Such terminology reveals the way in which the second generation is often excluded from full participation in the mainstream and/or still seen as "outsiders" despite having been born in the country they live in (p. 22).

There are added layers of complexity for racialised communities, as members are often constructed as 'outsiders' even after several generations have lived in the country of original settlement. Other scholars argue that defining migrant generations along genealogical lines masks political differences within diaspora communities and overemphasises the relevance of birth order. Eckstein (2002) suggests that pre- and post-emigration experiences may be more significant in defining generations of migrants and their children than birth and age cohort. Berg and Eckstein (2009) build on this argument in their conceptualisation of 'historically grounded generations', which emphasises country-of-origin lived experiences "that the conventional conception of generations overlooks" (p.2). Their insights are particularly important when analysing the experiences of diaspora communities that are composed of migration flows precipitated by distinct social, political, or economic events (See Chapter 4 for more discussion about 'historically grounded generations'). In addition, global political events such as 9/11 may become far more important in shaping how certain groups identify and mobilise than the culture or migration of their parents. As Hernandez-Ramdwar (2006) argues, the experiences of migrant descendants is worthy of study on its own terms, "not merely as derivative of what has been constructed as the Authentic [Migrant] Experience" (p. 90).

Definitional issues aside, migrant descendant studies have played a critical role in deconstructing ideas around cultural identity, citizenship, and belonging. This body of literature is largely based upon qualitative ethnographic research, which provides visibility to individual narratives and

adds nuance and depth to theoretical discussions. The analysis has shifted from debates about competing assimilation theories to explorations into the complexity of identity and community formations. Levitt (2009) critiques the assumption that children of immigrants are not significantly engaged in transnational practices, and emphasises instead the “power of being raised in a transnational social field” (p. 1225).

When children are brought up in households that are regularly influenced by people, objects, practices and know-how from their ancestral homes, they are socialized into its norms and values and they learn how to negotiate its institutions (Levitt, 2009, p. 1225).

While inherited cultural norms and values play a critical role in shaping the identities of migrant descendants, there are a number of other influences that also factor into the way they view themselves and their place in the world. Awokoya (2012) observes that ‘1.5 and 2.0 immigrant youth’ hold multiple black identities simultaneously (e.g. Nigerian, Africa, African-American, and black), and that media-generated portrayals of African immigrants have a significant impact on the salience of particular identities (p. 99). Arthur (2010) makes a similar argument concerning the impact of mainstream perceptions of black communities on the identities that ‘second-generation’ African girls choose or adopt. “No matter their countries of origination, the second-generation girls perceive that their blackness serves as the main marker, a common physical trait that will determine whether they will have limited or equal integration or incorporation into the core society” (Arthur, 2010, p. 167). These authors demonstrate that migration is not always in itself the defining factor in shaping the orientations and life trajectories of migrant descendants.

2.4.2 Impact of Family Dynamics and Life Course

While the lives of migrant descendants are characterised by individual unique experiences and identities, they are also profoundly impacted by

dynamics within their families and encounters with other members of their diaspora community. The extent to which they identify with the cultures and countries of their origin often relates to their socialisation within the home, though this does not always play out in predictable ways. Cultural education, language proficiency, community ostracism, gender expectations, and immigrant family aspirations shape migrant descendant identifications and dis-identifications, as well as their life trajectories and transnational practices.

Wolf (2002) examines the complex dynamics between Filipino immigrants and their children. She notes that 'second-generation' Filipino youth are situated "between different generational and locational points of reference, both the real and the imagined – their parents', sometimes also their grandparents' and other relatives', and their own" (Wolf, 2002, p. 258). Immigrant parents often go to great lengths to pass on their traditions, religious practices, languages, and/or cultural norms to their foreign-born progeny. However, migrant descendants respond to the socialising efforts of their parents in different and often contradictory ways depending on their life stage and other psychosocial events. Some may labour to demonstrate their cultural 'authenticity' in order to seek approval from their parents and community members, while others may choose to rebel or distance themselves from what they perceive to be irrelevant or restrictive norms and practices. These responses vary from person to person, as well as from stage to stage in the same person's life.

Kibria (2002) found that 'second generation' Chinese and Korean Americans often clung to primordialist notions of identity inherited from their immigrant parents and communities, and complied with cultural expectations such as intermarriage bans. This strategy was adopted in order

to quash challenges to their “Chinese-ness” or “Korean-ness”, and to assuage their own insecurities and uncertainties about where they belonged. Hernandez-Ramdwart (2006) also suggests that exposure to the culture of origin can impact the identities of the ‘second generation’, however she notes that “adolescents in particular may go through stages of wanting to differentiate from their parents [and] this can also extend to wanting to distance themselves from their parents’ culture” (Hernandez-Ramdwart, 2006, p. 111). Lundy (2011) makes observations along similar lines with regards to the experiences of ‘second generation’ Haitian Americans. “When members of the second generation begin to assert Haiti and its culture as their own, the resistance they encounter from family members can be a force to either heighten that identity or reject it altogether” (Lundy, 2011, p. 218).

Parents can also exert influence in ways other than cultural socialisation. For example, many immigrant parents place a particular emphasis on education and set high expectations for their children. While some children may resent these pressures, others aspire to meet these expectations as a way of ‘repaying’ their parents for their sacrifices throughout the migration and settlement process. “This moral obligation towards one’s parents extends to wanting to be professionally successful and upwardly mobile in order to fulfil the original project of migration (Juhasz and Mey 2003)” (Wessendorf, 2013, p. 44). Espiritu and Tran (2002) found that Vietnamese parents used stories about poverty and struggle in Vietnam to exercise control in the home and motivate their American-born children to do well in school and get a good job. This is a strategy used to “regulate the misbehaviour of their children, especially their daughters, by linking such behaviour to cultural betrayal” (Espiritu & Tran, 2002, p. 390).

Life events and stages also play a defining role in shaping migrant descendant identities, sometimes 'activating' an interest in exploring their heritage, and other times reinforcing their connections to other places, communities, or issues. Wessendorf (2013) uses the term 'life course' to make reference to this sequence of stages, which occur as people mature over time. By focusing on adults as opposed to youth, Wessendorf (2013) is able to chart the patterns of transnational practices of the 'second generation' over the course of their lives. An analysis of the life histories of her participants revealed "that certain social affiliations and disaffiliations, as well as the public expressions of these, are important during certain stages of the life course, but not during others" (p. 11). Awokoya (2012) found that children of African immigrants in the United States found it difficult to reconcile different racial and ethnic identities when they were young, as they felt obligated to live up to the expectation of others. "However, as they got older, participants acquired a repertoire of responses to these various constituents and described learning processes that helped them feel more empowered when negotiating their multiple identities" (Awokoya, 2012, p. 113). Levitt and Waters (2002) also point to the importance of life course in shaping the identities and transnational practices of the 'second generation'. They refer to Marcelo and Carola Suarez-Orozco (2001) who argue that the transnational activities of 'second generation' Mexicans are influenced by the racial, gender, and class hierarchies they encounter in the United States. Further, these "transnational activities change as the children of immigrants move from adolescence to young adulthood and as they attempt to fulfil [...] the immigrant bargain [showing their parents and the community that they have not forgotten their roots]" (Levitt & Waters, 2002, p. 21). The observations

from these authors are important, as they help to de-essentialise 'culture' by demonstrating the contingent and fluid nature of diasporic identities.

2.4.3 *Homeland Ties and Transnational Practices*

There is a growing body of literature focused on understanding the extent to which the affective ties that migrant descendants develop to their countries of origin translate into actual transnational practices. Eckstein (2002) argues that these scholars "increasingly draw on a paradigm that highlights homeland ties that coexist with assimilation tendencies" (p. 211). Research has found that migrant descendants do in fact articulate a desire to engage in transnational practices, and in many cases they even express an interest in 'returning' to their countries of origin in the future. For example, Wessendorf (2013) found that "the 'sojourner mentality' of Italian migrants [in Switzerland] and the dream of returning had an important impact on the second generation", many of whom also described a 'dream' to return to Italy (p. 5). This aligns very well with classical typologies of diasporas, which emphasised the maintenance of idealised notions of the homeland and intergenerational aspirations to return (Cohen, 1997; Safran, 1991). While migrant descendant *aspirations* to engage with and/or return to the homeland are in and of themselves analytically important, it is also important to note that these intentions "are subject to verification and likely to change over time and context" (Espiritu & Tran, 2002, p. 393). This reaffirms the need for research that is longitudinal in design in order to capture these changes, including the factors that influence both the actualisation and abandonment of transnational aspirations. This should include 'practice' based research that seeks to measure the extent of migrant descendant transnationalism, and 'process' oriented research that focuses on the transnational social fields that

shape and re-shape these aspirations and practices (Wessendorf, 2013; Yiu, 2009).

A specific volume of work has emerged examining 'roots migration', which refers to migrant descendant travel to the country of their parents' origin. Arthur (2010) suggests that roots migrants travel "in search of a place that provides them with a sense of belonging [and] they base their connections to the homeland on concrete transnational involvement as part of their everyday lives" (p. 375). He makes this second point to differentiate roots migrants from 'roots tourists', such as North American tourists who visit their ancestors' homeland in Scotland as a form of pilgrimage without having concrete connections to the country or culture beforehand (Basu, 2004). Kibria (2002) also examines what she terms 'homeland trips', which are "voluntary visits to societies of ancestral origin that are limited and fairly short in duration and generally focus on such goals as tourism, leisure, seeing family and friends, and learning, discovering, or rediscovering the cultural aspects and other elements of the ancestral society" (p. 297).

Kibria (2002) makes it a point to differentiate such trips, though in this case based on the motivations and circumstances driving the travel. For example, she distinguishes homeland trips from "those that are more clearly associated with transnational activity, such as extended forays to the homeland of uncertain duration, as well as those taken for distinctly work-related purposes (Kibria, 2002, p. 297). However, as my research demonstrates, these lines are often blurred in practice and one's motivation and activities may shift over the course of a single trip to the homeland. Overall, the impact of migrant descendant trips have been found to have mixed effects – sometimes reinforcing emotional links to the 'homeland', other times creating a sense of

distance from a culture previously identified with – and the analyses of these experiences often highlight the general ambiguity surrounding the migrant descendant cultural experience (Bauböck & Faist, 2010; King & Christou, 2011; King et al., 2011; Potter, 2005; Wessendorf, 2007b, 2013).

One way that migrant descendants build connections to their homelands is through transnational activism or engagement in homeland development initiatives; however, there is debate in the literature concerning the significance and impact of these homeland-oriented activities. As Levitt and Waters (2002) note,

One perspective sees transnational activism among the second generation as confined primarily to certain groups of individuals who are, by and large, physically and emotionally rooted in the United States and lacking in the language and cultural skills or desire to live in their ancestral homes [...] An alternative view sees the first view as over-emphasizing the importance of physical movement [...] This view stresses the importance of the sending-country individuals, resources, and ideas that are a constant presence in the lives of the second generation and holds that even selective, periodic transnational practices can add up (p. 4).

Both perspectives highlight different yet important features of homeland-oriented activism and development practices of migrant descendants. Their initiatives are often characteristically different from those of their parents, whose activities are informed and/or motivated by direct lived experiences and relationships in the country of origin. As such, the activities of migrant descendants tend to be more ad hoc in nature and are often smaller in scale and visibility. However, scholars should not overlook the political impact of these practices, as both resident and origin country states and international institutions are increasingly interested in engaging migrant descendants in their transnational portfolios (Mahieu, 2015). While there is very little research that focuses specifically on migrant descendant transnationalism, scholars are increasingly making note of these experiences and practices in their analyses of broader diaspora-homeland relations.

Najam (2007) argues that the key question facing scholars is not only whether diaspora-to-homeland philanthropy goes down over time and from generation to generation, but also what factors shift the causes and issues that direct and often (re)ignite this philanthropy. For example, many 'second generation' Pakistani-Americans demonstrated a renewed enthusiasm for maintaining links to Pakistan "because of identity concerns heightened in a post-9/11 world (Najam, 2007, pp. 128-129)". Similarly, 'second-generation' Haitian-American diaspora began to mobilise and engage in transnational practices more intensely following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. "Hip-hop star Wyclef Jean's failed attempt to enter the Haitian presidential race is perhaps the most visible effort by a member of the second generation to address the issues that confront Haiti in the aftermath of the earthquake" (Lundy, 2011, p. 214). Garbin & Godin's (2013) study of 'second generation' Congolese activism in the United Kingdom found that the 2011 election in Congo served to galvanise hundreds of these young people. However, a number of factors including the contested re-election results, confrontations with British police during marches, and a disillusionment with the organisation and efficacy of diaspora politics contributed to the gradual decline of their participation in Congolese activism (Garbin & Godin, 2013, p. 124).

Finally, Levitt (2009) suggests that religion can also be an important motivating factor in "cross-border activism among the second generation and that the potential beneficiaries of these activities may be both co-religionists and co-nationals living around the world" (p. 1239). There is certainly evidence of this in my research, as several YDEOs expressed a direct connection between their faiths and the nature and motivation behind their

engagements in Ethiopian development (See Chapter 5). Ultimately, the fact that migrant descendants engage in transnational practices *at all* is in itself analytically important, regardless of the frequency, nature, or impact of these activities. That migrant descendants were not themselves emigrants and do not have long-term lived experiences in their countries of origin is precisely what makes their transnational practices worthy of investigation, particularly within diaspora studies. Therefore, it is critical to analyse the drivers motivating migrant descendant transnational practices instead of taking them for granted, and to examine the qualitative nature of existing practices rather than measuring them against benchmarks set by 'first generation' immigrant experiences. In the end, migrant descendant experiences may prove more insightful than their immigrant parents in terms of identifying the conceptual value 'diaspora' brings above and beyond 'migration' frameworks.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided a broad overview of empirical and theoretical debates and advancements that have informed this thesis in various respects. This literature review is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing on thinkers from fields including cultural studies, sociology, psychology, political science, geography, and, international development. While the approaches and perspectives may have differed, a lot of this literature emerged as a response to the same geopolitical shifts, transitions, and 'moments' in contemporary history, including the expansion of neoliberal capitalist ideology at the end of the Twentieth Century, and the rapid globalisation that characterises the Twenty-First Century. These configurations and re-configurations of global political and economic systems have challenged scholars to debate and

reimagine their understanding of the ways that people and states are or should be orienting and organising themselves.

In my review of the diaspora and transnationalism studies, I discuss the emergence of these frameworks as both distinct and overlapping bodies of work. This literature works to highlight and make sense of the psychosocial, political, and economic manifestations of an increasingly mobile and interconnected world. In diaspora and transnationalism studies, the nation-state does not disappear, however, neither is it taken for granted as the most salient organising structure or force. Instead, these scholars often look within, across, and beyond the state in order to analyse other ways in which people imagine their communities and mobilise themselves. My research builds on the insights of this literature, taking advantage of both the theoretical space and the systematic approaches that have emerged out of these debates. I draw on diaspora studies thinking in the way that I frame YDEO identities and identifications with Ethiopia, and transnationalism studies has informed my empirical approach and understanding of YDEO social practices.

My research is concerned with the intersection of diasporas with homeland development. In order to contextualise this analysis, I include a review of the broader discussions and debates that have characterised development studies. This includes classic neoliberal ideologies as well as fervent critical approaches, both of which focus on prescribing and/or analysing how wealth and power is or should be organised and generated around the world. Through this literature we see that global development practice and discourse is embedded within historical configurations of power and politics that often perpetuate inequalities and reinforce the status quo. Therefore, I build upon this understanding, rather than gloss over it, in my review and analysis of the

contemporary diaspora/development literature that follows. This emergent body of literature has taken shape as public and academic perceptions of migration and development have shifted over time, and is marked by a current wave of optimism and enthusiasm around the potential gains from engaging diasporas in development – particularly in Africa.

As I discuss in this chapter, there are many issues with mainstream diaspora/development studies, including a depoliticisation and homogenisation of the ways in which diasporas relate to and engage with their countries of origin. Through this thesis, I work to address this gap by critically examining the relationship between diasporas and development, highlighting the diverse, symbolic, politicised, and sometimes problematic ways in which YDEOs engage with Ethiopia and Ethiopian development. Finally, in this chapter I also review the body of work that has examined the experiences of migrant descendants, focusing on social scientific literature from the 1990s onwards. These scholars conceptualise and research the ways in which cultural identities transform and (re)emerge through movement, time, generations, and life stage. The bulk of this work has focused on the identities and transnational social practices of the children of migrants (often referred to as the ‘second generation’) – a growing segment of the population in many contemporary cosmopolitan cities in North America and Europe. In this thesis, I build on and seek to deepen this important, yet still thin, body of work. I argue that examining migrant descendant transnational practices and social relations is an analytically fruitful exercise not only for this particular field of study, but also for diaspora, transnationalism, and development studies, as well as the broader sciences concerned with contemporary social identities, practices, and movements.

Chapter 3. Methodology

In 2006, I served as the Coordinator of a youth-led community-based research project that culminated in a report entitled 'Youth Perspectives: Challenges to Peace Building and Development in the Ethiopian Community' (Abebe, Amanuel, Jamie, Mekonnen, & Merid, 2006). Our report was one of six diaspora community case studies commissioned by the United Nations University for Peace (UPEACE) in the lead up to their 'High Level Expert Forum on Capacity Building for Peace and Development: Roles of Diaspora'. Our data collection involved gathering the perspectives of YDEOs in Toronto regarding a wide range of personal and community issues, and in the end we conducted three focus groups and also administered 157 questionnaires. I was an undergraduate student at the time, and our research team included other YDEO undergraduate and graduate students, as well as an academic advisor who provided critique and support. The project was ambitious and often quite stressful, particularly as an undergraduate student; however, it was a rewarding experience overall and is responsible for igniting my research interest in exploring YDEO experiences.



Figure 1: Picture during community event where we recruited participants for our youth-led study.
Photo credit: Alpha Abebe

One of the sections in our questionnaire asked respondents to indicate which culture they identified with more, 'Canadian' or 'Ethiopian'. The majority of respondents (65.8%) selected 'Ethiopian'; however, in analysing the results we noticed that 6.3% of respondents selected *both* options despite the instructions to choose only *one*. In retrospect, we realised that we should have provided the option to choose both, and that had we done so, our results would likely have been very different. When the report was released, a journalist from a local newspaper took an interest in our case study, and as it turns out, was particularly intrigued that the majority of our respondents identified more with Ethiopian culture despite being born and raised in Canada. In our interview with the journalist, we tried to provide a more nuanced account of YDEO cultural connections, however when the article was published, the narrative remained focused on that particular factoid.

I gained a number of important skills through my involvement in this project, and in many ways it served as an early crash course in qualitative research. Naturally, the most important lesson I took from this experience stemmed from our methodological 'mistake'. I came to understand how much a research narrative can be affected by decisions and omissions made throughout the methodological design and implementation process. Over the years, I also learned to appreciate the fluid and layered nature of diasporic identities, and the ways in which various tools of research elucidate or mask this complexity. I moved away from categorical questions like the one in our questionnaire and began experimenting with methodological approaches that made room for more ambiguity and nuance. There is a time and place for surveys, statistics, and macro-level research; however, the social processes

that are the focus of this research require methods that provide a closer look and allow for a thicker description.

Rather than posing and testing a hypothesis, I began this research with a series of focused yet open-ended questions, designed a flexible methodology, and developed an interpretive analytical approach with the objective of building a rich theoretical understanding of my subject matter. As discussed in Chapter 1, the following research questions have guided my research design, methodology, and analysis:

- *What is the qualitative nature of YDEO-led activity intended to promote the social, political or economic development of Ethiopia? How and why do they engage in these activities?*
- *What impacts do these practices have in defining and/or strengthening diasporic identities?*
- *Which norms, structures and institutions mediate and are mediated by these interactions?*

It is worth noting that in the early stages of my research planning, I had an additional research question: *How do local communities in Ethiopia engage with, respond to, shape and translate these efforts?* In the process of finalising my methodological plans, I dropped this research question in an effort to manage the scope of my research; however, this is a question I hope to pursue or learn about in future research (See Chapter 8). In the sections below, I provide a detailed account of my methodology, including my epistemological position, theoretical framework, data collection process, and my approach in analysing this data. I will also discuss the ethical considerations and protocols followed, my positionality within this research, and the potential limitations of this study.

3.1 Epistemological Position

As a researcher, I aspire to be as *reflexive* as possible, a quality which Etherington (2004) describes as “the capacity of the researcher to acknowledge how their own experiences and contexts (which might be fluid and changing) inform the process and outcomes of inquiry” (pp. 31-32). I believe that part of being a reflexive researcher involves acknowledging the epistemological assumptions that shape one’s topic selection, questions, theoretical framework, and analysis. My *epistemological position* describes how I understand the world, how I believe one can come to understand the world, and how this has in turn framed my analysis. My research is grounded within the *post-positivist tradition*, that is, I reject the notion that the goal of research is to objectively observe, measure and describe a fixed social reality. As Prasad (2005) argues, post-positivist research tends to “approach questions of social reality and knowledge from a more problematised vantage point, emphasising the constructed nature of social reality, the constitutive role of language and the value of research as critique” (p. 9).

My research interests developed from an appreciation for the socially constructed nature of much of what we use to orient ourselves in the world. For example, few things are as salient and ‘real’ in our everyday lives as our identities, culture, and citizenship – yet these constructs are constitutive in nature and operate as flexibly as they do firmly. Though not always acknowledged as such, diaspora/development research, including my own, is constantly navigating the paradox of ‘the real’ and ‘the constructed’. For example, my research involves describing the process whereby YDEO diasporic identities are social constructed and imagined. However, as their engagements in Ethiopian development demonstrate, these identities also

carry very 'real' social capital and often guide my respondents' social practices in concrete and material ways.

Rather than seeing the world as something to be 'discovered', I take an *interpretive approach*, which involves seeing the world as something to be 'understood' and 'represented' through research. I am personally inclined towards Denzin's (2004) argument that, "in the social sciences there is only interpretation. Nothing speaks for itself" (p. 447). In the introduction to his seminal book *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Geertz (1973) describes his approach to the study of culture in the following way: "Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (p. 15). As Geertz (1973) demonstrates, for the interpretive researcher, the pursuit of knowledge involves uncovering and interpreting the meanings individuals attach to various social identities, practices, and structures. Interpretive research also implicates the researcher – the 'interpreter' – and makes them a visible part of the knowledge production process. As Yanow (2006) argues, most interpretive researchers believe that "an intersubjective world in which empathetic understanding of another's meaning is possible", and therefore researchers consistently and consciously draw on themselves throughout the research process (p. 19).

My research is not only concerned with uncovering meaning, but also the *process* whereby social actors *make meaning* – this is where the interpretive analysis really kicks in.

A related emphasis in much interpretive research is on the extent to which actors may not be fully aware of the ways in which taken-for-granted assumptions underlie their meaning-making activities. By studying the symbols, rituals, stories, and other artifacts

through which actors make sense of their worlds, researchers seek to reveal the intricate, evolving connections between taken-for-granted understandings and human activities and practices (Schwartz-Shea, 2006, p. 92).

So much of the way that we operate in the world is 'taken-for-granted', in that the process that connects our life experiences, worldviews, social interactions, and practices often functions on a subconscious level. Therefore, the task of understanding this process generally involves a lot more than simply asking someone to describe it. The strength of interpretive research then, as Yanow (2006) argues, is that it works around this tension between the 'words and deeds' of social actors by staying grounded in both their *narratives* as well as the *details* of their lived experiences.

3.2 An Interactionist Theoretical Framework

My theoretical framework is intimately connected with my epistemological position – in fact, both orientations can be traced to the same 'turn' in the social sciences towards qualitative and constructivist research. My theoretical framework can be characterised most broadly as *interactionist*. The way that I have developed and applied this framework draws on the classical sociological literature connected to 'symbolic interactionism' (Blumer, 1969; Cooley & Schubert, 1998; Mead, 1934), as well as contemporary adaptations and derivatives of the symbolic interactionist approach (Denzin, 2001; Fahy & Sundin, 2008; Jefford & Sundin, 2013; Plummer, 2000; Stryker, 1980, 2008; Tomei, 2011). At the heart of the symbolic interactionist approach is the assertion that both *society* and *self* emerge through a process of social *interaction*. The human world – micro to macro – reflects institutionalised meanings produced through this interaction, and people are seen as both subject to and architects of these meanings. To fully appreciate the value of this approach one needs to understand its contribution in relation to the two

other sociological paradigms that were dominant in the early Twentieth Century – *structural functionalism* and *social conflict*.

While these two generally sit on opposing sides of the political spectrum, they share in common a largely macro approach to the study of the social world. A simplified version of the structural functionalist approach reads like this: society is a mechanistic system (or organism) with various interdependent components that have a function in maintaining social stability. A society that is functioning properly is one in which these various components are working together. Institutions play a key role in creating this equilibrium by building consensus and addressing *dysfunction*. A similar outline of the social conflict approach, highly influenced by Karl Marx, reads like this: society is based upon the competition over scarce resources, which are unevenly distributed among classes of people. Conflict is inherent to society, and institutions play the role of building social order by legitimating the power and resources of some groups over others through a process of coercion and normalisation. Within this context, the initial contribution of symbolic interactionists included highlighting the role of *agency* and the *micro* processes of interaction and meaning-making which socially construct the world – including macro institutions. In short, “symbolic interactionist researchers focus on process and change in the personal and the social worlds” (Fahy & Sundin, 2008, p. 9).

There are some key figureheads whose writings remain the foundation of this theoretical framework, including George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer, Charles Horton Cooley, Norman K. Denzin, and the works of sociologists affiliated with the University of Chicago during the first half of the Twentieth

Century (Fine, 1993, p. 62). Mead's work has been particularly important for adherents and critics alike.

"In the beginning there is social process." This aphorism expresses the assumption underlying Mead's frame as well as his answer to the question of the relation of the social and the individual. It asserts that treating the social as simply the setting for individual experience and behavior is inadequate as a starting point for social psychological analysis. At least implicitly, Mead also asserts the socially organized character of human experience; the constructed nature of social life; the significance of self in mediating the relation of society to behavior and behavior to society; self as initially formed on the basis of others' responses to the person; an active agent view of the human being; the importance to social behavior of persons' definitions and interpretations; and the limitations of determinism in accounts of social behavior. Given these emendations, an expansion of the "in the beginning" aphorism well states Mead's theme: The social process shapes society, self, and social interaction, and each feeds back on the others (Stryker, 2008, pp. 17 - 18).

This excerpt reveals how deeply symbolic interactionism was rooted in social psychology and identity theory; however, the approach has since been combined with other theoretical and philosophical perspectives to investigate a vast array of social phenomena (Hausmann, Jonason, & Summers-Effler, 2011, p. 320). Norman K. Denzin is arguably the most influential contemporary interactionist scholar, and he has worked to develop interactionism into a flexible, critical, and practical theoretical framework. He describes his own methodology as 'interpretive interactionism', which includes examining turning point life experiences "that radically alter and shape the meanings persons give to themselves and their life projects" (Denzin, 2001, p. 34). Once contentious, many of the core tenets of symbolic interactionism – such as a socially constructed world – are now taken for granted as 'truth' in mainstream social science (which is also to the credit of contributions from postmodern theorists including Foucault).

There have been many critiques launched against symbolic interactionism, which reflect some 'alleged and some real sins'. As Fine (1993) succinctly captures, "it was claimed to be apolitical (hence, supportive of the status quo), unscientific (hence, little more than tenured journalism), hostile to the

classical questions of macrosociology (hence, limited to social psychology), and astructural (hence, fundamentally nonsociological" (p. 65). Interactionists themselves have engaged quite actively with these critiques, some offering alternative interpretations of the core texts and others, their modified approaches. For the purposes of my research, the most useful outcome of this debate has been the development of a *structural* approach to interactionism – largely led by Sheldon Stryker and his colleagues (Stryker, 1980, 2008; Stryker, Serpe, & Hunt, 2005).

Stryker (1980) defines social structures as "the pattern of regularities that characterise most human interaction" (p. 65). He has generally differentiated between two forms of social structures: 1) 'large' ones such as race, ethnicity, gender, SES, age, and class; and, 2) 'intermediate' ones which are more localised and associational, such as communities, schools, "and other organised social units which bring sizable sets of persons together in one setting, thus increasing the probability of relationships forming or being maintained" (Stryker et al., 2005, p. 95). While generally not articulated in such terms, *structure* has served as a euphemism for *power* in much of this literature. The difference between this approach and the other dominant sociological paradigms is that structural interactionists maintain that structure does not determine human identity and action, but rather, operates in simultaneous processes (Hausmann et al., 2011, p. 321; Serpe & Stryker, 2011, p. 232). "We can expect social behavior to exhibit a blend of creativity as well as stability and change; thus, a major theoretical task becomes specifying conditions that lead to varying degrees of one or the other" (Serpe & Stryker, 2011, p. 232).

Interactionist scholars have also used concepts such as *role* and *commitment* as a way of bridging the self and society in this structured view of a social world.

Entailed is a sense of larger social structures of whatever kind as boundaries making it more or less likely that persons in particular social locations will enter particular social relationships with particular agendas, symbolic systems (e.g., specifications of the meanings of roles and selves), and resources. Further, the structural symbolic interactionist frame argues that persons' location in larger social structures impacts the identity process through commitment (Stryker et al., 2005, pp. 94 - 95).

'Commitment' is defined as ties to social networks, and conceived of as a 'small' unit of social structure. "To the degree that one's relationships to a set of others depend on being a particular kind of person and playing out particular roles, one is committed to being that kind of person. Commitment is hypothesised to be the immediate source of salience attached to identities" (Stryker, 2008, p. 20). 'Role' and 'commitment' relate not only to identity, but to action and behaviour as well – as individuals are viewed as acting in ways that validate and reinforce their salient identities (Hausmann et al., 2011; Stryker, 1980). At the risk of re-characterising interactionism as a structural, it is important to highlight the coercive and inequitable context within which many of these 'choices' are being made. As Fine (1993) asks, "How do individuals negotiate the realities that are structured – that can be ignored only by those willing to accept severe consequences – and how do structures determine what actors can or will do" (pp. 69-70)?

These various critiques, adaptations, and enhancements to interactionism are valuable and relevant to my research. My theoretical framework is informed by the insights that have emerged through these debates, in particular the need to examine the manifestation and intersection of both *agency* and *structure* in social processes. At a fundamental level, interactionism offers a flexible and integrated method of deconstructing social identities, interactions, actions, and structures. It also draws attention to the ways in which

individuals act to verify their conceptions of who they are in relation to the roles, expectations, and commitments associated with relational and generalised 'Others'. Adding a structural lens to this framework means appreciating how these processes happen within contexts both mediated by and in resistance to institutions and other social structures. This framework has deepened and enriched my research by encouraging me to look very closely at the *processes* that simultaneously shape selves, societies and structures.

In practical terms, this meant being attentive to connections between YDEO identities, social groupings, and social practices – as well as the institutions and structures of power that shaped and were shaped by these connections. For example, to what extent did YDEO social interactions (e.g. within Ethiopian community settings) reinforce/shift particular social identities (e.g. cultural, racial, or gender identities), and/or facilitate particular social practices and behaviours (e.g. engagement in Ethiopian development)? Interactionism also provided the space needed to wrestle with issues around both power and agency, which is critical to a theoretical approach to the diaspora/development nexus. As an actor-centred approach, it examines social phenomena through the meanings that individual actors attach to their own behaviour, while also critically examining the behaviour and social practice itself. Finally, interactionism is a framework that is steeped in the post-positivist and interpretive traditions, which provided a unified epistemological and theoretic lens with which to interpret and analyse my data and observations.

3.3 Data Collection

My data collection process was qualitative in nature and involved conducting:

- An instrumental case study (YDEO engagement in Ethiopian development)
- Multi-sited fieldwork (Canada, U.S., Ethiopia)
- Semi-structured in-depth interviews (55 interviews)
- Participant observation (8 community events)

3.3.1 *Instrumental Case Study*

The 'case study' is a very common approach employed by interpretive researchers, as it provides the scope to engage deeply with a given social phenomenon. Baxter and Jack (2008) describe 'qualitative case study' as a methodology, which "provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts" (p. 544). Over the years Robert K. Yin has developed a robust set of resources for researchers interested in employing a case study approach (Yin, 1984, 2012, 2013). In summary, Yin (2003) suggests that researchers should consider a case study design when:

(a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545).

All of these conditions applied to my research project, suggesting that a case study approach was in fact a good fit. Stake (2005) argues that a subject can be considered *a case* if it is represented as a "bounded system" with some level of specificity, coherence and particularity, which can be probed. The 'case', or unit of analysis, under examination in my research is *YDEO engagement in Ethiopian development*.

The purpose for examining a case can determine the type of case study one selects for their research, including an explanatory, exploratory, descriptive, multiple, collective, intrinsic, or instrumental case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2009). I have approached YDEO engagement in Ethiopian development as an *instrumental case study*. Stake (2005) uses the term ‘instrumental case study’ to describe research that examines a particular case primarily to provide insight into a wider issue or to draw generalisations; which is distinct from ‘intrinsic case studies’ that see the value of the research wholly in the chosen case itself. As discussed in Chapter 1, I was initially drawn to research YDEOs for more intrinsic than instrumental reasons, given my personal connection to these issues. However, ultimately the *theoretical* value in my research stems from the insights that can be drawn towards a broader understanding of the diaspora/development nexus, and the relationship between social identities and practice.

It is also worth reflecting briefly on the nature of presenting *YDEO engagement in Ethiopian development* as a ‘bounded case’. Borrowing from the framework developed by Stake (2005), I would argue that there is sufficient ‘specificity, coherence and particularity’ to this phenomenon to justify its characterisation as a unit of analysis, or ‘case’. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the YDEOs in my research represent a heterogeneous and complex group of individuals with varied and layered lived experiences. As a result – and as I will discuss in the subsequent chapters – their engagement in Ethiopian development has evolved in different directions and taken on many different forms. Therefore, approaching this phenomenon as a ‘case study’ is an effort to systematically examine its complexity, but does not suggest it is a homogenous experience.

3.3.2 *Multi-Sited Fieldwork*

My research involved fieldwork in multiple locations between 2013 and 2014, including the following cities/locations:

- Toronto, Canada (15 interviews)
- Greater Washington, D.C. area, United States (15 interviews)
- New York City, New York, United States (3 interviews)
- Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (20 interviews)
- Via Skype (2 interviews)

My primary data was collected through 55 in-depth semi-structured interviews with YDEOs who had or were in the process of engaging in Ethiopian development initiatives. Overall, 30 of my respondents were female and 25 were male (See Appendix IV for detailed respondent profile). I also attended 8 community events that were related to my research in the various cities, where I played the role of a participant observer. Toronto and Washington, D.C. were selected as field sites because these cities are home to the largest and most established Ethiopian diaspora communities in Canada and the U.S., respectively (See Chapter 1 and 4). I travelled briefly to New York City to conduct three interviews with YDEOs who were key informants and/or heavily involved in Ethiopian development initiatives and could therefore provide important insight into my research. While I would have preferred to conduct all of my interviews in-person, I did conduct two video interviews via Skype, to accommodate the schedules and locations of these respondents. Finally, I travelled to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to interview YDEOs who had moved to the country temporarily or permanently to do volunteer or professional work within an Ethiopian development initiative.

I was very familiar with the primary fieldwork sites prior to beginning my research. Toronto is the city where I was born and raised, and I have deep connections within the Ethiopian community there. Over the years, I have travelled to Washington, D.C. on numerous occasions to visit family, attend Ethiopian community events, as well as professional meetings and conferences. I was also quite familiar with Addis Ababa, as I have travelled there to visit family and tour the country on a number of occasions before beginning my research. More specifically, I had strong connections with the diaspora community living within Addis Ababa. While this familiarity certainly had its limits and disadvantages (see Section 3.5), it proved very helpful in facilitating the respondent recruitment process. The bulk of my data collection took place over the course of thirteen months. During much of this time, I was based in Toronto where I conducted interviews *in situ*, and also began virtual outreach and recruitment in preparation for my travels to the other cities.

I spent about six weeks in the Washington, D.C. area over two trips (with a brief visit to New York City), and one month in Addis Ababa over one trip. My familiarity with these cities, and the ability to make interview arrangements via email meant that these time durations were sufficient to gather the data I needed. I asked respondents to choose a location for our interview that was convenient and comfortable for them, and in the end almost all of the interviews took place in cafés or restaurants in each of the cities. I stopped conducting interviews when I felt I had hit a certain point of saturation in that a number of core themes had emerged as patterns across my interviews and there was enough data to begin my analysis.

3.3.3 *Recruitment, Sampling, and Interview Process*

I utilised a combination of the following *purposive sampling* strategies, as outlined by Marshall and Rossman (2011, p. 111), in my recruitment and selection of interviewees:

- A. *Intensity Technique* – Involves information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely.
 - I began my interviews with these ‘information-rich’ cases, which I found through my existing network, and also by reaching out to high profile individuals known for their engagement in Ethiopian development.
- B. *Snowball Technique* – Identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information rich.
 - Snowballing helped to expand the sample beyond my existing network. I advertised my research project through as many public community channels as possible, and also relied heavily upon social media. Also, after every interview, I asked my respondents to refer me to appropriate people within their networks who might be interested in participating.
- C. *Opportunistic Technique* – Follows new leads, takes advantage of the unexpected.
 - This strategy kept me open to stakeholders and issues pertinent to my research that I had not considered at the design stage. There were a number of unplanned activities, such as my interviews in New York City and some of the community events that I attended, which proved to be very fruitful and enriched my analysis.

Email and Facebook proved to be very important in identifying respondents for my research, particularly because of the multi-sited nature of my fieldwork and the fact that YDEOs tended to spend a significant amount of their time online anyway. I used informally worded emails and public Facebook posts to tell people about my research (See Figure 3 below), and subsequently followed up with people who expressed interest at which point I provided further details, including the formal interview consent form.

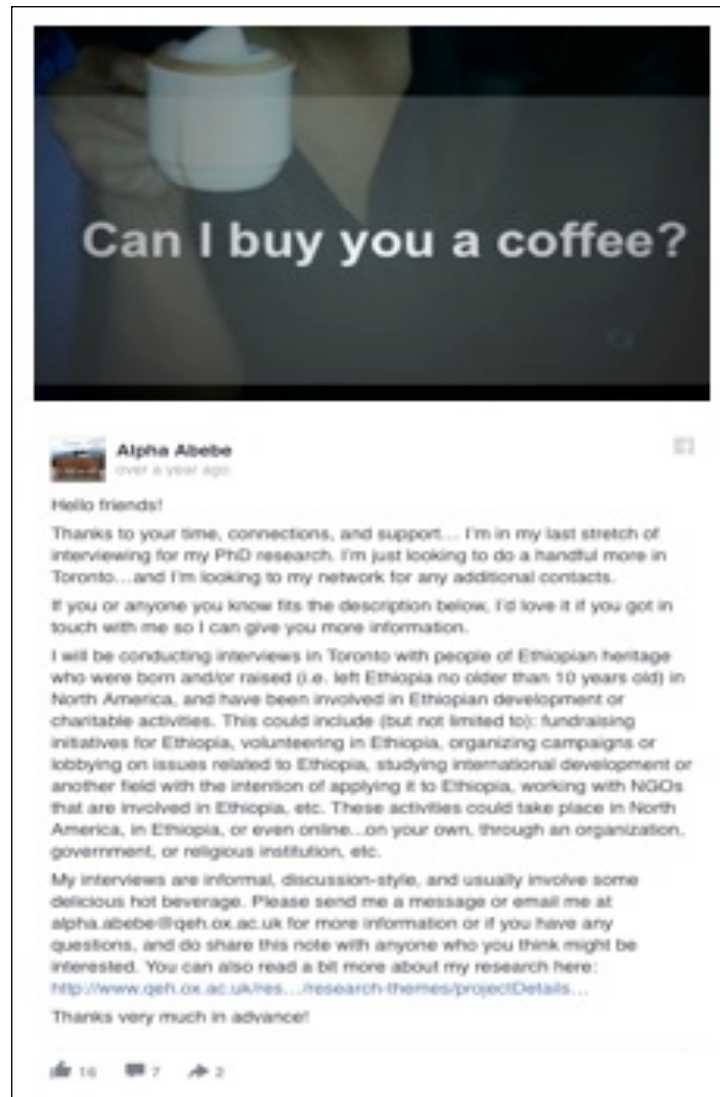


Figure 2: Recruitment posting taken from my personal Facebook account.

My interviews followed an in-depth and semi-structured format. Miller and Crabtree (2004) explain that in-depth interviews generally use an interview guide and “use open, direct, verbal questions that elicit stories and case-oriented narratives” (p. 189). The process that I followed also fit within this common practice. I developed an initial interview guide (See Appendix III), which included a blend of broad ‘grand tour’ and focused topical questions. I refined my interview guide after the first few interviews, opting to exclude some questions and adding others. While I followed my interview guide loosely, I also allowed conversations to follow tangents when they seemed

fruitful to my research. After some time, I became familiar enough with my questions that I no longer needed to refer to the guide, which also helped maintain an informal and natural flow to conversations.

The primary language for all of my respondents was English, and most of my interviews were conducted entirely in English. However, there were times when respondents would transition between English and Amharic (one of the Ethiopian languages) when telling a story or describing an expression or term. I am proficient in Amharic, therefore could understand and transcribe these parts of the discussion directly. All of my interviews were recorded using a small hand-held audio recording device. There were instances where people asked to speak 'off the record', at which point I would pause the recording (see Section 3.5). The average length of my interviews was 1.5 hours, however there were a few interviews that were slightly shorter and some that were considerably longer. I took detailed notes and/or simultaneous transcription when it was appropriate to do so. There were, however, instances when I chose not to take notes during interviews when I felt it would disrupt the flow of conversation or it was making someone uncomfortable. After most interviews, I created an entry in my fieldwork journal, and these entries ranged from brief observations and insights to long reflections and analytical musings.

Denzin (2001) describes his qualitative and interpretive methodology as something that is neither 'magical' nor 'mysterious'. "It involves using skills that most individuals already have, namely, the ability to talk and listen to others, including oneself, and remembering what one hears others say" (Denzin, 2001, p. 26). I think this is an important admission, and something researchers should keep in mind when describing their methodological

processes. Skill, craft, and experience are needed in order to conduct effective research interviews; however, much of this is about communication and empathy more so than complex technical expertise. I worked very hard to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere, which began from my initial recruitment strategies and continued throughout my interviews. I asked respondents to choose the location for our interview so they were in a setting that was convenient and comfortable for them. I also began the conversation by introducing myself, reinforcing the fact that I was interested in their personal stories, and ensuring respondents that there were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to my questions.

There were a number of other things that I remained mindful of in an effort to maintain a comfortable environment that allowed for reflective conversations, including my body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. In the beginning of most interviews, people provided reserved and brief responses to my questions; however eventually, after a rapport and level of comfort was established, respondents would often share long and detailed stories or reflections without the need for much probing. During these times, people were generally sharing very personal and emotional stories with me; therefore, it was important that I demonstrated my active listening by providing eye contact and other gestures and words that expressed that I valued their experiences. At the beginning and end of each interview, I invited my respondents to ask any questions they might have for me, and explained what the rest of my research process would entail.

3.3.4 *Participant Observation*

Over the course of my fieldwork, I attended eight community events as a participant observer. Five of these events were targeted specifically to an Ethiopian diaspora audience, and the other three were aimed at a broader African diaspora audience (with several people of Ethiopian descent in attendance). These events included: two report launches, a film screening, a university campus social gathering, two young professional networking events, a conference, and an organisational tour. I attended these events because there was some connection to the issue of diaspora engagement in homeland development. Many of these events were ones that I would have taken an interest in and potentially attended even if I were not pursuing this research. However, since I was present in my capacity as a researcher, I was more attentive to the environment including the discourses that were circulating, and the way that my presence and/or interactions might affect what I was observing. Attending these events shaped my research in both subtle and direct ways.

During the early stages of my fieldwork, attending events helped to spark ideas about potential interview questions or research directions. I was also able to build in-person connections that often aided in recruiting respondents for in-depth interviews. At other times, I took note of particular remarks or activities at an event that helped to validate particular insights from my interviews or pointed to connections between individual respondent narratives and broader discourses or social movements. After attending an event, I saved any literature that was distributed (e.g. brochures or posters), and made notes in my fieldwork journal including my observations and reflections. Participant observation is a well-established methodology that is

often used in a systematic way by cultural anthropologists conducting long-term ethnographic projects (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). It is important to note, however, that most of my primary data came directly from my in-depth interviews, and my observations from participating in these events generally served a secondary and more supportive role in my research.

3.4 Data Analysis

There are two aspects to my data analysis methodology: 1) the technical process of organising and coding my data; and, 2) the philosophical traditions that guided my interpretation of this data. Most of my 'data' took the form of interview notes, journal entries, interview transcripts, and artefacts from the field (i.e. brochures, pictures, reports). Some respondents also sent me items following our interviews, such as their own blogs or articles that related to our discussions. I also collected web-based material that I drew on in my analysis including policy documents, literary pieces, and organisational overviews. This supplementary material helped to contextualise my respondent narratives within broader discourses and social movements. The core data came from my interviews with YDEOs, as these narratives contained rich and thick descriptions of their lived experiences and engagements in Ethiopian development.

Analysing these interviews involved an iterative process of transcribing, coding, recoding, and interpreting my respondents' narratives. I combined manual and computer-mediated strategies throughout this process including the use of *F5 Transcription Software*, *NVivo Data Analysis Software*, and good ol' post-it notes. As laborious as it was, transcribing my interviews was a critical stage in my research process. I was re-immersed in YDEO narratives and

given the opportunity to think through and reflect upon the connections within and between various narratives. When transcribing, I made note of things outside of spoken word such as long silences after a question, laughs, and sighs. In many cases, this sub-text proved to be a critical part of understanding the meaning behind a particular respondent's reply or story. Coding my data served both a functional and interpretive role in this process. As Charmaz (2006) notes, 'coding' is a process of distilling and sorting data, and provides a researcher with a system for comparing various segments of data with each other (p. 3). Using the NVivo software proved to be very effective throughout my coding process, and made my data readily accessible whenever I needed to return to it.

My data analysis process can be broken down into two stages, which I have outlined below. However, I do not mean to give the impression that this was a linear process or that I had it clearly outlined from the outset. In many cases, I went back and forth between stages or points within the process as new insights or challenges emerged in my research or writing.

Stage 1: Transcription and Descriptive Coding

- Imported field notes, journal entries, and web material into NVivo as 'sources'
- Began by transcribing a few 'information-rich' interviews and made note of descriptive themes that emerged
- Developed codes based on descriptive themes to help organise my data
- Continued transcribing and importing transcripts into NVivo as 'sources'
- Coded all data sources based on descriptive themes
- Made notes of emerging analytical themes during descriptive coding

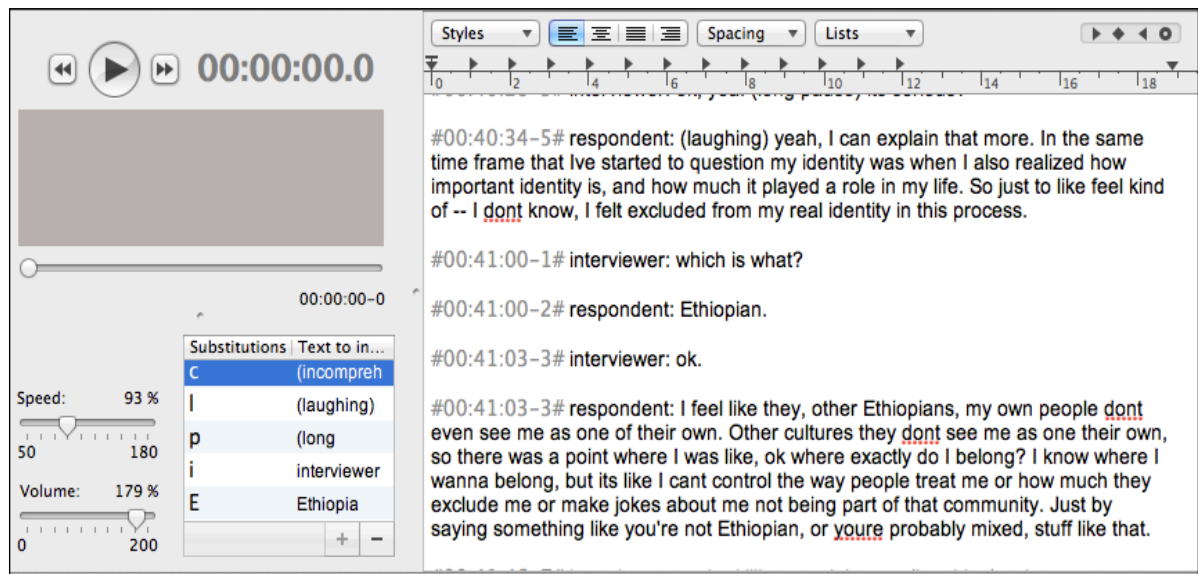


Figure 3: Screenshot of interview transcription process in F5 Transcription Software.

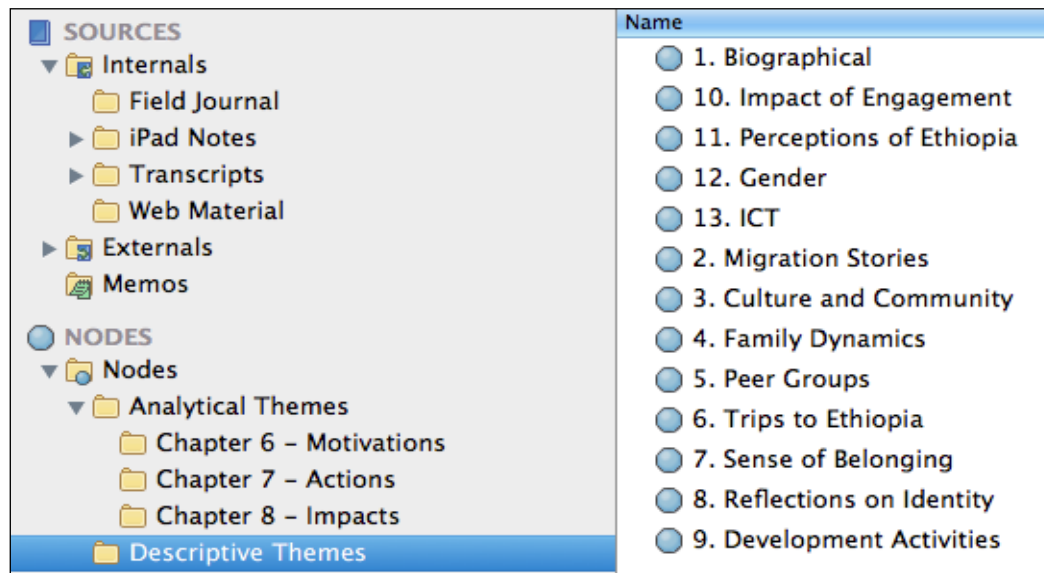


Figure 4: Screenshot of my descriptive coding structure in NVivo

Stage 2: Analytical Coding and Writing

- Developed and refined analytical codes based on emerging themes
- Reviewed transcripts and other sources and began coding based on analytical themes
- Documented emerging analytical insights through notes and memos
- Revisited theoretical framework to ensure it aligned with the data
- Combined and refined analytical codes as needed and completed coding

- The screenshot shows a software interface with two main panels. The left panel, titled 'SOURCES', contains a tree structure with 'Internals' (expanded) and 'Externals'. 'Internals' includes 'Field Journal', 'iPad Notes', 'Transcripts', and 'Web Material'. 'Externals' includes 'Memos'. Below 'SOURCES' is a section titled 'NODES' with a tree structure including 'Nodes' (expanded) and 'Analytical Themes'. 'Analytical Themes' includes 'Chapter 6 - Motivations' (highlighted), 'Chapter 7 - Actions', 'Chapter 8 - Impacts', and 'Descriptive Themes'. The right panel, titled 'Name', displays a list of items corresponding to the selected 'Chapter 6 - Motivations' node. The list includes: 1. Self-actualization, 2. Making an impact, 3. Guilt or Responsibility (expanded), 4. Confirming Ethiopianness (expanded), and 5. Validating Ethiopianness. Sub-items under '3. Guilt or Responsibility' are: Addressing global inequity, Duty & Responsibility to Ethiopia, Privilege & Guilt, and Self doubt. Sub-items under '4. Confirming Ethiopianness' are: Exclusion and racism. Sub-items under '5. Validating Ethiopianness' are: Search for authenticity and Wanting to belong.

SOURCES	NODES	Name
▼ Internals	▼ Nodes	1. Self-actualization
Field Journal	▼ Analytical Themes	2. Making an impact
▶ iPad Notes	Chapter 6 - Motivations	▼ 3. Guilt or Responsibility
▶ Transcripts	Chapter 7 - Actions	Addressing global inequity
Web Material	Chapter 8 - Impacts	Duty & Responsibility to Ethiopia
▶ Externals	Descriptive Themes	Privilege & Guilt
Memos		Self doubt
		▼ 4. Confirming Ethiopianness
		Exclusion and racism
		▼ 5. Validating Ethiopianness
		Search for authenticity
		Wanting to belong

Place at the table

Excuse me / Excuse me

Be sure not to be seen as patronizing

People that look like you

Bubble Burst

The Cherry on top

Diagram of

Two class groups

Historically Grounded Generation

Historical

Becoming Whole

Overemphasizing Transnational activities

Radicalizing

Can't go just to party

The Perfect Exit

Children of aristocrats

Make your mark in China

Do something

Being 'cool'

Role of

Do something for

US dream

Love and the generation

Adding Value

Heart and Hand

Life purpose

Setting up a system

China / African

93

While the process of coding my data was aided by computer software, it was anything but mechanical. Drawing connections within and between respondent narratives was a fundamentally *interpretive* process informed by my epistemological position and theoretical framework. I analysed my notes and transcripts as discursive 'texts', which involved connecting individual narratives and experiences to broader social ideas, movements, and systems of power. In a *discourse analysis* these texts are considered a discursive 'unit' or material manifestation of a discourse, which exists beyond the text or subject itself (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 4). "Discourses exercise power in a society because they institutionalise and regulate ways of talking, thinking and acting" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 35). This approach is built upon Gramscian and Foucauldian notions of power, which makes "the very givenness of the world the object of exploration and analysis" (Calhoun, 1995, p. 8).

Discourse analysis is distinct from other approaches, such as ethnographies which "often aim at uncovering the meaning of a social reality for participants but are less concerned with how that social reality came into existence through the constructive effects of various discourses and associated texts" (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 6). However, in my analysis I was very interested in the intersection between self, society, and structure, which made this analytical framework particularly useful. I used a *critical studies* lens, which added another layer to my analysis and involved examining the role of discursive activity in constituting and sustaining unequal power relations. Finally, discourse analysis openly engages with the contextual nature of language, the implication of the researcher in the research, and the relativity of the interpretation and representation of findings. This

problematizes traditional measures of ‘validity’ and ‘authenticity’ used to evaluate the merit of research. The discourse analyst “interprets his or her data in a certain way and that data so interpreted, in turn, renders the analysis meaningful in certain ways and not in others” (Gee, 2005, p. 94). Thus, the validity of such an analysis – such as this thesis – must be determined through an iterative process that evaluates the intelligibility of its ideas, its relevance to contemporary realities, and its broader theoretical value.

3.5 Research Considerations

3.5.1 *Ethical Standards*

Prior to embarking upon fieldwork and conducting any interviews, I was required to submit my research plans to Oxford University’s Social Sciences and Humanities Inter-divisional Research Ethics Committee. The Committee approved my methodology, deeming that it met the appropriate ethical standards as per the procedures laid down by the University for all research involving human participants.⁴ The key ethical considerations in my research plan included informed consent, confidentiality, and mitigating any associated personal or participant risks. Once an individual expressed an interest in participating in my research, I sent them an electronic copy of my consent form and encouraged them to review it prior to our meeting. This consent form (See Appendix I and II) outlined the purpose of my study, the nature of their participation (i.e. voluntary), the study procedures (i.e. in-depth interview), and the benefits and risks associated with my research. I explained that they were welcome to terminate their participation should

⁴ For more information about Oxford University’s research ethics standards and procedures, please visit the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) website: <https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/curec/>

they become uncomfortable at any stage of the interview. All participants were invited to ask me any questions regarding the consent form prior to, during, or after our interview. I had printed copies of the consent form on hand when meeting with participants, and once they were comfortable with the goals and methods of my research I had them sign the consent form before beginning. I also offered a copy of the consent form to all respondents.

All of my respondents were literate and fluent English speakers, and were therefore able to read through the consent form without difficulty. While most of my respondents were also over the age of 18, I developed a simplified version of the consent form for any younger participants (See Appendix II), which I ultimately used for the one respondent who was under 18 years of age. I worked diligently to maintain the confidentiality of all of my respondents by removing any identifiable personal information in this thesis. I have replaced all of my respondents' names with pseudonyms and redacted anything from their quotes that could be attributed to them, such as the name of their school or employer. In most cases, I spoke in generic terms about specific organisations or groups that my respondents were engaged in; when I did name an organisation it was because doing so would not compromise the confidentiality of my respondents. As outlined in the consent forms, all interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis and I did not provide remuneration to my respondents. However, if interviews took place over coffee or a meal I offered (and usually insisted) that I pay the bill out of courtesy and in line with Ethiopian cultural norms. There were minimal risks associated with my research for both my respondents and myself, as my respondents would not be classified as particularly vulnerable and my field sites were all relatively safe and familiar cities. That said, I was still required

to complete a full risk assessment with Oxford University's Department of International Development prior to embarking upon my fieldwork, where I outlined any potential risks (which were minimal) as well as my pre-emptive mitigation strategies.

3.5.2 *Positionality*

Reflecting upon one's positionality and bias as a researcher has become a standard benchmark across social science. However, given the epistemological, theoretical and analytical frameworks outlined here, this is particularly important for my research. As a young diasporan of Ethiopian origin from the West who has engaged in Ethiopian development initiatives, my research is as much about my own experiences as the people I intend on interviewing. I was born in Toronto, Canada to parents who were among the first wave of immigrants from Ethiopia to Canada during the early 1980s. I grew up very close to the Ethiopian-Canadian community – as it was growing itself – and remained embedded within these networks through Ethiopian church, civil society, cultural, and artistic associations. My activities and interactions through these networks were often local, but sometimes connected me to other Ethiopian communities across North America and in Ethiopia. During my undergraduate studies, I became involved in a participatory research project that precipitated the establishment of a youth-led community development organisation serving Ethiopian-Canadian youth.

Over the five years that I helped to run this organisation, I came to meet, work, and engage with hundreds of young people of Ethiopian descent across North America, most of who were born and raised in North America. These experiences inspired the topic of my Master's research, which focused on

issues of identity, community and belonging among young Ethiopian diasporans (Abebe, 2009). While I worked in the development sector for two years upon graduating, my relationship to development in Ethiopia is largely shaped through my involvement in community-driven fundraisers, projects, campaigns, and discussions. My trips to Ethiopia over the years were often filled with a *mélange* of familial, recreational, and development related activities. My Amharic comprehension, verbal, and reading skills are less than perfect, however, I can often move between Western and Ethiopian cultural contexts with relative ease.

Occupying a dual subject/examiner position in research is a complex but productive space that I am continually learning how to navigate. Given the dearth of literature written from an ‘insider’ perspective, particularly in diaspora/development studies, I see my work as an important contribution to the field. There was certainly many advantages of being an ‘insider’ such as the ease of access to respondents that facilitated my data collection, as well as the various cultural nuances I was able to understand and subsequently analyse in this thesis. However, there are both unique and common challenges that I have had to address as I moved between insider and outsider positions in different contexts throughout this research process. As an ‘insider’, interviewing people I know or feel connected to through shared heritage or experience, there were times where I gained access to more information than I felt was ethical to reproduce in my research. Often, people opened to me about very personal and painful experiences as our discussions became more intimate and I had to rely on my intuition and discretion in deciding when to stop taking notes during the interview, and when it was or was not appropriate to write about these experiences in the thesis.

There were also times when I feared my analysis might come across like a judgment of or insult to a respondent's character, and I had to manage my feelings of guilt and responsibility as a researcher in the way I represented these narratives and experiences in my thesis. There were also reverse issues with trust that I encountered as an 'insider', where I sensed that certain respondents may have feared being honest in their accounts given my proximity (real or perceived) to their social circles. Other times, I felt a certain level of coldness at the beginning of interviews, as respondents were trying to 'feel me out' and sort out what my agenda might be before opening up. In our discussions, I found that this often came from a sense of disillusionment some individuals had with the Ethiopian community more generally due to negative experiences in the past.

I worked to continually reflect upon on how I was positioned as a researcher, community member, practitioner, student, Westerner, Ethiopian, African, woman, insider, and outsider, and how this framed my interactions, perceptions and analysis. I found that these various positions shifted in visibility, importance, value, and limitation throughout my research process depending upon the context I was in, the person I was interviewing, and even how I consciously or unconsciously used these positions instrumentally. There will always be axes of positionality that frame me as an insider or outsider in particular ways or instances regardless of the research I project embark upon. As Weems (2006) argues, "no matter how similar two persons may be in terms of social location, there are oftentimes differences in interpretation based on the singular, temporal, and spatial dynamics of knowledge construction" (pg. 1002).

Being a researcher certainly had a distancing effect, despite the fact that I shared so much in common with my respondents. No matter how much of a relaxed and familiar environment I created, there was always a certain wall that remained between my respondents and myself as they made calculations about how much or little they wanted to share in a conversation that was motivated by a research agenda. I felt it was only fair that people have the opportunity to keep this wall up, particularly because I did not know what direction my analysis would take me. Therefore, I tried not to obscure that fact that our discussion was fundamentally part of a research process and not just coffee with a friend.

Ultimately, I could not, and did not necessarily want to, conduct this research as a dispassionate observer or examiner. My 'data' is not just data; it includes the life stories and experiences of a group of people I feel very connected to, some of whom I know quite personally. There was a sense of responsibility, and sometimes angst, that came along with that level of connectedness to my research; however, this was something I tried to work through and reflect upon in my fieldwork journal rather than suppress or dismiss. My notes included candid accounts of times when I felt conflicted, confused, inspired, and affected by the research process in various ways, and this reflective process helped me stay honest and accountable in my analysis and writing.

3.5.3 Potential Limitations of Study

As with any research process, there were a number of decisions and conditions that may have shaped my results or analysis in ways that limit this research. While there may be many limitations of which I am not aware, I

have worked to mitigate and/or account for the following potential limitations throughout my research process:

Researcher Position and Bias

My social location is shaped by the sum of my life experiences, including upbringing, privileges, belief systems, education, relationships, race, etc. As discussed above, this positions me in various different ways in relation to my respondents, which has affected my research outcomes in ways that I am both aware and unaware of. My proximity to this research topic may have made me 'blind' to certain things that could have analytical value, or I may have entered into this research with certain presumptions that I failed to challenge. With that said, as a post-positivist researcher, I do not believe it is possible or desirable for research to be completely 'objective' and free from all researcher bias or influence. I have tried as much as possible to remain cognisant of the ways that my personal bias may affect my research, and have worked to maintain a level of transparency and critical distance that provides readers with the necessary information to evaluate my analysis and theoretical insights.

Credibility of Respondent Narratives

My primary data consists of self-reported accounts of YDEO lived experiences and engagements in Ethiopian development. It is possible, if not likely, that many of these accounts differed in some way from the actual events in my respondents' lives. For example, respondents may have tailored their responses based upon what they felt I wanted to hear or amplified experiences that they assumed fit within my research focus – a phenomenon often described as the Hawthorne Effect (Macefield, 2007). I tried to mitigate

this by speaking in very general terms about the goals of my research, and asking open-ended rather than leading questions.

There are other factors that may have influenced my respondents' narratives, which are inevitable in any exercise asking people to provide a retroactive account of their experiences. Often, people have a selective memory and their analysis of past decisions and encounters may be shaped by their current system of knowledge, beliefs, and social positions. Ultimately, I was just as interested in my respondents' *interpretations* of their lived experiences as I was by what may have actually transpired. While I could not control what they chose to tell me, conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews allowed for enough time and opportunity to get to know my respondents, including the lens with which they used to look back on and describe their thought processes and interactions.

Sampling Methods

The respondents in this research represent a purposive but non-probability sample of YDEOs from North America, as discussed in section 3.3.3 above. I chose this particular form of sampling as it aligned with the goals of my research as well as my theoretical and analytical frameworks. However, this limits the nature of the claims that I can make as well as the generaliseability of my results. I cannot, and do not aim to, speak to the experiences of all YDEOs in North America, therefore randomised and probable sampling was not necessary for my research design. However, I did attempt to be as representative as possible within my purposive sample along axes of gender, religion, age, city, and ethnicity. Ultimately, I was more successful in some of these efforts than others.

For example, I achieved a good balance of male and female respondents, however I had a difficult time finding a significant number of respondents of Muslim faith or background. While a larger proportion of people of Ethiopian descent in North America come from a Christian heritage (See Chapter 4), I believe this imbalance is also partially reflective of the limits of my access and personal connections with Muslim communities within the Ethiopian diaspora. It is also possible that fewer YDEOs from Muslim communities felt a connection with my research and did not volunteer to participate. This could be because they have found other ways to negotiate relationships with Ethiopia outside of development initiatives, or perhaps other social identities and communities are simply more salient to them (see Section 6.2.2). Relying on my personal networks and snowball techniques proved a very effective method for my research, however there were inevitably many people and perspectives that I did not have the opportunity to fully engage with because they were either not visible or readily accessible to me.

Scope of Research

The process of designing this research involved making decisions about its scope and what I did and did not have the time or resources to examine. My curiosities about this research topic are endless, however I had to focus my methodology and analysis in order to make this a manageable project. If I had the opportunity to expand the scope of this research, I would have liked to interview a few other groups of people alongside my existing sample. It would have been interesting to speak with YDEOs who have *never* engaged in Ethiopian development efforts in order to compare different processes and permutations of diasporic identification and social practice. Speaking with the family members of my respondents may have also proved insightful and may

have offered an opportunity to corroborate the stories my respondents shared with me.

Finally, there are many things I could have learned by speaking with various individuals implicated within YDEO development initiatives, including local nationals in Ethiopia and the administrators of various international development organisations. Ultimately, I found that an actor-centred approach was the best way of exploring my research questions in a focused and in-depth manner. I was fundamentally interested in the interpretive process that connected YDEO identities to their practices, and understanding this process required the form of deep engagement with their narratives that is reflected in the methodological design of this research.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have detailed the methodological design, decisions, and processes that have shaped this thesis. These are not peripheral details; rather, they represent the building blocks upon which this research was framed and established. From my broad epistemological worldview, to the specifics of my body language and demeanour during interviews – in many ways these details say as much about my research as the actual substantive content and findings. As discussed above, my methodology was qualitative in nature, my data collection process was flexible in design, and my analytical approach was iterative and interpretive. Together, this provided a unified framework for my research, and proved to be effective in the pursuit to understand the nature and meaning attached to YDEO social identities and practices.

The *interactionist* theoretical framework guided my methodological decisions at every stage of the research process. As an actor-centred approach, this

framework led me to focus on in depth interviewing, which was designed to draw out detailed personal histories and first-person narratives. Interactionism also draws attention to the dynamic relationship between social identities, groups, and practices, which shaped the nature of my interviews and focus of my data analysis. Further, this framework provided a systematic method for examining both manifestations of structure and agency as they relate to YDEO experiences and engagements with Ethiopian development.

I approached my data as discursive texts, and in my analysis I looked for connections between individual narratives/experiences and broader social ideas, movements, and systems of power. In this chapter, I also reviewed a number of research considerations including ethical standards, positionality, and the potential limitations of my study. Through this reflective exercise, I aim to provide the reader with as much relevant contextual information as possible, both about my research process and about myself as an individual and researcher. It is my hope that this context highlights both the strengths of this research, as well as future opportunities to fill in the gaps with different perspectives and approaches.

Chapter 4. YDEOs: A Historically Grounded Generation

Meron Hadero is an Ethiopian-American writer who has spent most of her life in the United States. In 2015, she published a short story entitled 'Mekonnen aka Mack aka Huey Freakin' Newton' in the literary journal *Boulevard*. The piece is a coming of age story following the adolescent trials and triumphs of a boy named Mekonnen who moves from Ethiopia to the United States with his family at the age of eleven. Mekonnen's family settled

in Brooklyn, New York in the late 1980s, which was a time when racial tensions were very high in the city. As the story unfolds, Mekonnen and his parents have to come to terms with their newfound Black-ness, and the extent to which this complements or contradicts their other identities.

The immigration officer corrected the forms. Africans, he said, are black. Lesson one. From that day on, my mother believed in the possibility of two identities: we were Ethiopians, no doubt about it, and maybe we might become African Americans concurrently, but why worry about it, she said. My father declared that no, we were not African Americans, but Africans in America. My parents had grown up in a system with its own caste stratifications (light, brown, red, black along with Amhara, Tigray, Kembata, and all the other eighty-two tribes that stacked up to form the social ladder in Ethiopia). They carried that thinking over to the US; it did not translate; they could not let it go. I tried to cut through all that complexity and said, "Why aren't we just black?" My father, who was privileged enough back home to get us here, retorted, "Mekonnen, you are not just anything." My mother agreed. That ended the conversation, and any real racial identity I developed was not negotiated at home but was between me and the world outside (Hadero, 2015).

Meron Hadero's story illustrates the transnational and local realities that young diasporans of Ethiopian origin (YDEOs), like my respondents, must navigate as they construct their social lives and identities. While Mekonnen's parents were in a new land, their worldview was coloured by a set of experiences and truths established in a place they left behind, at least physically. Ethiopia clearly served as an important point of reference for Mekonnen's parents, and as primary agents of his socialisation, his parents' experiences and perspectives were important in shaping his reality as well.

In this chapter, I provide a brief overview of the Ethiopian historical context that bears particular significance to my respondents and their families, and that which is relevant to the process of YDEO engagement in Ethiopian development that I explore in this research. Much of this context includes political events that my respondents did not experience directly, but were nonetheless important in shaping their social landscapes. As we see through Mekonnen's experience, and as I will discuss in the sections below, the past, present, local, and transnational come together in dynamic ways and carve

out a unique and shared experience among YDEOs in North America. I begin in section 4.1 with a brief overview of contemporary Ethiopian political history, focusing on the period following the communist revolution in 1974. In section 4.2, I review the history of international development discourse and practice in Ethiopia. Section 4.3 summarises the emergence and nature of the Ethiopian diaspora in North America, and section 4.4. looks more specifically at Ethiopian diaspora-government relations. Finally, section 4.5 explores the ways in which this historical context has shaped and grounded the experiences of YDEOs in North America as a whole, and those in my research in particular.

4.1 Ethiopian Political History

Often heralded as the ‘cradle of humanity’, the division of the African Rift Valley encapsulated by Ethiopian borders is believed to be the home of the first homosapiens, the ancient Aksumite civilisation, and figured prominently at the dawn of the world’s major religious movements (Marcus, 1994; Pankhurst, 2001). Ethiopia was governed by various monarchical systems until 1974, however the boundaries of these empires shifted, as did the reach and exercise of power. The second half of the nineteenth century saw three major historical figures take the throne as Emperor, each facing a different challenge with a colonial power: Tewodros, Endrias and Menelik. Of greatest importance to the mainstream Ethiopian social and political psyche is Emperor Menelik II’s defeat of the Italians at the battle of Adwa in 1896. The defeat was disastrous to Italy’s image, and that of White colonial powers in general – so much so that face-saving scientific studies began to emerge claiming that Ethiopians were Caucasians who were “darkened by exposure to the equatorial sun” (Rollins, 1998, p. 3).

In 1930, Haile Selassie was crowned Emperor of Ethiopia and he continued to bring significant institutional and technological changes to the country that he began while he was a regent (Rollins, 1998, p. 10). Mussolini's 1935-36 Italo-Ethiopian war, however, prevented the Emperor from continuing his modernisation program and he was eventually forced into exile (Ofcansky & Berry, 2004, p. 17). The Emperor continued to lobby for support to fight the occupation while in exile, however there was little response from the global powers that were more interested in placating Mussolini at the time. This changed when Mussolini declared war on France in 1940, and the British and Commonwealth armies came to the aid of Ethiopian patriots who had already been waging a guerrilla war during the occupation; full Ethiopian independence was then restored in 1941 (Milkias, 2011, p. xxi).

Ethiopia is one of two African countries that were never colonised, which is at the core of mainstream nationalist narratives and remains historically significant to pan-African and Black Atlantic discourse. In fact, "Ethiopia was the African country that most significantly raised African-consciousness among twentieth-century African Americans" (Rollins, 1998, p. 1). The struggle to maintain Ethiopian sovereignty was supported by Black communities around the world, who had found a political and even spiritual stake in the preservation of the mythico-historical nation. This was particularly true for the burgeoning Rastafarian community in Jamaica, for whom the Emperor was divine and Ethiopia was the 'promised land' (Cohen, 2008; Milkias, 2011). However, the Ethiopian monarchy would only enjoy another thirty years, as internal challenges to its legitimacy and power began to intensify, particularly once news that the Emperor was concealing a devastating famine in the North became public knowledge.

In 1974, a student-led movement escalated into a revolution that overthrew the monarchy and installed a communist regime named the *Derg*, under the leadership of Mengistu Haile Mariam. This regime “unleashed a military and political reign of terror against its real and imagined opponents [and] also pursued socialist economic policies that reduced agricultural productivity and helped bring on famine, resulting in the deaths of untold tens of thousands of people” (Ofcansky & Berry, 2004, p. 17). The ‘Red Terror’ – the *Derg*’s most enduring legacy – cost Ethiopia a generation of educated youth and professionals who were lost to murder, imprisonment, and forced migration. Ultimately, the *Derg* failed to achieve legitimacy or bring prosperity to the country, which laid the foundation upon which a northern ethno-regional insurgency mobilised to topple the regime in 1991 (Abbink, 2006, p. 180). The resulting government was named the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and remains in power at the time of writing.

The EPRDF “fundamentally restructured the Ethiopian state” and has managed to maintain control over the economy, in spite of its free market rhetoric (Abbink, 2006, p. 180). In a policy that was met with a mixed reception, the Government adopted ‘ethnic nationalism’ as its official state ideology and actively discouraged any pan-Ethiopian political discourse. The political borders were restructured into nine regional states along ethno-cultural linguistic lines, and new legislation granted states the right to secede and promoted local ethnic languages within the political and education systems (Nega, 2010, p. 1429). Ethiopia recognised Eritrean independence in 1993 following thirty years of war and a referendum in which estimates show that over ninety percent of all eligible voters in the Eritrean diaspora

participated, with ninety-nine percent voting in favour of independence (Ali-Ali, Black, & Koser, 2001, pp. 621-622). However, tensions continued between the two states resulting in the 1998-2000 war, where tens of thousands were killed on either side of the newly constructed border (Sorenson & Matsuoka, 2001, p. 51). In 2005, highly contested elections results led to large demonstrations and state sponsored violence launched against political opponents and civilians alike (Abbink, 2006; Nega, 2010). In addition, a number of 'low-intensity conflicts' have taken place under the EPRDF, including in Oromia, Ogaden, Amhara, and Afar regions (Nega, 2010, p. 1429).

As a result of these and other questionable political decisions, scholars and human rights activists have become increasingly critical of the EPRDF. While many initially viewed ethnic federalism as a progressive model, there is growing evidence to suggest that it is a divide-and-rule strategy devised to maintain and legitimise power that was earned by force (Bariagaber, 1998; Teshome-Bahiru & Záhořík, 2008). The first leader of the EPRDF was the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, a notorious figure who is both credited with and faulted for much of the changes in contemporary Ethiopia. Zenawi led Ethiopia for twenty-one years, right until his death in 2012 at the age of fifty-seven, from an illness that is still shrouded in much mystery. He was a charismatic leader who led the country with a diplomatic but iron fist, and he is considered to be the architect of the EPRDF's unique brand of "authoritarian developmentalism" (Vestal, 2012, p. 198).

This brand, which has endured even after Zenawi's death, is characterised by a blend of rapid urbanisation, state-led economic development, international diplomacy, and shrewd yet violent suppression of local political dissent. The EPRDF won nearly every seat in Parliament in the 2010 elections, which

reflected the systematic silencing of dissent since 2005, the fragmentation of the opposition, and questionable election practices overall (Milkias, 2011, p. 402). At the time of writing, the EPRDF is still the ruling party in Ethiopia, is currently led by Zenawi's successor Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, and has not waived from the course set out before Zenawi's death. While the Government has supported a number of social and economic growth initiatives that have gained both local and global appreciation, public spaces for political participation continue to shrink and the political future of the country remains in a precarious state.

4.2 International Development in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has consistently ranked among the poorest countries in the world. Unfavourable climate conditions, political instability, population growth, HIV/AIDS, and inequitable geopolitical factors have all contributed to intractable chronic poverty in the region. However, domestic projects of social, political and economic development have always existed in response, with varying levels of political will, investment, and success. Every imperial and revolutionary leader in Ethiopia has left a unique developmental legacy ranging from agricultural reforms, to mass literacy campaigns, to infrastructure and road projects. At the grassroots level, indigenous forms of community organising, such as rotating savings and credit groups, have survived for centuries, creating invaluable social safety nets to households, and an infrastructure for contemporary civil society organisations to build upon. However, the modern landscape of development in Ethiopia has been shaped considerably by Western foreign aid and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). With this has come an influx in resources, but also new sets of challenges for the country. The 1973 and 1984-

1985 famines, the latter in particular, catapulted Ethiopia into the global spotlight and planted the seeds for what now exists as a massive and complex international development industry in the country.

The northern highlands of Ethiopia are chronically food insecure, and the worst affected during the 1973 and 1984-1985 famines (Harrison, 2002). While it is widely acknowledged that the imperial government was well aware of the severity of the 1973 famine, political and diplomatic interests motivated them to present the country as a 'bountiful nation capable of feeding itself and its neighbours' instead – a controversy which precipitated the fall of Emperor Haile Selassie and emergence of the *Derg* government (Kissi, 2000, pp. 113-114). It was global coverage of the 1984-1985 famine, however, that contributed most to the expansion of international aid and development efforts in Ethiopia. BBC's broadcast of Ethiopia's famine on October 24, 1984 reached an audience of over 470 million people worldwide, with Michael Buerk reporting that it was "the closest thing to hell on earth", and complementary graphic images of dead children and desolate land (Poster, 2012, pp. 406-407). The broadcast inspired a number of global campaigns and fundraisers. Most notably, Live Aid and the associated pop music recordings *Do they Know It's Christmas?*, and *We Are the World*, both rose to the top of the music charts and, together with the concerts, raised hundreds of millions of dollars for famine relief. The public pressure that came with the publicity of the famine forced Western governments and the *Derg* to respond aggressively (Poster, 2012). As Gill (2010) suggests, "the face of aid was transformed and the face of hunger was Ethiopian" (p. 2).

Most contemporary INGOs working in Ethiopia (including religiously-affiliated agencies) trace their roots to one of the famine crises, and were

initially focused on emergency relief operations and food distribution (Clark, 2000, p. 4). However, when the EPRDF came into power they were eager to steer both government and NGO efforts away from relief and towards longer-term development, including education, financial services, and health programs (Clark, 2000, p. 6). Since the 1990's the EPRDF has remained committed to governing Ethiopia as a 'developmental state', which some have credited for the country's economic growth, and others for the perpetuation of undemocratic practices. In 2010, Human Rights Watch published a scathing report entitled 'Development without Freedom: How Aid Underwrites Repression in Ethiopia'.

Development agencies have turned a blind eye to the Ethiopian government's repression of civil and political rights, even though they recognise these rights to be central to sustainable socioeconomic development. Donors defend the decision to support the government by pointing to Ethiopia's stability— particularly when compared to neighboring Somalia—and by highlighting the country's progress in meeting development indicators. [...] Some donor officials also argue that broad economic progress outweighs individual political freedoms. Frequently, they also concede that existing monitoring programs are simply not able to track the political manipulation of donor-supported services. The Ethiopian population pays a heavy price for this approach to development (Human Rights Watch, 2010, pp. 4-5).

As the report highlights, relations between government and NGOs in Ethiopia often hinge upon a fine balance of competing visions of 'development', and this balance is not easily kept.

Initially, the EPRDF created a favourable environment for both international and local NGOs to operate and expand in. "In 2006–7 INGOs brought in \$537 million in foreign exchange, \$100 million more than coffee, which is Ethiopia's largest export earner [...and] investment from NGOs [was] equivalent to 25% of the government's annual budget" (Gill, 2010, p. 178). Many of the world's most prominent INGOs such as Save the Children and Oxfam have their largest and most resourced programs in Ethiopia. However, a number of concerns have been raised since the proliferation of INGOs in

Ethiopia, including a 'NGO dependency' that undermines local community structures, under-resourcing of local NGOs, and government accountability directed towards donors rather than local people (Clark, 2000; Habermann, 2011; Harrison, 2002).

Over the years, the relationship between the Ethiopian Government, donor agencies, and NGOs has become increasingly strained. The EPRDF's resistance to market reforms and governance conditionalities during the structural adjustment period led to significant reductions in Western aid, and the 2005 election unrest created deep mistrust between the government and civil society organisations (Gill, 2010; Harrison, 2002; Nega & Milofsky, 2011). The late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi increasingly viewed both Western aid and development as 'unwelcome neoliberal impositions' (Gill, 2010, pp. 167 - 168). This was epitomised in 2009 with the passing of *The Charities and Societies Proclamation* (dubbed *The Anti-NGO Law*), which has significantly stifled international and local NGO work in Ethiopia.

Any civil society group that receives more than 10 per cent of funding from abroad, even from Ethiopian citizens, is outlawed as a foreign organization, and are forbidden from working on human rights and a range of other issues [...] The aim of the law is to ensure that international NGOs simply restrict their activities to service delivery, and do not stray into areas such as human and democratic rights, gender equality, and conflict resolution (Nega & Milofsky, 2011, p. ii45).

The law has effectively criminalised the human rights network in Ethiopia and has also targeted diaspora-funded philanthropic initiatives through its restrictions – all of which reflects what the EPRDF perceives as threats to its power. While it promises to be significant, at the time of writing, the full impact of this law is yet to be seen. At the very least, the law has made it prohibitively difficult for international and diaspora-led organisations to play an active and/or open role in shaping Ethiopia's civil society and human rights networks (Aalen & Tronvoll, 2009; Yeshanew, 2012).

While it has earned many critics, the Ethiopian Government has not waived in its commitment to the country's development, that is, development on its own terms. Much of this commitment is reflected in its rhetoric, however much is also seen in its policies and actions as well. The Government has received international accolades for its progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, the steady increase in the country's Human Development Index score, and the sustained (but contested) 'double-digit' economic growth figures (Alemu, 2009; Gill, 2010; Mwanakatwe & Barrow, 2010; UNDP, 2011). Increasing investments from East and South Asia (China in particular) has captured recent attention due to the acceleration of the country's infrastructural and agricultural sectors, in addition to the associated human rights and environmental concerns.

While over 88 percent of the population still suffers 'multiple deprivations' and Ethiopia remains in the 'low human development category' according to the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2011), the Government remains optimistic about the fate of the country. In 2009, the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was quoted as saying, "I believe by 2025 we will be a middle income country with a per capita income of at least \$1,000 [per annum] and at around that time, slightly before perhaps, we will be completely free of aid of any variety" (Gill, 2010, p. 265). Despite this vision, the range of social, political and economic issues discussed here suggests that significant social, political and economic challenges need to be addressed before this ambitious vision can be realised in Ethiopia.

4.3 Ethiopian Diaspora in North America

The Ethiopian diaspora has been constituted by a complex intersection of historical social, political and economic processes. “Although, the exact size of the Ethiopian diaspora is unknown, it is estimated to be 1-2 million people with large concentrations in the Middle East, North America and Europe” (Addis, 2014, p. 127). Before the 1974 revolution, substantial and permanent international migration from Ethiopia was rare, and largely the reserve of a small segment of the population who were either political or religious elites (Zewde, Yntiso, & Berhanu, 2014). However, by 1981 (just six years after the revolution), Ethiopia accounted for 1,743,800 of the 2,966,100 African refugees in the world, and 2,400,000 of the 3,366,300 internally displaced people on the Continent (Getahun, 2007, p. 48). While the most common destinations for Ethiopian migrants have always been neighbouring African countries, major migration flows to North America also began in the 1970s (usually via another African or European country) and have developed into the most politically and economically significant Ethiopian diaspora communities (Fransen & Katie, 2009; Lyons, 2007; Shelemay & Kaplan, 2015).

Ethiopians historically represent the first time Africans have come to the United States as a refugee group (McSpadden, 1987, pp. 799-800), and they remain one of the main sources of African immigrants to both Canada and the United States (Halie Fenta et al., 2006, p. 925). Lyons (2007) identifies three major waves or ‘generations’ of Ethiopian refugees and immigrants to the United States.

The first wave of those associated with Emperor Haile Sellasie’s regime fled the Marxist military government known as the Derg in the early 1970s. These were followed by leftist opponents such as supporters of the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party (EPRP) who fled the period of ‘Red Terror’ in the mid- to late-1970s. Others have left following the coming to power of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991 (Lyons, 2007, p. 536).

Terrazas (2007) notes that the first waves to the West (early 1970s and 1980s) largely consisted of elite and ruling class Ethiopians who were threatened by the political transitions and repression during the *Derg*. However, subsequent waves to North America have included family reunifications, overstayed tourist visas, skilled migrants, U.S. Diversity Lottery Visa winners, and other waves of forced migrations including those fleeing the EPRDF (Fransen & Katie, 2009; Lyons, 2007; Terrazas, 2007).

Figures representing the size of Ethiopian communities in North America differ, with wide variations between census statistics and community estimates. According to the 1996 Canadian Census, only 65 Ethiopians were reported to have arrived in Canada prior to 1976 (M Ornstein, 2000, p. 22), and these same statistics showed that 21,591 Ethiopian immigrants arrived in Canada between 1974 and 1996, most of whom settled in Ontario (H. Fenta, Hyman, & Noh, 2004, p. 364). While recent census figures remain modest⁵, it is estimated that over 70,000 people of Ethiopian origin live in Toronto alone (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2008; Ethiopian Association in Toronto, 2010). As of 2007, the number of Ethiopian-born residents in the U.S. was estimated to be 73,000, and 460,000 if second and subsequent generations are included (Lyons, 2007). While the Ethiopian communities are far more geographically spread out in the U.S. than they are in Canada, there are particular concentrations found in cities such as Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and New York.

The Ethiopian community in Washington, D.C. is the largest and most established, with some estimating that there are as many as 350,000 to 400,000

⁵ The most recent Canadian census data available is from the 2011 National Household Survey, in which 24,535 people reported being born in Ethiopia and 6,595 reported being recent immigrants from the country (Government of Canada, 2011).

in the greater Washington, D.C. area (Lyons, 2007, p. 546; Terrazas, 2007). Washington, D.C. is also noted as being the focal point for the most significant social, political and economic mobilisations in the Ethiopian diaspora, and is often courted by Western and Ethiopian political leaders/hopefuls looking to garner diaspora support or resources. As Kaplan (2015) argues, “there is a general consensus among Ethiopians and others that [the Washington, D.C.] region hosts the largest population of Ethiopians of any urban area in the United States and is the most important cultural center” (p. 60).

The contemporary and patterned nature of Ethiopian migrations to North America has generated a number of shared experiences, narratives, and transnational mobilisations that make it possible to speak about ‘the Ethiopian diaspora’ in an analytically meaningful way. However, as Lyons (2007) notes, “it is impossible to characterise the diverse population and wide range of identities within the Ethiopian diaspora fully or accurately” (p. 593). Ethiopia is made up of over 80 ethnic groups, and over 85 languages are currently spoken across the country. There are three major religious groups in Ethiopia, all of which have a strong presence in the diaspora. According to the 2007 Ethiopian census, 42 percent of the population identify as followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 34 percent as Muslims, and 18 percent as Protestants/Evangelical Christians (Feyissa, 2014, p. 98). There is also an ancient community of Ethiopian Jews predominantly from Northwestern Ethiopia, thousands of whom have migrated to Israel since the beginning of the 1980s.⁶ The diaspora’s heterogeneity is not only reflected in its religious

⁶ Operation Moses, was the covert multilateral initiative in the early 1980s led by the Israeli Government, which facilitated the smuggling of over 8,000 thousand Ethiopian Jews (Beta Israel) out of Ethiopia and into Israel (Getahun, 2007). Since then, the community in Israel

and cultural makeup, but also through different waves of migration and settlement, as discussed above.

The reasons Ethiopians chose or were forced to leave the country have varied over the period from the 1974 Ethiopian revolution to the present; moreover, their relationships to both Ethiopia and their host countries have also evolved over time, with elements of “diaspora consciousness” developing at different rates in different circumstances and patterns of resettlement and integration varying not only from place to place but also within a single locale over the years (Shelemay & Kaplan, 2015, p. 7).

It is therefore important to reflect upon the nature of and relationship between pre-migration experiences and the post-migration social lives and practices of Ethiopian immigrants and their descendants.

In *Cartographies of Diaspora*, Avtar Brah (1996) develops a conceptualisation of ‘diaspora space’, which describes the “politics of location, of being situated and positioned” (p. 238). In many respects, the Ethiopian diaspora operates as a *space* just as much as it does as a *group* or *identity*. This *space* is contested – there are gatekeepers, rebels, and innovators, as well as some made visible and others invisible. Sorenson and Matsuoka (2001) examine ‘Abyssinian fundamentalism’, a term they use to describe the exclusionary discourse employed by former Ethiopian elites from the highlands who were involved in long-distance nationalist projects in the diaspora. Kumsa’s (2006) work draws attention to the experiences of the Oromo diaspora, an ethno-national group who form the numerical majority in Ethiopia but have been historically marginalised and subjugated. There is an increasing body of work examining Oromo diasporic identity, which is often linked to the Oromo liberation movement in Ethiopia and draws upon a nationalist discourse distinctly separate from and in opposition to mainstream Ethiopian nationalist discourse (Jalata, 2008; Kumsa, 2006; Lyons, 2007; Sorenson, 1992).

has grown significantly; according to Israeli Government documents, at the end of 2011 the Ethiopian community in Israel numbered 125,500 residents (State of Israel, 2012).

The Harari diaspora community, a predominantly Muslim group originally from the eastern Ethiopian city of Harar, is largely based in Toronto. The diaspora community has used new media and virtual platforms to reconstruct their Harari heritage, asserting it as a form of nationality and creating linkages with a global Islamic identity (Gibb, 2002; Hafkin, 2015). Along with class and ethnicity, subsequent genealogical generations have added additional layers of complexity and diversity to the Ethiopian diaspora, often by challenging the status quo and reinterpreting Ethiopian history, identities, and cultural norms (Abebe, 2009; Hafkin, 2015). However, an enriched and expanded understanding of what constitutes a diaspora should provide the space to engage with these complexities and cleavages rather than homogenising the experience of these Ethiopian communities.

4.4 Ethiopian Diaspora – Government Relations

The Ethiopian Government has a very complicated love/hate relationship with its diasporas, particularly with those in North America. The same holds true for many countries with large diasporas, as émigrés often represent both a potential destabilising force and significant source of capital and political support (Gamlen, 2014; Laakso & Hautaniemi, 2014; Merz, Chen, & Geithner, 2007). While the de facto relationship with its diaspora is often tense, on paper, the Ethiopian Government has adopted a diaspora engagement strategy along the lines of what is often promoted by international organisations like The World Bank and International Organization for Migration. In fact, most international policy documents related to African diaspora and development use Ethiopia as a case study, such as the migration policy brief prepared for the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs which described Ethiopia's diaspora engagement policies as "one of the most

progressive in Sub-Saharan Africa” (Kuschminder, 2010, p. 1). Much of the Government’s efforts are focused on engaging the diasporas in North America, who remit the most money and are the most politically active (Terrazas, 2007). In 2010, the National Bank of Ethiopia reported more than \$600 million USD in official remittance inflows, with the actual volume (including informal channels) likely in the range of \$1 - \$2 billion annually (Geda & Irving, 2011, p. 113). Of the Ethiopian diaspora remittances recorded by the UNDP, North America accounts for the largest flow (41 percent) in dollar value (Fransen & Katie, 2009, p. 24).

In 2002, the Ethiopian Government created the General Directorate in charge of Ethiopian Expatriate Affairs (GDEEA) through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has provided a framework for its diaspora engagement strategies. For example, the Government has allowed “foreign nationals of Ethiopian origin” (this includes people born abroad) to apply for “yellow” identity cards, which bestow upon the bearer select rights and privileges such as visa-free entry as well as certain residence, employment, and property rights (Agunias & Newland, 2012, p. 98). Additionally, “in order to further facilitate the contact between the Diaspora and their country [Ethiopia], each Ethiopian Embassy has assigned a diplomat who is solely responsible for handling community issues” (Government of Ethiopia, 2012). The Government has used its embassies and consular networks to attract diaspora investment and aggressively sell diaspora bonds. Ethiopia’s first attempt at promoting a diaspora bond was notably unsuccessful, and in 2011, the Government launched a second effort, the Renaissance Dam Bond, to help raise \$4.8 billion for the construction of a dam designed to be Africa’s largest hydroelectric power plant (Agunias & Newland, 2012, pp. 210-211). The

outcome of this most recent effort is still unclear.

The Ethiopian Government states that they seek “to build a warm and constructive relationship” with the diaspora (Government of Ethiopia, 2012); however, some of the measures taken seem to suggest otherwise. As Lyons (2015) argues, the current Government’s posture and actions suggest that “diaspora remittances and investments are welcome, but diasporans’ political perspectives are not” (p. 86). There is much evidence to suggest that the Government is wary of diaspora participation in the social and political development of the country, which is likely the result of the role that the diaspora (particularly in North America) played in supporting the opposition during the highly contested 2005 elections (see Section 4.1). The Government’s defensive position is most clearly revealed in the restrictions they established through the 2009 *The Charities and Societies Proclamation* that targets civil society and human rights groups with links to the diaspora (see Section 4.2).

The Ethiopian Government has not always been the key actor driving diaspora-government relations; in many cases it is diaspora individuals and groups that have made the ‘first move’ and set the terms of their engagement. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Ethiopian Students Union in North America (ESUNA) and the Ethiopian Students Union in Europe (ESUE) both played key roles in seeding and consolidating the opposition that eventually overthrew the Ethiopian imperial regime (Zewde et al., 2014, p. 129). Since then, there have been several other significant Ethiopian political movements that have either developed in the diaspora, or have relied upon major financial and moral support from the diaspora. This includes the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) (founded in 1975), the Oromo Liberation

Front (OLF) (founded in 1976), and the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) (founded in 2004) (Lyons, 2015; Zewde et al., 2014).

In 1997, a nine-person delegation of Ethiopian Muslims from the diaspora travelled to Ethiopia for a month of high-level political meetings.

Before the delegation headed to Ethiopia, it conducted a baseline survey in order to establish the prominent Muslim issues in contemporary Ethiopia. On the basis of these findings, as well as the extensive feedback it received from Muslims in Ethiopia, the delegation produced a document entitled *Questions Raised by the Ethiopian Muslims' Diaspora to the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi*, which outlined and articulated the prominent Ethiopian Muslim issues. The document contained a wide range of issues, with the main talking points including: [...] creating a greater historical space for Islam in Ethiopia [...] allowing unencumbered operation of Islamic NGOs in the country — with reference to the institutional imbalance reflected in the existence of numerous Christian NGOs as opposed to the fewer and controlled Islamic NGOs; allowing the establishment of Islamic banks; [...] introducing more balanced and responsible mass media [...] (Feyissa, 2014, pp. 107-108).

As the delegation's demands illustrate, the motivations driving Ethiopian diaspora engagement with Ethiopian government often combine political, philanthropic, and economic interests. Another illustration of this is the Tigray Development Association (TDA), an NGO that was founded in Washington, D.C. in 1989 to aid in the rebuilding and development of Northern Ethiopia following the famine. The TDA eventually moved its headquarters to Northern Ethiopia and draws major support from the regional political party, the TPLF – so much so that some argue that “TDA is a proxy organization that works for TPLF, which directs the activities of the association and controls its investments” (Zewde et al., 2014, pp. 153-154). Conflict-generated diaspora groups, like the first-wave Ethiopian diaspora, have an inherently complex relationship with their countries of origin. As we see in the examples cited above, much of this complexity is manifested in the diaspora-state relations of émigrés themselves, and as I will discuss below, this complexity re-emerges in new forms with the new generation born and/or raised abroad.

4.5 Young Diasporans of Ethiopian Origin in North America

In the sections above, I provide a brief overview of some contemporary socio-political events and processes that have shaped Ethiopia, its diasporas, and the transnational landscape that connects these people and institutions. The violent political events in the 1970s and 1980s played a particularly important role in precipitating mass Ethiopian emigration to North America and throughout the world. Most of my respondents did not experience these events directly, however they were *products* of these events and in that sense were affected in a number of important and arguably direct ways. These YDEOs were the children of a *particular group* of people who left Ethiopia at a *particular time* in history under *particular circumstances*.

In Chapter 2, I discuss the work of Eckstein (2002) and Berg and Eckstein (2009) who argue that pre- and post-emigration experiences may be more significant in defining generations of migrants and their children than birth and age cohort. They develop a conceptual framework termed ‘historically grounded generations’, and argue “if migrants from any one country uproot at different times with different lived experiences, they would constitute different historically embedded generations” (Berg & Eckstein, 2009, p. 9). Based on this framework, the large cohort of migrants who fled Ethiopia’s *Derg* regime in the 1970s and 1980s and settled in cities across North America would constitute a specific historically grounded generation. That is, the socio-political environment in Ethiopia before their migration, and the nature of departure from the country has profoundly shaped their post-migration lived experiences, including their settlement patterns, social relations, diasporic identities, and homeland engagement.

Around seventy-five percent of my respondents were the children of people who either fled Ethiopia after and as a result of the 1974 revolution, or were studying or working abroad beforehand and could not return due to the political turmoil at the time.⁷ The following are characteristics that were common to many of the parents of these respondents: 1) they were among the elite and educated class in Ethiopia; 2) they were forced migrants or became exiled after the revolution; 3) they were among the first Ethiopians to settle in their North American cities; 4) they have many family members in Ethiopia whom they regularly speak with and support through remittances; 5) they were critical of the *Derg* regime and the current EPRDF regime in Ethiopia; 6) they placed a high value on education when raising their children; and, 7) they eventually transitioned into a middle class lifestyle in North America.

These experiences have defined and shaped the lives of this wave of migrants from Ethiopia and forms the historical context within which their generation is embedded. However, the story does not begin and end with them, but rather, continues to unfold with their North American born/raised children. Their pre-migration status in Ethiopia, the circumstances that led to their departure, and their continued transnational social practices have had an important impact on shaping YDEO imaginations of and connections to Ethiopia. Their initial settlement experiences in North America, including the size and nature of the Ethiopian diaspora community and the level of diversity in their city of residence, affected various aspects of YDEO psychosocial development, including racial and cultural identity formation. Their political views regarding the *Derg* and EPRDF regimes in Ethiopia were often passed down to their children, and could even dictate if and when they

⁷ The other twenty-five percent of my respondents either left Ethiopia on their own when they were young, or came from families that left Ethiopia for other reasons or opportunities.

could visit Ethiopia as a family safely. Finally, their social class and capital in North America opened doors and opportunities for YDEOs, including higher education and possibilities for international travel and other enrichment activities.

The relationship between the lives of YDEOs and the experiences of their parents is strong, however this relationship is not deterministic and can often play out in unpredictable ways. YDEOs did not simply absorb and adopt the views and practices of their parents, many of them chose to reinterpret, ignore, or reject them instead. There are a number of examples that illustrate the role of agency and the impact of the wider socio-political context in shaping YDEO decisions and lives, particularly as they relate to culture, race, and gender. For example, many of my respondents' parents were very politically active and embedded within the Ethiopian diaspora communities where they settled (at least initially); however, they discouraged their children from doing the same and preferred that they focus on their education instead. While these YDEOs rarely showed interest in the Ethiopian networks built by their parents, they often searched for and became engaged in communities and initiatives that brought other YDEOs together, and did this with or without their parents' support.

In addition, my respondents' parents rarely played an active role in cultivating their racial identity; if anything, they promoted a form of Ethiopian exceptionalism and worked to de-emphasise their children's 'Blackness'. However, most of my respondents developed a black racial identity on their own, which was borne out of both negative experiences with discrimination and positive associations with Black history and culture in North America. As early immigrants from a relatively conservative and

religious society (of various faiths), many of my respondents' parents held perspectives about gender that were more defined and restrictive than those in North America. For example, females were often under more family and community surveillance than their male counterparts, and were expected to present themselves as demure and chaste. However, as with most young people, YDEOs rarely took their parents' perspectives at face value, but rather, negotiated, challenged, and often rebelled against the gendered expectations of their families and community.

I argue that the population segment sampled in my research, that is, the first large cohort of people of Ethiopian descent born and/or raised in North America⁸, have been defined by a unique set of socio-political circumstances and cultural influences and are in themselves a 'historically grounded generation'. While my respondents grew up in various cities across North America and have unique lived experiences and personality traits, there was a rhythm and pattern to their narratives as they described their upbringing, social practices, and various decision-making processes. Though YDEO lives were certainly not scripted, there was continuity to their life histories, and from our conversations emerged a number of stock characters and common scenes, acts, and plot twists.

Much like anyone else, their adolescence and young adulthood was often a turbulent period, marked by uncertainty and existential angst. However, YDEOs shared a particular experience that added another layer of complexity as they navigated and negotiated their social and cultural lives. The

⁸ The first large wave of migration from Ethiopia to North America began in the mid-1970s when the *Derg* regime came into power, and continued until the early 1990s when it was overthrown by the EPRDF regime. Therefore, most first wave YDEOs, the children of this group of migrants, were born between the years of 1970-1995.

connection to Ethiopia, however loose or tenuous, played an important role in shaping YDEO social identities and practices. It was not so much that they had a connection to Ethiopia that mattered for this research as much as the similarity and nature of that connection. My respondents were close enough to the Ethiopian lived experience that it featured prominently in their socialisation and everyday cultural milieu, yet far enough that there was often a cultural and linguistic disconnect between them and the wider Ethiopian community. In addition, their parents migrated from Ethiopia at a similar time and under similar circumstances, which meant YDEO imaginations of Ethiopia were shaped by personal stories and oral histories that were strikingly similar in tone and substance.

Ultimately, the life trajectories of my respondents differed in innumerable ways, however their experiences were connected by a shared and transnational history that shaped their identifications with Ethiopia and also factored in their decisions to engage in Ethiopian development. As the children of forced migrants, their mission was clear – to excel and ‘make it’ in the new land and (re)claim the possibility of security and success that their parents had to defer or leave behind. However, their lives were also steeped in a transnational social field that was animated by a relationship to Ethiopia – the Ethiopia that was left behind by their parents, the Ethiopia where they vacation and still have family, and the Ethiopia they believed should be in the making.

This thesis is not an audit of how much success YDEOs have managed to achieve in North America, nor do I try and measure the extent of their assimilation or diasporic commitment. What I examine instead is the dynamic relationship that exists between the social, political, and economic lives of

YDEOs and their cultural and material connections to Ethiopia. While this relationship is expressed in a number of different ways, I look specifically at YDEO engagement in Ethiopian development initiatives – this provides a concrete framework for analysing what is otherwise a rather amorphous phenomenon. In the following chapters, I delve into my respondent narratives as they describe their motivations for engaging in Ethiopian development, the development activities themselves, and the ways in which these experiences have shaped their relationships, identities, and decisions in life so far.

Chapter 5. Connecting the Dots: Motivations and Meaning Driving Engagement

I begin my examination of YDEOs and their Ethiopian development initiatives by focusing first on their *motivations*. This chapter will engage deeply with the life events, ideologies, and ambitions, which have driven YDEOs to seek out, join and organise various Ethiopian development initiatives. I start from and stay focused on the motivations as expressed by the respondents themselves. However, I unpack these expressions to examine the values, strategies and discourses embedded within the ways in which these individuals rationalise and represent their own actions. Diaspora/development literature often begins with the assumption that diasporans are inherently motivated to engage in development, and focuses any related analyses on the intensity or perceived integrity of these motivations. However, my research challenges this presumption and demonstrates that the motivations to engage deserve more than a cursory analysis. From an interactionist perspective, it is the site of much of the meaning-making that directs people's actions, and subsequently helps them to interpret their experiences and interactions with others (See Chapter 3 for more discussion on interactionism). Thus, I examine *why* YDEOs chose to engage in Ethiopian development and how this is connected to their perceptions of who they are and where they feel they belong in the world.

A sociological framework provides a useful lens with which to interpret this process, as it draws attention to the social nature of what are otherwise expressed as personal decisions. Sökefeld (2006) utilises a sociological approach – social movement theory – to develop his framework for analysing the formation of diaspora communities.

If we take diaspora as a social form that is not a necessary outcome of migration but that is contingent on the imagination of a transnational community and upon the self-identification of actors as members of this community, we must ask how actors are mobilised for such identification. The social movement approach suggests that there must be opportunities, mobilizing structures and practices, and frames that enable this mobilization (Sökefeld, 2006, p. 271).

Sökefeld's overall approach is valuable in that he moves away from primordialist conceptions of diaspora communities and draws attention to their socially constructed nature. However, characterising diasporic consciousness as a function of social mobilisation does not do justice to the role of agency in this process, and privileges organised and institutionalised forms of diasporic action. This leaves little room for the ad hoc and independent forms of action, which were far more common among the respondents in my research⁹.

An interactionist framework offers an alternative sociological approach that is less deterministic, as it encourages us to examine social phenomena through the meanings that individual actors attach to their own behaviour. Most action is not purely reactionary, nor a response to coercion or blind indoctrination. There is an interpretive process that precedes and frames even the most predictable forms of human action, as people make calculations about how others will perceive their actions and how this reflects back on their own conceptions of who they are or should be. Diaspora engagement in homeland development is a particularly suitable phenomenon to examine this dynamic between identity, society, and action, as it reflects a structured mechanism through which groups and individuals create meaning and a sense of belonging through social practice. However, development practices are rarely conceptualised as *social interactions*, but rather as people or

⁹ Chapter 6 includes a discussion of the nature of YDEO development activities. In section 6.1, I also return to the social movement framework, applying it to understand particular social *actions* within diaspora communities rather than the formation of diasporas themselves.

institutions that *act*, and individuals, communities, or countries which are *acted upon*. This characterisation reveals more about the power dynamics that frame development discourse than it does about the ways in which these practices actually play out in the minds of actors and within complex social fields. However, our understanding of the nature and politics of development discourse and practice is significantly limited when we fail to investigate the social and psychological processes which drive these in the first place.

This chapter engages with such questions and seeks to understand, through the narratives of the actors themselves, how processes of constructing *the self* intersect with those that construct social relations and formations. In the sections below, I will discuss the meanings YDEOs attached to their engagement in Ethiopian development in their descriptions of why they were initially motivated to do so. My analysis establishes how these actions were part of a process of constructing a social, political and cultural identity. While many respondents described their motivations as part of a desire to identify with Ethiopia, this process often served as a mechanism with which these individuals were wrestling with broader questions about their personal ambitions, values, and place in the world. I begin my analysis in 5.1 by discussing those motivations that related to spiritual, professional, and other personal development pursuits. In section 5.2, I will focus on and deconstruct philanthropic motivations and desires to make an impact, give back, and add value. This will be followed in section 5.3 by an examination of narratives that reflected commitments to social justice and efforts to reconcile privilege and responsibility. Finally, 5.4 will explore the role that experiences with exclusion and a search for belonging played in motivating YDEOs to engage with Ethiopia through development efforts.

5.1 *'Start with yourself and work your way out': Spirituality, Career Goals, and Self-Actualisation*

Contemporary diaspora/development discourse is largely predicated upon the notion that diasporas are driven by altruistic and philanthropic motivations if and when they choose to engage in homeland development (See Chapter 2). Some scholars have problematised this notion by examining the extent to which certain diaspora contributions drive conflict in the homeland, exacerbate divisions and inequity, or benefit diasporas as much if not more than those framed as beneficiaries (Dekkers & Rutten, 2011; Kapur, 2007; Laakso & Hautaniemi, 2014; Merz et al., 2007; Newland, Terrazas, & Munster, 2010; Van Hear & Cohen, 2015). However, the dichotomy between 'the benign self-sacrificing diaspora' and 'the divisive self-interested diaspora' creates caricatures out of these diverse and complex social beings. It is difficult to avoid making tacit value judgments about the legitimacy of certain motivations over others when policy directives are what shape so much of the diaspora/development literature and debate, and so much of the interest in diaspora behaviour is driven by a desire to change or redirect it. This representation of diaspora engagement in development as a mere social intervention narrows our analytical scope considerably. However, conceptualising diaspora engagement in development as a social phenomenon instead opens up a wider range of questions, and makes the research relevant to a broader set of debates about social behaviour and human nature.

Conducting in-depth interviews with my respondents opened up the space to discuss their development activities within the context of a larger set of experiences, decisions, and questions they were navigating in their life. Many

were initially driven by motivations that had to do with themselves rather than or in addition to the people and causes their efforts were directed towards (although some respondents articulated this more directly than others). Often, people grew up aware of the development issues in Ethiopia, however they were motivated to act upon these issues only after coming to some crossroads or transition in their personal lives. This is not necessarily unique to my respondents or diasporans. There is a body of literature on general volunteerism and philanthropy that supports this finding and demonstrates that there are always psychosocial if not material benefits to the person who is framed as the 'giver' (Allahyari, 2000; Bekkers & Wiepking, 2010; Heron, 2007; Hudson & Inkson, 2006; McBride, Lough, & Sherraden, 2012). However it is still rare to find this discussed when it is the efforts and activities of diasporas which are being examined. Rather than evaluating these motivations along a spectrum of legitimacy or hypocrisy, I engage with the tensions that surfaced in my interviews as respondents discussed how their own interests intersected with their desires to help others in the 'homeland'.

5.1.1 Spirituality, Purpose, and Meaning

Most of my respondents were in their early to mid-twenties either at the time of our interview or at the time they began their involvement in an Ethiopian development initiative. Many recounted a recent period where they were exploring existential and spiritual questions about their larger purpose in life. For some – usually younger – respondents, this coincided with a time when they were tasked with making decisions about their educational and career path. For other – usually older – respondents, they had found security and success in their professional lives but were looking for something more

meaningful out of life as a whole. 'Purpose', 'calling', and 'meaning' were words that were consistently used by my respondents to describe what they were searching for when they decided to devote their time, resources or life to Ethiopian development.

The decisions of those who had a religious worldview were most commonly described in these terms, including the following respondents:

I hope I'm here [in Ethiopia] because of calling, not just need and opportunity (Haile: male, late-20s, Ethiopia)¹⁰.

I chose international development because I prayed about what I should be studying in university when I was in grade eleven and I was led towards development. [...] I feel like [contributing to development] is something that is based on my faith. I feel like people have different things that they are pushed towards, but I just feel like eventually that's the plan that God has for my life (Meskerem: female, early-20s, Toronto).

I was 19 and I went [to Ethiopia] for religious reasons. I really felt like that was the call on my life at that moment. Something that God wanted me to experience. [...] So I went [to a church] and the Pastor advertised this trip that he was going to be taking to Ethiopia. It was a missions trip that was meant to help AIDS orphans and other charity organisations. A lot of development work, to put it basically, and also to work with the church. So it was pitched as something like that. That was never really my interest or my focus. I really don't know why I wanted to go but I just knew I was meant to go (Kidus: male, early-20s, Toronto).

There were four other respondents, in addition to Kidus, whose development activities were either facilitated by a religious organisation or connected to a Christian missions trip. In these cases, there was a very direct link between their spiritual pursuits and the motivations behind engaging in development. However, there were many more like Haile and Meskerem whose activities were secular, nevertheless still motivated or influenced by their spiritual or religious convictions. Most faith systems, including Christianity, call their followers to act charitably, serve others, and live for a purpose greater than

¹⁰ My respondents are referenced throughout my thesis using pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity. I also list their approximate age at the time of our interview, as well as the location where our interview took place (See Appendix IV).

themselves. However, in the quote above, Kidus admits that he was seeking a very personal spiritual experience, which was facilitated by the schedule of development activities he participated in.

Typically, the YDEOs I interviewed were born or lived most of their lives in a metropolitan North American city. Most had completed or were pursuing university degrees, and many of them had moved on to find material success through professional careers. However, what emerged as a common theme was the depiction of Western culture as individualistic and superficial. Several respondents explained that they came to a point where they were in search of more meaningful pursuits than the materialistic ones they had up until that point. As Amina (female, late-20s, DC) phrases it below, Ethiopia provided 'a perfect exit' – an opportunity to try something new, more admirable, and more worthy of their time and efforts.

I was honestly really stressed out when I moved [to Ethiopia]. I had been doing this rat race for years. I was working for two-and-a-half years in an industry where taking a vacation day or a sick day was taboo [...] It was a very vain industry, and naturally I wasn't like that. I just worked really hard, and I was pretty creative and I thought like, there's more meaning to life. You know you start to ask yourself questions like, why am I doing this? Is it going to be something I can do in the long run? And of course it wasn't, so I decided that it was a perfect exit. It made sense. [...] And I never planned to go to grad school until I realised I couldn't do real development work [otherwise]. So I decided that if I didn't come up with a great business idea that worked that I could get funding for, then I would go to grad school and go that route (Amina: female, late-20s, DC).

Yacob (male, early-30s, DC) was a law school student at the time he decided to head to Ethiopia to provide volunteer legal services at a human rights organisation. His arrival at the organisation happened to coincide with the 2005 post-election violence in Addis Ababa, which resulted in a very intense, traumatic, and short-lived volunteer experience for him.

So the issue of my second trip [to Ethiopia] – I think I had suggested before that one of the principle motivators was this effort to find meaning in a kind of

meaningless toil. This is what I kind of melodramatically painted my time at law school, right (laughing)? [...] So yeah, we can say that it's all well and good to try and find meaning but, by what measure do I have it that you know, going to Ethiopia is going to help me find meaning, and going to Ethiopia to do human rights work is going to help me find meaning (Yacob: male, early-30s, DC)?

One can sense the cynicism in Yacob's tone as he critiques his initial assumption that he would find meaning through his volunteer work in Ethiopia.

On the other hand, Endrias (male, early-30s, Ethiopia) arrived in Ethiopia only a week prior to our interview and was still sorting out what he would do while he was there.

I've always been dissatisfied with [my level of engagement with Ethiopian issues] but it's just a rat race and you can't get out of it, it's hard to describe. In the end, you look up and the year's gone by [...] And so I wasn't self deluded in the sense that I knew, the longer I stayed [in America] – I'm in my 30s now, I can't be talking about how I'm gonna do it in my 40s you know? So if I really want to help people, now is the time. I knew what I was doing now was just more career driven but not really of any substance to me (Endrias: male, early-30s, Ethiopia).

There is a marked difference in the level of his optimism in Endrias' narrative when compared to Yacob and others who had spent more time working on an Ethiopian development project. However, overall, most of my respondents recounted some sort of spiritual or existential process they were navigating and described a range of emotions and reflections that came along with it. They were asking themselves complex questions such as 'what is my purpose', 'how can I be fulfilled in life', and, 'where can I find meaning'? For many, Ethiopia provided the *cause*, and development provided the *mechanism* with which they could wrestle with these big questions in life.

5.1.2 *Professional Advancement and Learning Opportunities*

People in the Ethiopian diaspora face a number of structural barriers, an experience that is consistent with other racialised and immigrant communities in North America (see Section 5.4.1). However, there are also a number of ways in which they enjoy privilege and access both in Ethiopia and in North America. While many of the initial waves of Ethiopian migrants arrived to North America as refugees, most were part of the elite and educated class in Ethiopia and were fleeing political persecution as power shifted hands (See Chapter 4). The YDEOs I interviewed were typically children of this first wave of Ethiopian migrants, and many have benefitted from the privileges and resources their parent's maintained or managed to regain. My respondents are part of a group that also enjoys the benefits of added social capital owing to their Western education, accent-free English, and personal and professional networks. In many cases, their connections to and in Ethiopia have become assets as well. As the global economy has become increasingly interconnected, a number of opportunities have opened up for professionals who have the skills and networks needed to thrive in this transnational landscape.

In her analysis of flexible citizenship among Chinese in the diaspora, Ong (1993) argues that 'Overseas Chinese' have found strategic ways to leverage their unique social, intellectual and economic capital. She discusses "the evolution of that stratum of upper middle-class and upper-class diaspora Chinese who have the resources to negotiate and exploit the varied conditions of commerce and family residence in China, Britain, and other countries" (Ong, 1993, p. 753). Mohan and Zack-Williams (2002) argue, "economic actors, especially the more astute and powerful, 'switch' ethnic affiliation and

diasporic identity on and off depending upon the relative advantages to be gained by either strategy” (p. 222). While most of my respondents were not engaged in explicit business ventures in Ethiopia, many were motivated to engage in a particular Ethiopian development effort due, at least in part, to the professional rewards associated with the opportunity. The ease with which they discussed moving between jobs and countries speaks to a range of class, gender, and geopolitical dynamics that operate alongside the individual’s decision-making processes.

Several of my respondents left careers that were financially rewarding to pursue a learning opportunity or professional advancement that was made possible through a particular charitable or development initiative. Eyob’s (male, mid-30s, Ethiopia) experience in Ethiopia is illustrative of this point. Eyob was Ivy League educated and working as a corporate lawyer in New York when he decided to take a two-year sabbatical to work as a policy advisor at one of the departments in the Ethiopian Government. This was a quasi-volunteer position, as the remuneration he received was a fraction of what he was making in New York. The following was his response after I asked whether he enjoyed his work as a corporate lawyer:

I did enjoy it but I guess this is part of the reason why I came here [to Ethiopia]. [...] I was always more interested intellectually in public international law. So there are some firms that do it, but A) its difficult to make that switch directly from corporate law, so strategically it was good to have this experience. Two, I always had in the back of my mind wanting to spend more time in Ethiopia and this seemed to be – I didn’t have any weighty obligations, so it seemed to be the right time to do it. And then I had always been interested in diplomacy and international affairs, so being able to mix all of that and doing it in Ethiopia means you get to do it at a higher level than say, coming into the State Department as a junior officer. And so all of that coalesced into making this more interesting.

Later on in our discussion, Eyob explained that while he was very active in Ethiopian development initiatives in the U.S., he is less so in Ethiopia partly

because he feels that working in the Government is a service to the public in itself. However, he was very candid about that fact that the move to Ethiopia was both personally and professionally strategic. He emphasised this point in an online article where he discussed his move to Ethiopia, explaining that he is but a part of a larger wave of young Ethiopians moving to Ethiopia in order to take advantage of emerging opportunities.¹¹

There were a number of other respondents who alluded to the strategic considerations that went into their decisions to engage in development. Dereje (male, early-30s, Ethiopia) was born and raised in California and moved to Ethiopia to start an NGO focused on education. Prior to moving, he had worked in investment banking in New York until he was laid off during the global economic recession. This encouraged him to pursue an MBA, however he realised that he needed more leadership experience in order to make his application competitive. He explained how this was connected to his decision to start an NGO in Ethiopia:

Well I know I needed more leadership experience. I have good work experience, but I didn't really manage people. I haven't really had leadership in any of my extra curricular activities. I've done lots of mentorship; I've helped in hiring processes and diversity-type events. But in terms of managing other people, I've not done much of that at all. I know I need that experience before I go to graduate school. It wasn't going to happen while in the work I was in. Most of my jobs I was more of a researcher or sales person, you don't really manage a team of five people or even two people, you might have one person under you and that's that.

While starting an NGO had clear instrumental value for Dereje, throughout our discussion he emphasised that he was nevertheless committed to the development cause itself, and also invested in making sure the organisation was effective and sustainable.

¹¹ I have not provided a direct quote or link to the website referenced in order to maintain the anonymity of my respondent.

Kiros (male, early-40s, Ethiopia) left the U.S. to take a senior position in the Ethiopia office of an international development organisation. He explained that this transition was prompted by a desire to learn more about Ethiopia and what it would take to make an impact there. The following was his response when asked how he came to the decision to move to Ethiopia:

It wasn't an incident per se. It was just a realisation after almost five years of working in the mayor's office. I started to think about, ok what's next for me? So there was two clear paths: One – I can continue with the political work that I was doing, so I could have left and joined another campaign or run for office, or join another presidential campaign or whatever. Two – or this would be a good break. And I want do something else, I want to understand development, I want to understand Ethiopia, what are the challenges, how can I contribute to that? So its really, thinking around what my next career move is gonna be.

There is a sense of ambition, entitlement, and confidence that comes through in the way that these respondents describe their decisions. Their desire to learn, achieve, and experience new things aligns with the ways that their broader genealogical generation have been characterised within the media and literature.

Tulgan and Martin (2001) define 'Generation Y' as global citizens born in the late seventies and early eighties:

We can describe Generation Yers in four positive ways as: 1. A generation of new confidence, upbeat and full of self-esteem; 2. The most education-minded generation in history; 3. A generation paving the way to a more open tolerant society; 4. A generation leading a new wave of volunteerism (p. 4).

Many of my respondents, including Eyob, Dereje and Kiros, fit this generational profile in a number of ways. While doing charitable work was important to them, so were other educational and professional pursuits. At times a professional opportunity provided the means to fulfil charitable desires, such as in Kiros' case; other times it was a charitable activity that opened up opportunities for employment and professional growth, as was the case for Dereje. While most of those who pursued their interests in

Ethiopian development had to forgo or defer some financial gain, the fact that they could explore these opportunities and still economically sustain themselves is a marker of privilege in itself. Some of this privilege is manifested in the unique social and cultural capital that comes with having a transnational lived experience in an increasingly transnational global economy. For many of my respondents, their previously loose or ambiguous connections to Ethiopia were now materialising into viable professional opportunities and other social and economic benefits.

5.1.3 Autonomy and Adventure

While some of my respondents engaged in Ethiopian development activities that were based in North America, more than half of them were either currently based in Ethiopia or had travelled there at some point to participate in a development initiative. The demographics of those who made a permanent or long term move to Ethiopia became increasingly predictable as I was conducting my interviews there. While almost all of the YDEOs in my research belong to an educated middle class, those currently in Ethiopia tended to have a higher socio-economic status. They generally came from upper-middle class families, had attained graduate school credentials, and had high paying professional careers before their move to Ethiopia. They were also older (generally in the early 30s), did not have children and were mostly male. In discussing the factors that were involved in making their decisions to move to Ethiopia, I learned that these individuals could absorb the risks and uncertainties because they had access to the resources, networks, and safety nets needed to do so. There also seemed to be gender dynamics at play. While gender norms (globally and in the Ethiopian community) are constantly shifting and being challenged, young women are

often expected to stay close to family and avoid making decisions considered unorthodox or risky (for example, quitting one's job to participate in a development project in Ethiopia). This may be why most of the people I could find to interview in Ethiopia tended to be male, despite the fact that my respondents in North America were predominantly female, and the development sector as a whole is predominantly staffed by female volunteers and workers (Heron, 2007).

In their discussion of African diasporas and development, Mohan and Zack-Williams (2002) point out that "some, mainly those privileged by gender and class, can flourish in the diaspora and make use of the multiple connections in place and around the globe" (p. 233). One way to make use of those connections is to become engaged in charitable or development work directed towards the homeland. For many diasporans, engaging in such work – particularly *in situ* – is seen as a privilege bestowed upon those who can afford to sacrifice the time or resources to do so. Despite the sacrificial element involved or associated with development work, there are many ways in which it can benefit the person framed as the benefactor. There can be professional rewards (see 5.1.2), but also a range of other non-material benefits, which may factor into their decision to become involved. For many of the YDEOs I spoke with, Ethiopia represented an opportunity to work or live in a way that was not possible for them in North America. For some, this meant they were engaged in more meaningful work and had more autonomy and power than they had before. For others, Ethiopia was somewhat of an uncharted territory, the exploration of which seemed exciting and adventurous. In many cases, Ethiopia presented an opportunity to live a well-

rounded lifestyle, where they did not have to choose between professional success and personal fulfilment.

Haile (male, late-20s, Ethiopia) was born and raised between Canada and the U.S. In 2009, he moved to Ethiopia *“with no job and a sparse resume”* – a decision that he described as a *“leap of faith”*. Prior to his decision to move, he had come to Ethiopia to conduct research for his Master’s thesis, which was focused on the impact of health technologies. While his fieldwork was initially scheduled to be two months long, he extended it to six months and then just days after he defended his thesis, bought a ticket to return to Ethiopia permanently. Haile explained that he was motivated to move to Ethiopia because he found it difficult to see the fruits of his labour while living and working in North America, in terms of impact on other people’s lives. After his move in 2009, he eventually found a position working with a U.S.-funded initiative, which recruited diaspora to come and work in the healthcare sector in Ethiopia. Haile worked there for over a year then took a similar position with a public sector initiative that was connected to an American university.

When I met with Haile, he had recently resigned from his job and started a company intended to develop information technology systems to support health ministries in Ethiopia. He had become frustrated with the pace of working in Ethiopia, as well as the bureaucracy, politics, and interpersonal challenges that came along with the working environment. He was also getting the sense that his peers from university were working in positions that were more demanding and intellectually stimulating than those that he had found in Ethiopia thus far. Haile explained that there were three things that he was looking for in meaningful work: *“complexity, autonomy, and a*

relationship between effort and results". While he was yet to find that balance, he was hopeful that his newest venture would bring him closer to this goal.

Haile's engagement in Ethiopian development was largely driven by his desire for more autonomous and meaningful work. He was seeking a form of freedom and stimulation that he felt was lacking in the North American job sector. This was a common theme across my respondents, particularly those who were currently based in Ethiopia. Many described Ethiopia, particularly Addis Ababa, as an emerging market with exciting opportunities open to those daring and resilient enough to seize them. While most of my respondents were not engaged in the business sector, they often portrayed themselves as social entrepreneurs and used market language to describe their decisions and environments. For example, Habte (male, mid-30s, Ethiopia) had recently moved to Ethiopia from California, where he was born and raised. He was a teacher by profession and came to Ethiopia with the desire to make an impact on early childhood education in the country. He explained that his move came at a time in his life where he was "*feeling ballzy*", and motivated to "*go and try something different*".

However, Habte conducted research and weighed the odds before taking this gamble and felt satisfied that "*Ethiopia was part of an educational growth*". As he described, "*the realistic side was that I knew that I could make money here*". Habte had initially taken a low wage position at an under-resourced and disorderly public school in Ethiopia, which was aligned with his intentions when he moved. However, when I met him he was in the process of pursuing a teaching opportunity at a private school. He explained, "*what I learned from working at [the public school] is that I need something that reminds me that I am successful [...] If you want to help the world, start with yourself and work your way*

out from there". Habte still had ambitions to help make a large impact on the public education system in Ethiopia, however he felt he needed to invest in his professional development first.

Habte described his decision to move to Ethiopia as "ballzy". There was a thrill and excitement that he associated with the novelty of the environment and the uncertainty of what lay ahead. Like Habte, most of the YDEOs in my research, by design and definition, had spent little to no time in Ethiopia prior to or even during their engagement in development. However, their unfamiliarity with that environment was compensated by an ancestral connection that made Ethiopia more accessible and meaningful than other places in the world. This made Ethiopia a choice destination for those seeking to balance their philanthropic and adventurous ambitions. Faiven (female, early-20s, Toronto) was pursuing a degree in International Development Studies (IDS) when we met in Toronto. In the long-term, her goal is to find a career working in the Ethiopian development sector. The following was her response when I asked what motivated her to choose IDS as a school major and pursue development practice in Ethiopia as a career:

Well, initially before I even applied to IDS, I was always fascinated by peoples' stories about them travelling or seeing pictures, in particular when [my friend] went to Brazil and I was seeing people around me going to these types of places, it just looked so amazing. And I was like, I wanna travel but I wanna see things that I've never seen before. Like any of the five senses: like smelling, seeing, tasting foods I've never tasted. Like I was fascinated with the rest of the world. And the connection with Ethiopia was when I started thinking about it seriously – like what will I do if I travel? I'm not just going to travel for luxury. [...] I was like, I have power, I am able to travel if I want. And where would I want to invest my life? The closest connection to me was Ethiopia.

Once again, it was the balance between novelty and an existing connection that drew Faiven to Ethiopia, and the desire to find purpose and meaning in her pursuits that drew her to Ethiopian development.

5.2 *'I feel like I can change things when I am there': Making an Impact, Giving Back, and Adding Value*

There is a relationship that exists between power and privilege on the one hand, and patronage and philanthropy on the other. This relationship is often masked or glossed over because of the ways that it challenges constructs such as *the benevolent benefactor* and *the appreciative beneficiary*, which so many organisations and initiatives rely upon to survive. In the world of diaspora-led development, there is an added layer of complexity that serves to make this issue particularly delicate and difficult to address. Diasporans often see themselves and are represented as 'one' with the people that they aim to serve and support in the homeland. Their ancestral connection suggests that they are instinctively acting in the best interests of the people and country.

Further, diasporans often identify with their country of origin in a deep and personal manner due to familial, interpersonal and other psychosocial ties and relationships. Discussing their positions of power and privilege vis-à-vis people in the homeland may have a distancing effect and disrupt efforts to remain or become connected to the country. Addressing the ways in which their social location may have shaped their motivations or method of engaging in homeland development can be perceived as an indictment of their integrity, which is particularly damning to those who feel a kinship with or responsibility to the people in that country. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the social, political and economic configurations that shape diaspora-led development efforts and direct a complex set of power relations that are constantly shifting but always at play.

In this section I will present and unpack the philanthropic and humanitarian motivations to engage in Ethiopian development, as described by my

respondents. I do not evaluate or privilege these motivations to engage in development over others (such as pursuing professional advancement). Instead, I focus here on the ways in which my respondents have framed these particular motivations, the discourses that they draw upon in doing so, and the extent to which this is connected to their social, cultural and economic place in the world. In many ways, their narratives reveal more about psychosocial needs common to all people (e.g. the need to feel valued and productive) than they do about behavioural traits unique to diaspora communities. While most of the YDEOs I spoke with had a desire to contribute to Ethiopian development in particular, this was often preceded by or coupled with an overarching desire to have some impact in the world and be part of a positive change process more generally.

5.2.1 *Having the Power to Change Things*

Lealem (male, early-30s, Ethiopia) was an American who spent a few years working in the U.K. before moving to Ethiopia. He found his time living in London very isolating and uninspiring. *“I’ve never felt as insignificant as I did in London”*, he explained. Habte (male, mid-30s, Ethiopia), while finding professional success and leading a full social life in California, felt unfulfilled and unsatisfied with his ability to make a difference. He explained, *“The thing that I had been hungering for in LA and was not finding was social impact. I wasn’t feeding that part of me”*. Many of the people I spoke with had an interest and desire to see positive change in the world around them, and more specifically, to play a part in that change process. They felt they had knowledge, skills and resources to contribute; however many did not feel they had the opportunities or access needed to affect significant change where they lived in the West. Others simply felt that their capabilities were better suited and

more needed in Ethiopia, where the impact of their efforts would be amplified.

YDEO narratives revealed a commitment to the cause of global social justice, but also a personal need to feel that they mattered in the world and had the power to turn their efforts into results. For many, the realisation that they could change someone else's life was very empowering and the ability to feel connected to that other person added another layer of satisfaction and sense of accomplishment. Faiven (female, early-20s, Toronto) described a profound encounter that occurred on her first trip to Ethiopia:

This one time I gave a beggar a dollar, a one birr¹², and then I didn't take the gum she was offering. I just told her, 'that's ok keep it'. And like the way she looked at me, the way she was so thankful, put me in this new position I had never been in at nine years old. I felt like I had so much power, and by doing such a small, little, almost meaningless to me action, it changed someone's life.

Faiven described this experience as particularly empowering and explained that it eventually played a factor in her decision to pursue a degree in International Development and desire to work in Ethiopia.

Helen (female, mid-30s, Ethiopia) moved to Ethiopia to work in the corporate social responsibility unit of a private sector company. After graduating with an ivy-league business degree, she had many opportunities to find a lucrative job in the U.S., however she explained, *"I just wanted to go somewhere where I could make a difference"*. 'Making a difference' for many of my respondents was measured in relative rather than absolute terms. They wanted to see positive change that was commensurate with their level of effort and connected to the particular set of skills, interests and experiences they brought to the initiative.

¹² 'Birr' is the unit of currency in Ethiopia, and the term is also used to refer more generally to money or other currencies. From 2011 – 2016, 1 U.S. dollar could buy between 16-21 Ethiopian Birr (ETB), and 1 Canadian dollar could buy between 14-18 ETB (according to historical exchange rates listed on www.XE.com).

Social justice and community service were important to them, and they wanted to be in a place or position where they could contribute towards such efforts in an unmediated fashion.

But when I was [volunteering in South America], I decided I wanted to go to Ethiopia, and I think I would make a bigger impact seeing as I actually speak the language (Meron: female, mid-20s, Toronto).

It sounds corny but I guess [...] knowing that I can do things there [in Ethiopia]. I don't know – I can make an impact or something like that. I feel like I can change things when I am there (Meskerem: female, early-20s, Toronto).

I don't think I'm patriotic in any sense of the word. I just like helping people [...] whether that person is Ethiopian or not doesn't make a difference at the end of the day. The opportunities to help in Ethiopia are much more visible, and to have an impact on that person doesn't take much (Haile: male, late-20s, Ethiopia).

Yeah, I definitely think we [second generation Ethiopians] kind of are like in the middle place where we have like power on both ends so we have to use it (Elsa: female, mid-20s, Toronto).

In the excerpts above, my respondents expressed the various ways they felt equipped and empowered to contribute towards change and development in Ethiopia. They were more invested in the issues and felt a greater sense of agency and ability to respond to the needs in Ethiopia.

Like Elsa (quoted above), many of my respondents found that being culturally, politically or physically positioned in-between North America and Ethiopia could be harnessed as social capital and wielded into power to affect the change they wanted to see. The search for power to affect change emerged as a strong theme in my discussions with YDEOs. There is a confidence and idealism in their narratives that is characteristic of the wilful optimism associated with youth in general, and their generation in particular (as discussed in section 5.1.2). Their sentiments are also reminiscent of development discourse in the West, which attaches urgency to the problems in Africa and fashions a central role for Western actors to address these

problems. This can be seen in the following quote from Kidus (male, early-20s, Toronto) who facetiously described his initial motivations to volunteer in Ethiopia in the following way: *"I thought I would be a superhero, a messiah, swoop in to Ethiopia and change everything"*. It is important to examine these narratives with an even broader analytical lens, as the exercise of 'power' on a micro scale is still always embedded within larger power structures. Power exists within hierarchical social structures and – with the exception of brute violence – it is most often expressed through the accumulation and expending of social and economic capital.

Exploring diaspora/development discourse and practice as a 'field', in the Bourdieusian sense, is a useful way of understanding how power is operating and being expressed in this space. Bourdieu conceives of a field as a

space of positions and position-takings [...] And the position takings (works, political manifestos or demonstrations, and so on), which one may and should treat for analytical purposes as a 'system' of oppositions, are not the result of some kind of objective collusion, but rather the product and the stake of a permanent conflict. In other words, the generative and unifying principle of this 'system' is the struggle itself (Bourdieu & Emanuel, 1996, p. 232).

Engaging in Ethiopian development often provided the YDEOs with an opportunity to take a position of power. It was a field where they felt their social, cultural, and economic capital had greater purchase and they occupied a more favourable position within the social order. They expressed a desire to use this power for public good, but also pointed to the ways in which this power was important in developing a personal sense of influence and purpose in the world. Bourdieu did not conceive of this practice of 'position-taking' as innocuous or incidental but rather, the product of 'conflict' and 'struggle'. Power does not operate in a vacuum, nor can it be claimed without a cost to someone else. While their struggles to feel empowered may be personal, YDEO development practices implicate the social geographies

where they were born and raised, existing development actors in Ethiopia, and the communities targeted by their development initiatives. There is a constant exchange of capital, position, and power, which animates the diaspora/development space and reminds us to stay attune to its complex and political nature.

5.2.2 *Helping People and Feeling Good*

When I met with Ruth (female, late-20s, Toronto) she was raising funds to support the rural education project her father established in Ethiopia and planning a trip to visit the site for the first time. Her family had been involved with the initiative her entire life, however she had only taken an interest in it recently.

For a long time I couldn't care less about the initiative. My mind wasn't there; I was more worried about what was going on in my life, what was going on with my friends. I had no passion. It wasn't until I was older and I see the need, and I could see how good it feels to do good for other people, especially people who have so much less than you. And you have been fortunate enough – even if you don't have a lot more than they have, if you can just help them in any way, I almost feel like its my calling to do something like that. Why not support people that can't support themselves, or give them the necessary tools to do so? And if one person – if I can do that, and I'm helping whoever it is whether my father, whether it be Bob, Joe, Tim, not Ethiopian-related, Ethiopian-related, I'm open, I'm more than willing to do it (Ruth: female, late-20s, Toronto).

Ruth describes her involvement in this development initiative as part of a broader awakening to the importance of helping others. Not only did she become aware of the extent to which helping others made her feel good about herself, she also saw it as an expression of her *true self*. Later in our discussion Ruth explained why she wanted to volunteer in Ethiopia specifically: *“I really want to see where I came from. And I also want to experience something different than what I'm used to. I want to see how other people live, and I want to see how that impacts me”*.

Ruth's narrative provides a useful illustration of the 'helping' discourse that emerged as a theme in my discussions with YDEOs. There are a number of different subject positions that are enacted through this discourse, and a broad set of actors and institutions that facilitate and are implicated in its practices. At times, the YDEOs spoke about helping as a return to the communal values they associated with authentic Ethiopian identity. In other instances, their narratives echoed generic Western projects to help the poor and unfortunate 'Other'. While some respondents were committed to helping as an expression of religious values, others attributed it to the way that they were raised at home. Often, these differing narratives overlapped and were expressed by the same person. Irrespective of its attribution, *to help* was imbued with a moral quality, and the desire to help was part of a pursuit to become a better person.

I borrow two concepts – 'moral selving' and 'the helping imperative' – to aid in analysing the various psychological, social, and political layers of this 'helping discourse'. Allahyari (2000) developed the concept 'moral selving' through her research of American volunteerism, which examines the intersection of charity and morality. She describes moral selving as a complex process of creating oneself as a more virtuous person by drawing on available moral rhetorics to frame particular social practices (i.e. volunteering). Heron (2007) draws on critical race and feminist theory to deconstruct what she terms 'the helping imperative' driving Western development discourse and practice. "I demonstrate that ongoing processes of bourgeois identity formation cannot be comprehended without grasping the imperative that a white middle-class bourgeois subject thinks of her/himself as moral, and to be perceived as such" (Heron, 2007, p. 6). Together these concepts provide a

useful analytical framework with which to examine the motivations ‘to help’ as expressed by my respondents.

My respondents, like many young adults, were in the process of deciding upon and negotiating their values and priorities in life. They were socially and politically aware individuals trying to understand what their role was in addressing the issues in the world around them. Central to their notions of what it meant to be a ‘good’ and ‘complete’ person was a conviction that they should serve and help others. At times, this conviction did not necessarily translate into a sense of responsibility to a particular group of people, social cause, or even outcome, as expressed by the respondents below.

As a person, I don't have grand expectations in life [as long as I'm] living a life where I can take care of myself and the people around me, and feel like I am making a small difference in someone else's life (Russom: male, mid-30s, Ethiopia).

When I left my gig in Miami and moved back here [to DC], I had about five months off and one of the things that I wanted to do – (laughing) in a random and completely self-serving way – was take a bunch of time and just volunteer at one of these homeless shelters in town. It was self-serving in that I could have volunteered and done a bunch of things like legal services – but I actually wanted to be in the kitchen washing dishes. And I asked, I begged the guy, I was like look, I don't want to do any legal services or anything I just want to be in the kitchen. For me it felt very tangible, a very tangible contribution. So that's the selfish part (Yacob: male, early-30s, DC).

Had my research involved interviewing a randomised sample of YDEOs, it is fair to assume that many people would express a generalised desire and commitment to help others such as Russom and Yacob did. However, my methodology involved recruiting individuals who had or were in the process of engaging in Ethiopian development, and my questions focused on understanding why they were motivated to help Ethiopia in particular.

As a result, what was more common among my respondents was that they expressed a moral conviction to help people in general, which translated consequentially into a commitment to help people in Ethiopia.

It's not just about helping Ethiopia, it's about human beings. I see myself living anywhere in the world. I chose Ethiopia because I feel a tie to people that look like me and want to see them achieve. I love to see all human beings succeed, but seeing Ethiopians succeed is the cherry on top (Habte: male, mid-30s, Ethiopia).

The conversations I have in my family are always about helping people, that's how I see my purpose as an Ethiopian-American (Winta: female, mid-30s, DC).

It [her financial donations to Ethiopia] is more about being a better person, not being a better Ethiopian (Tigist: female, late-30s, DC).

Mainstream diaspora/development discourse often interprets diaspora motivation to help their country of origin as an expression of their allegiance to the nation and its people. In the case of people who were born and raised in Ethiopia, this may very well be the case. However, the YDEOs I spoke with were more likely to express a commitment to cosmopolitan values, see themselves as global citizens, and frame their motivations to help Ethiopia as a response to need and access rather than patriotism.

I found that many of my respondents were able and willing to communicate how their motivations to engage in Ethiopian development connected to how they viewed themselves, or wanted to view themselves.

I feel good about myself when I'm here [in Ethiopia], because I might have given someone ten birr on the street [...] It makes me feel good about myself – in a selfish way (Lissan: male, late-20s, Ethiopia).

When I have given money to a charity it's been an emotional thing more than I thought it was going to help the people. It was because I wanted to help, not because I thought it was a long-term solution (Bisrat: male, mid-30s, DC).

There is a lot of selfishness in my need to save the world (Emnet: female, late-20s, DC).

I really enjoyed working on that [World Bank] project [in Ethiopia]. I wrote the report for the Amhara region [...] and saw [that] those guys had used mine as a

template. I realised that I did decent work, enjoyed the process, and my output was appreciated. The team leader even sent an email telling people to do it my way. I realised that it was interesting and I was good at it, and this is what led me to international development. Had I not done that I don't know if I would be drawn to international development (Dagim: male, mid-30s, Ethiopia).

Through their support of development work, they were able to feel successful and construct a moral identity as a good and productive person. The intended beneficiaries of their help and service often served a utilitarian function, in that their betterment operated as evidence of the helper's 'goodness'.

An interactionist framework becomes particularly useful in understanding this process by highlighting the connections between identity, discourse and practice. Allahyari (2000) developed her concept of moral selving "in relation to a symbolic interactionist perspective, with its dynamic understanding of self and society and its attention to the centrality of role taking and the generalized other" (p. 6). She argues that the work of moral selving directs individuals inward as well as outward, and her research examines how volunteers construct a moral self through the practice of feeding the urban poor. Heron's (2007) work helps expand Allahyari's concept; she argues that 'helping' in a developing country context is a practice which feeds into the construction of a moralised Western middle class identity predicated upon historical and racialised notions of the undeveloped 'Other'.

Here again is a story where 'developing countries' appear to be in a state of unmanageable disarray, and where what seems to matter is not just the assistance that is given, but the helping imperative and the effect that 'helping' the passive Other will have on our own life experiences" (Heron, 2007, p. 5).

Deconstructing the helping imperative expressed by my respondents in a similar fashion demonstrates how their development practice offers a structured way for YDEOs to fashion a complex moral and social identity.

5.2.3 *Adding Value and Finding a Role*

Representations of diasporas as ‘commodities’ or ‘resources’ have become the norm within mainstream development discourse. States, international institutions, and researchers regularly use verbs traditionally used to describe capital wealth-maximising strategies (i.e. leveraging, capitalising, exploiting, etc.) to also describe diaspora engagement strategies. Initially, this reflected a fascination and desire to capture value from the large amount of remittances sent by diasporas to their countries of origin (Kapur, 2004). While interest has broadened to include non-capital contributions to development (i.e. skills, knowledge, and values), diaspora relationships to their countries of origin are often still conceptualised or evaluated using economic terms and frameworks (Weinar, 2010). For example, diaspora skills, knowledge and networks are awarded value to extent that these advance distinct economic developmental goals.

Page and Mercer (2010) argue that diasporas have been analysed within an “economistic framework, which has privileged and measured the rational acts of individuals” such as remittances (p. 104). However, when one looks at the broader narrative around African diasporas and development, it is diasporas themselves who are often conceptualised as economic units, not just their contributions. An example of this can be found in Chikezie’s (2011) typology of diaspora capital – what he calls the “5Cs”: intellectual capital, financial capital, political capital, cultural capital, and social capital. As Chikezie (2011) explains, this framework was developed “to help African governments identify ways to capitalise on the asset that the African diaspora represents and to better systematise the diaspora’s contributions to Africa’s development” (p. 262). By representing the diaspora as ‘assets’, the author

transforms them into commodities, which can then be refined and harnessed for African development.

It was difficult to ascertain the extent to which my respondents were directly influenced by this broader policy and public discourse on African diaspora and development. However, the similarity in the terms and metaphors they used to describe their own role in Ethiopian development suggests that this discourse has become pervasive and authoritative enough that it has been diffusely adopted. The most common theme to emerge in this respect was a desire on the part of YDEOs to 'add value' in an Ethiopian development context. For many, this was lined with a moral imperative, as they felt it incumbent on themselves and other diaspora to bring transformation with them as they engaged with or travelled to Ethiopia.

Genet (female, early-30s, Ethiopia) came from a business background and was pursuing business opportunities in Ethiopia that she hoped would have a social impact.

My parents thought I was crazy leaving a stable prestigious high paying job [...] Yeah of course you want to go back to your home country, that's where the most need is and you can add the most value. [...] I could easily extract value in a number of places; many people come to Ethiopia with that mind-set but don't leave something useful. Adding value means leaving something that will stay here. This is why diaspora and foreigners – people who have experienced things in the way they're done best – can bring those best practices. [...] It's a combination of challenge, value add, and personal reward that comes from being in Ethiopia that makes this the most appealing place to be for me (Genet: female, early-30s, Ethiopia).

Genet was highly critical of aid organisations and the NGO system in Ethiopia, and felt strongly that sustainable development would come through investments in the private sector. She drew heavily upon the concept of 'adding value', which may have related to her professional background. However, there were several other respondents who were not engaged in

business but borrowed from similar discourse. For example, Lelisa (female, early-30s, New York) described the difficulties she faced trying to feel comfortable with her role and position in Ethiopia: *"I had something to give [in Ethiopia], but many other people could give it as well. And I wanted to find out, what's my value add? Why am I there? What am I contributing?"*

Kiros (male, early-40s, Ethiopia) moved to Ethiopia to work in the development sector and had very strong opinions about the 'types' of diaspora that had something to offer Ethiopia, and therefore should be targeted and engaged.

So if you look at Ethiopia today, what Ethiopia needs from the diaspora [...] that have done well – assimilated, educated, have resources – we definitely need that group of people, both for their skills and for their resources. If they have enough money, they can invest it here, but most of them like I said are educated, they're nearing retirement age where they can afford to leave their comfortable life in the U.S. and come back here and teach or create opportunities and other stuff. That's a very very good target to go after.

Kiros was referring to those Ethiopians who left as young adults in the 1960s and 1970s and settled in the U.S. and Canada. When speaking about the children of Ethiopian immigrants, Kiros made the following argument:

The kids of these people who are there, its a long term play. I think in the immediate time, I think what Ethiopia needs to do is make sure that they're still connected to the country, and haven't forgotten that – at least through their parents and others – they have a connection to the country. [...] As they grow and become productive members of society, then they can give back to the community. But right now, they're just not in a position of helping Ethiopia for what she needs.

Kiros held a particularly narrow perspective regarding the space and role children of Ethiopian immigrants had in Ethiopia. He saw value in nurturing and investing in their connections to the country to the extent that it created a potential reserve of resources Ethiopia could one day call upon for its development.

Having a developmental objective often provided YDEOs with the legitimacy they needed to carve out a sense of place and belonging in a country they could not fully claim. There were a number of community events I attended as a participant observer during my fieldwork, where remarks and spontaneous conversations with YDEOs who were *not* involved in Ethiopian development underscored this very same point. I attended the Toronto screening of a documentary entitled *Sincerely Ethiopia*, a film directed and produced by a group of YDEOs in the U.S. (See Chapter 7 for more discussion about this film). The film features the stories of locals and Ethiopian diaspora who have found professional success and/or addressed social issues in Ethiopia (Sincerely Ethiopia, 2013b). During the discussion that followed the screening, a YDEO in the audience expressed his admiration of the people featured in the film. He also explained why he had never travelled to Ethiopia himself: *“My biggest fear in going back home is seeing so much need and not being able to do anything about it [and] not being able to sleep at night”*.

On a separate occasion, I met with a friend to seek his help in recruiting respondents from the Ethiopian Muslim community in Toronto. We struck up an interesting conversation about his own relationship to Ethiopia, which I later documented in my fieldwork journal.

[He] has a hard time expressing a connection to Ethiopia, and he said this sheepishly, as if it were something to feel ashamed about. He is travelling to Ethiopia later this year, and said that one of the motivations for going was because he felt he “needed” to, since people always say that. He has an aunt there who runs a local NGO, and has reached out for support, but he has lacked the motivation to do much so far. However, he is thinking about using his professional photography skills to help his aunt’s NGO, perhaps taking some pictures she can use for her promotional material and website. He hopes “this might be a contribution” (Excerpt from my fieldwork journal: Toronto, January 16, 2013).

Overall, the YDEOs I spoke with were eager to engage with Ethiopia in ways that were seen as adding value within a particular development agenda. As

Weinar (2010) argues, “this treatment of diaspora as a resource may seem limiting, as the central values of cultural identity, symbolic belonging, sentimental ties, etc., are not accentuated” (p. 86). While the individuals I interviewed may have had the resources and access needed to fit into this instrumentalised framework, this discourse serves to mask and delegitimise the range of other relationships these or other YDEOs may have or want to develop with Ethiopia.

5.3 *‘That was straight up lottery of the womb’*: Social Justice and Reconciling Guilt and Responsibility

In the section above, I discussed the overarching desires of YDEOs to have an impact in the world and contribute to positive change, and the extent to which this drew them to development practices and initiatives. I build upon that discussion here by exploring how these broad moral and political rhetorics have translated into a desire to engage in Ethiopian development in particular. The narratives presented in this section are snapshots of points in our discussions when my respondents were often the most animated, emotional and uncertain. They discussed deep moral conflicts, which have come about through their awareness of and encounters with poverty and injustice in Ethiopia. Their political views and ethical perspectives on the issues in Ethiopia have been informed by a Western liberal education, media representations of poverty, as well as Ethiopian nationalist and Black activist discourses. The YDEOs were forced to confront the hard realities that so many people in Ethiopia face in relation to their own positions of relative comfort, safety, and privilege.

What made this tension particularly hard to ignore was the close ancestral connection, which compelled YDEOs to reflect upon the arbitrariness and

injustice of their differing fortunes. These were not abstract people living in poverty in an abstract part of the world. Instead, they were people who looked just like them living in a country which held particular symbolic significance. My respondents felt they had a stake in the development of Ethiopia not only as concerned global citizens, but also as individuals whose orientation and sense of self was linked to the country, however precarious that link may have been. While feelings of indignation could have turned to apathy, the individuals I spoke with were instead prompted to act, which is the process I was most interested in understanding.

It is this process between *thought* and *action* that reveals how people's identities are shaped and often formed through social interactions, and how social interactions are in turn structured by people as they negotiate their social, political and cultural identities. In this section I focus on the themes of justice, guilt, and responsibility that emerged from my interviews as YDEOs discussed the political and emotive factors that motivated them to engage in Ethiopian development. The depth and diversity of reasoning that transformed their perspectives on Ethiopian issues into a desire to respond to these issues brings the complexity of diaspora/development practice into greater focus.

5.3.1 *Addressing Inequity and Injustice*

Many of my respondents were highly critical of the generation of Ethiopian diasporans before them – their parents' generation – for the ways that they related and responded to Ethiopia. They felt the first generation left Ethiopia with political baggage, such as party and ethnic politics, that they then carried with them in the diaspora, tainting any of their efforts to affect

positive change in Ethiopia. YDEOs generally positioned their own efforts as a response to needs rather than interests and drew on rights discourse to frame their concerns and efforts (see Section 7.4 for discussion). They went to great lengths to characterise their positions on Ethiopia as apolitical, which is also reflective of how development initiatives are often represented in mainstream Western discourse. However, so far as development discourse is concerned with 'who gets what, when and how', it will always remain quintessentially political (Lasswell, 1936). YDEO perspectives were often deeply political in that they related to the distribution of power and resources in Ethiopia. It was often not only the poverty itself that created a sense of injustice among my respondents, but rather, the realisation that global resources were so inequitably distributed that their own lives could differ so greatly from those of people living in Ethiopia.

Bewnet (male, early-20s, DC) had just finished his first semester of college when his family took a short vacation to Ethiopia. It was his first trip to Ethiopia, and while others told him he would be shocked by the poverty, he found that this was not the case at first. *"It wasn't [shocking] to me, I went there, there were people starving and stuff, and you're like, oh ok they're starving."* However, when he returned to America he began to process his experience in Ethiopia very differently.

But it didn't hit me till I came back. I had a hard time adjusting. I was like, this is not fair, this shouldn't be happening. Why am I here, and why are they there? And that – it really did something to me. [...] It was the trip from the airport to the house that really killed me. After we landed here [D.C.] we took the taxi home and I couldn't – you know, all the roads were clear, nobody was jumping over the highway, and I was like, why is this ok? This is two different worlds. And [that was] the spark of [my NGO].

Like Bewnet, many respondents described their awareness of and responsiveness to the issues in Ethiopia as a process. In Bewnet's case, his

perspectives became politicised immediately upon arrival in the U.S. For others, it was through subsequent trips to Ethiopia that they began to ask deeper questions and form a sense of urgency to respond to these issues.

For example, Nardos (female, early-30s, DC) had spent some time living in Ethiopia as an adolescent when her family returned there for a period of time. She explained that the poverty she encountered *“struck a chord and shocked”* her, however she learned to become immune to its effect. *“I just saw it as a way of life for some people.”* However, when she travelled to Ethiopia as an adult during the Ethiopian millennium¹³ celebrations, she was disturbed by the gentrification she had noticed: *“they swept homeless people out and I didn’t see them. [...] I came back to Ethiopia again in three years and it had gotten worse – the class divide had gotten bigger”*. As an adult and through her higher education, Nardos had developed a more sophisticated set of intellectual tools with which to interpret her observations of Ethiopia.

Prior trips to Ethiopia were important as drivers of engagement in development among YDEOs. These trips (often family vacations) helped give shape to what may have felt like an abstract or distant country to YDEOs until that point. They also facilitated interpersonal interactions and relationships with people living there, which forced them to confront the social, political, and economic issues of the country through a subjective lens. On her first visit to Ethiopia as an adult, Amina (female, late-20s, DC) had several arguments with taxi drivers who were overcharging her because they knew that she was not a local. Her frustration was amplified by their

¹³ Ethiopia follows a Coptic calendar. As such, the Ethiopian millennium (September 1, 2000) was on September 1, 2007 in the Western Gregorian calendar. The millennium celebrations in Addis Ababa drew thousands of Ethiopian diaspora from all over the world. The government also drew wide criticism for the public spending on the celebrations and gentrification practices that displaced many of the urban poor.

dismissive and often-aggressive tones towards her, which made her reflect on the different gender roles and expectations in the country. As she explained, *“one [driver] had never had a conversation with a feminist before. [...] It made me wonder whether other local woman are treated that way by him and brought on all kinds of different questions [...] Apparently women are not treated very well back home”*.

In Amina’s case, it was a negative interaction that sparked a sense of outrage in her. In other instances, YDEOs were forging friendships and bonds with family members and other locals whose living conditions became the matter of concern. Eleni (female, mid-teens, Toronto) was my youngest respondent but perhaps the most active in Ethiopian development. She took a trip to Ethiopia at the age of seven, which impacted her so profoundly that she eventually launched a large rural education initiative.

When I was there I met a young girl about my age and we became very very great friends. After I had finished my time there and established that relationship I wanted to come back and do something to help her because I had found out from my parents that she wouldn’t be able to write to me because she didn’t have school resources or basic school supplies. So that was an issue I didn’t even know existed at that time and I wanted to do my very best to solve that problem because it was something so basic to me that I didn’t understand why it was such an issue to her. I had never had that problem before and I took pencils or basic resources for granted.

Even at her young age, Eleni was able to understand that there was a fundamental imbalance in access to basic resources in Ethiopia when compared to Canada, and this defied her moral logic. Social interactions like these, which were facilitated by prior trips to Ethiopia, were often formative experiences that would continue to shape YDEOs imaginations of Ethiopia and create a desire to remain connected to it in the long term. Development initiatives served the dual purpose of facilitating this connection to Ethiopia,

as well as helping YDEOs process and respond to the issues they had become aware of.

5.3.2 *Reconciling Personal Privilege and Feelings of Guilt*

Feelings of pity and guilt have been important drivers of philanthropy and other forms of engagement in development. As Easterly (2006) argues in *The White Man's Burden*, "The tragedy of the poor inspires dreams of change" (p. 8). Often, organisations and campaigns have taken it upon themselves to engender and enhance these feelings, subsequently channelling these emotions into economic transactions. Ethiopia has proven to be a global case study in this respect, as Western media representations have historically crafted and manipulated imagery from parts of the country to drive fundraising efforts and validate humanitarian aid and intervention (See Chapter 4). In the field of mainstream Western development discourse and practice, feelings of guilt and pity generally reflect a framework that constructs those living in poverty as distant 'Others' who need help. Heron (2007) argues that development contexts provide a white middle class with opportunities for emotional and 'life changing experiences', "an experience that eclipses its effects on the very Other whose 'need' we long to assuage and whose friendship we seek" (p. 156). While there were several instances when YDEOs echoed these Othering discourses, feelings of guilt most often emerged when respondents reflected on how closely connected they were to the poor who lived in Ethiopia. It was *sameness* rather than the *otherness*, which heightened their awareness and sense of guilt over their own positions of privilege vis-à-vis the living conditions of many living in Ethiopia.

Several respondents spoke about their good fortune as one that was attained through ‘chance’ or ‘lottery’. I have presented examples of this through lengthy excerpts below in order to preserve the sense of emotion and conviction that came across during our discussions. These narratives provide a compelling and interesting picture of the unique ways that identity and action intersect within young diasporic spaces.

Summer of grade twelve, there was the Make Poverty History. [...] Ethiopia was one of the countries actually that they were mentioning. But I just thought, there was this little girl who her parents died, and she was maybe nine, and she had a little brother and she was the caregiver of this brother who was three. It was this empty house or hut. And basically her life was just like impossible. And it just made me think of my brother, and the thought of, why I am here? I could easily – like, I’m Ethiopian, I could have easily been born to another mother in Ethiopia in a life that was like that, but I am here. [...] It got me thinking, if I am here and I’m in this position, I have so much more privilege and agency, and so I want to make sure my life is for something other than just my own, and that I can affect her (Fikir: female, mid-20s, Toronto).

You know Warren Buffet calls it the lottery of the womb, you were born in a womb and depending on who your parents are, that’s how your life will begin. And I could have been born in a womb of a rural village woman in western Ethiopia and that would have been my life. And that didn’t happen and so I feel like an obligation that I need to give back. [...] It comes back to the lottery of the womb, and I believe, I truly believe that there’s a thin line between me and the woman carrying the sticks on her back. Really. It just, it’s just a lottery that it’s not me carrying the sticks coming down those roads (Selam: female, late-30s, Toronto).

When I returned [from Ethiopia] the first time [...] I remember what stayed with me, what allowed me to walk into the Air Force commander office and basically say I’m leaving, is the memory of two girls. One was my niece who my aunt had adopted there, and a girl that I, you know, a beggar girl in Lalibela who looked like my sister. And I said, I didn’t have the verbiage to articulate it, but that was straight up lottery of the womb. Like she looks – she’s basically my sister, she looks like her exactly, she’s a spitting image of her. It’s only per chance, only because my mom decided to leave before the revolution, that she’s here begging for food and money and my sister is not. (Yacob: male, early 30s, DC).

The belief that their fates were so arbitrarily swapped with those of disadvantaged people in Ethiopia developed powerful emotions for these individuals. The orphan child, the woman carrying sticks, and the beggar girl were not just stock characters from a World Vision campaign, but people who

reminded YDEOs of their little brothers, sisters and even themselves. While they may not have formative years and interpersonal relationships to tie them to Ethiopia like their parents do, their diasporic identity still produced a sense of kinship strong enough to engender a sense of personal accountability for the country's development and well being.

5.3.3 *Sense of Duty and Responsibility to Ethiopia*

The themes of 'justice' and 'guilt' discussed in the sections above fed into a sense of duty and responsibility to act on the part of YDEOs. At times this sense of duty was described as an expression of patriotism and national pride, in other cases YDEOs spoke in more cosmopolitan terms. While some of my respondents spoke about the duty to contribute to Ethiopian development as a personal decision, others held strong views about the responsibility of the Ethiopian diaspora as a whole. They felt that the burden of this responsibility came with the resources bestowed upon them as people living in the West, but also as a way of honouring the sacrifices made by their parents who endured the challenges of emigration and settlement for their sake. Their narratives of duty and responsibility resembled the Biblical *Parable of the Faithful Servant*, "to whomever much is given, of him will much be required; and to whom much was entrusted, of him more will be asked" (Luke 12:48). Many of the individuals I spoke with felt this weight of responsibility to serve as a way of 'giving back' some of the resources and privileges associated with their socioeconomic and geopolitical status.

In his seminal work *Imagined Communities*, which deconstructs 'the nation', Anderson (2006) concedes to arguments made by "progressive, cosmopolitan

intellectuals” that nationalism often breeds racism, xenophobia and hatred of the Other. However, he contends,

it is useful to remind ourselves that nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love. [...] Something of the nature of this political love can be deciphered from the ways in which languages describe its object: kinship (motherland, *Vaterland*, *patria*), or that of home (*heimat* or *tanah air* [earth and water, the phrase for the Indonesians’ native archipelago]). Both idioms denote something to which one is naturally tied (pp. 145 – 147).

There were some respondents who conceptualised of Ethiopia in ways very similar to the description provided by Anderson above. For example, Bewnet (male, early-20s, DC) stated that he worried for Ethiopia “*like a mother worries for her child*”, which was very similar to the following statement made by Amina (female, late-20s, DC): “*I am Ethiopian first, and whatever I’m doing I plan to give back to Ethiopia as I would my own mother as she grows older*”. However, most YDEOs were wary of uninhibited expressions of ‘love’ for Ethiopia as a *nation*. They were aware and critical of the ways in which Ethiopian nationalist discourses have served exclusionary agendas and created conflict in the region and in the diaspora.

YDEOs often sought to recast their love for Ethiopia as an allegiance to ‘the people’ rather than the state, and spoke about their sense of responsibility as an expression of a depoliticised affinity to the country. Aida (female, early-30s, Toronto) was a respondent who spoke about this distinction extensively throughout our discussion. She consistently related her ‘Ethiopian-ness’ to a sense of service, that is, to be Ethiopian for her was to be communally-minded. While she was very active in Ethiopian development initiatives that were based in Toronto, she explained that she would not feel whole until she “completed the circle”, which involved physically going to Ethiopia to give back. However, Aida differentiated between what she termed “*Ethiopia-the-head*” (i.e. state, politics, nationalism), and “*Ethiopia-the-heart*” (i.e. the people).

She preferred to only identify with 'Ethiopia-the-heart', yet also described this attachment as "romanticised", "imagined", and "altruistic".

Family influences did not play as strong of a role in instilling a sense of responsibility to 'give back' to Ethiopia as I had expected when I set out to conduct my research. They laid the groundwork as far as teaching YDEOs the culture, taking them on trips to Ethiopia, and facilitating other transnational connections. However, my respondents rarely spoke about their parents insisting that they return to volunteer or engage in other development activities. In fact, it was more common that parents expressed concern over the amount of time YDEOs were devoting to their initiatives, which they feared would distract them from school and family commitments. However, YDEOs still related to Ethiopia through their families' experiences, and often their sense of duty to the country traced back to practices and relationships in the home.

We now have a generation of Ethiopian people who are well off that have benefitted from the sacrifices of their parents. [...] I don't think anyone can be successful unless they can share this success (Winta: female, mid-30s, DC).

The way I see it, our parents didn't come here just to get away. Once you've situated yourself you need to turn around and help the people you've left behind. I learned this through watching my mom give money to her family every month [...] If someone doesn't do this [give back], it means they forgot where they came from (Kidus: male, early-20s, Toronto).

So my understanding of Ethiopia was based on [my grandfather] because he volunteered to fight in Somalia. He left his kids and fought for his country. There was an incredible amount of honour in him being Ethiopian, he felt it had to be defended at all cost. [...] Actually, the very last thing he said to me before I left the house was that I was only going [to Canada] to get an education, and when the education was done I would come and help the country. And he said it exactly as that 'agerhin tiredaleh'¹⁴ is what he said. I have always carried this. [...] If I do five percent of what my grandfather did for his country I would die happy. That is how much that played a part in me (Teodros: male, mid-20s, Toronto).

¹⁴ 'Agerhin tiredaleh' is an Amharic phrase that means 'you will help your country'.

These excerpts demonstrate how the narratives and practices of family members can be interpreted by YDEOs in ways that translate into a sense of responsibility to Ethiopia. It is important to emphasise that this is an 'interpretive' process rather than a matter of inherited or conditioned behaviour. While familial relationships to Ethiopia certainly informed and shaped my respondents, these relationships were filtered, deconstructed, and combined with a range of other factors that motivated YDEOs to connect with their country of origin. Often, it was various combinations of push and pull factors in the West and in Ethiopia that eventually drew them to engage in development.

5.4 '*I needed to reconcile my identity issues*': The Search for Belonging and Becoming Ethiopian

Contemporary discourse on diasporas often celebrates and romanticises the hybridity of their identities as well as their transnational connections and experiences. In an age characterised by mass globalisation, there are in fact many advantages that come with having social, political, and economic ties to more than one geographic space (See 5.1.2 for examples). However, it is important to recognise that many diasporas in the West are also communities of people who regularly confront structural barriers and constraints such as xenophobic policies, economic marginalisation, dispersed families, precarious legal status, and racial discrimination, among others. The children of migrants, such as the YDEOs in my research, may have been born and/or raised in the West; however, they are often directly or vicariously affected by the same issues that their parents and community members confront. In fact, their lives are often complicated further by psychosocial issues that emerge as

they try to establish a sense of belonging in spite of feeling alienated from both their communities of origin and the countries where they grew up.

In the sections above, I have focused on motivations to engage in Ethiopian development, which amplify the savvy, strategic, and socially conscious characteristics of my respondents. This analysis is critical in illustrating the various ways in which individual agency is expressed through the social and cultural practices of YDEOs. However, it is also important to acknowledge the structures and barriers that limit and constrain this agency, as well as shape social behaviour by way of framing acts of resistance. In this section, I will explore how experiences of social exclusion and marginalisation have shaped and challenged my respondents. Often, YDEOs were motivated to strengthen or validate their connections to Ethiopia in response to feelings of isolation and experiences with prejudice within the general North American population as well as within Ethiopian communities. Engaging in Ethiopian development provided an opportunity to build this connection, and craft a sense of belonging through this social practice. Through their narratives we are able to see both experiences of vulnerability and examples of social ingenuity, which reflects how structure and agency both work synergistically to shape social practices.

5.4.1 Rejection, Racism, and Exclusion in the West

Canada and the U.S. have become desirable places for those *dis*-placed, including refugees and other forced migrants who have left Ethiopia over the decades since the 1974 revolution. However, many of these groups have been constructed as social and political outsiders through homogenising and Eurocentric nationalist discourses, as well as racist and xenophobic policies

and practices. Often, the very same policy frameworks that made it possible for Ethiopian diasporans to enter into and settle in the West are the ones that continue to construct them (and their children) as social and political outsiders. For example, Canada adopted an official state policy of multiculturalism in 1971, and according to Government figures, one of every six Canadian residents was born outside the country. The Citizenship and Immigration website cites this figure and boasts, “Canada has a proud tradition of welcoming immigrants. Our immigration system, refugee system and network of organisations to help newcomers settle and integrate are among the best in the world. [...] Immigration has helped to make Canada a culturally rich, prosperous and progressive nation” (Government of Canada, 2014).

However, this celebratory view of Canada is met with the reality that the income difference between members of European and non-European groups has grown steadily since 1970 (Michael Ornstein, 2006). Further, alarmist discourses and public debates about the state of Canadian national identity have been increasingly common, as the population has diversified. As Collet (2007) argues, “competing notions of what constitutes a national identity within an increasingly pluralistic society have come to the fore [and] the very definition and meaning of a Canadian national identity has been depicted by some Canadian scholars as being in a state of crisis” (p. 133). These tensions figured prominently within YDEO narratives, as they described the challenges they encountered growing up in North America as individuals from a Black immigrant community.

While many YDEOs use Ethiopia as a point of reference and often refer to it as ‘back home’, this ‘homeland’ is hardly a home in any conventional sense of

the word. Most have spent little or no time in Ethiopia, and their formative lives have consisted of eating, sleeping, learning, working, and playing elsewhere. However, many of my respondents have found this 'elsewhere' to be a hostile and inhospitable place. Even those who would be inclined to call their places of residence in North America 'home' have found it difficult given the exclusion that characterises so many of their experiences. YDEOs often find themselves in social and political contexts that construct them as the 'Other', impinge upon their rights, and consistently frame them as strangers, outsiders, and even criminals. Lelisa (female, early-30s, New York) joined her mother in the U.S. when she was eleven years old. They moved to a small town in the South, where she was one of five Black students in a middle school of over one thousand students. She was initially put into an English as a Second Language (ESL) class, however after several months she felt confident enough to inquire about how she could be transferred into the mainstream class. She described this experience as one that first made her aware of racism.

I went to my ESL teacher because I was terrified that kids were in ESL for seven, eight, nine years. So I went to her and I was like, I want to go to college what do I need to do? And her response was like, 'well people like you and with your background usually take a long time. I would say for you, you will be in ESL until the twelfth grade' – and I was in sixth grade at the time! – 'and you'll probably not get into university so I think the best route for you is community college, prepare yourself for that'. [...] And I remember going home and telling my mom, I want to prove her wrong and this is ridiculous. And that's when I really started to understand [racism] and I hated [that town]. I just didn't feel at home, I always stood out and I didn't feel supported by the system. I was in ESL for all of my classes, and its interesting – the ESL class is next to the Special Ed class, so sometimes when the teachers wanted to leave and make a phone call or whatever they would mix us together so one teacher was working with us.

Lelisa would eventually move to a more cosmopolitan city and excel academically, however this encounter was an introduction into a social reality

where she would have to navigate many similar barriers and setbacks because of her race and background.

In Lelisa's case, her experiences of exclusion in the U.S. were exacerbated by the fact that she arrived as an immigrant, and more specifically, an immigrant from Africa. However, for many of my respondents, the matter of whether or not they were born in North America did not factor into their encounters with prejudice and institutional racism.

When I went to school for example there were situations where I would get stopped by the police or would be in an area where I was being seen as Black. So it doesn't matter how well I did in school, doesn't matter how much I didn't get in trouble. In the eyes of the most important things – law, authority, school – I was always a Black kid (Teodros: male, mid-20s, Toronto).

My brother used to get picked on and he was hung at one point [on a hook] in the bathroom from his winter coat. Because this is all white people. [...] And then imagine – we moved from there to [another town] that was twenty times worse! They went as far as picking on me and my little brother [...] Where we lived it was just all white people, so it was just hard (Ruth: female, late-20s, Toronto).

[There was an incident] where I was unjustly convicted [...] And I saw a lot of it has racism involved, a lot of it is because I was Black. [...] I got sent to a courthouse [in a very affluent neighbourhood] as a Black guy. They lynched me. Once you're caught up with the law in America, I'm not kidding, any little thing and you're gonna go back to jail. [...] I wanted to come to a country where I'm not stigmatised because of my race, or because of a corrupt system that really did me wrong. And so, I can come to Ethiopia, I can learn the faith, I can do film, I can participate in the growth of the country, I can try to help people, I can be free. I'd rather be free in the Third World than in jail in the First World (laughing). And so everything just drew me here [to Ethiopia] (Endrias: male, early-30s, Ethiopia).

While there was a great deal of diversity among my respondents as far as whether and how they identified with a 'Black' identity, in the North American contexts where they grew up, they were generally racially homogenised nonetheless. Moreover, to be 'a Black kid' or 'a Black guy', as Teodros and Endrias phrased it, can be particularly precarious in North America, especially for young Black males who are consistently under the surveillance of the state and criminalised through media representations and

public discourse. Ultimately, these stories were recounted by my respondents not as isolated incidents, but rather, as illustrations of many experiences that have added up to make them feel like they do not belong within the North American contexts where they grew up.

For the YDEOs I spoke with, their African heritage often disappeared behind parochial constructions of Blackness, or was simply ignored all together as Fikir's (female, mid-20s, Toronto) narrative illustrates below:

I remember one day in my History textbook, there was one line, it was like a timeline of all wars, and there was one line about Italy and Ethiopia, and just seeing Ethiopia, oh my gosh, I flipped out! I was like to my teacher, 'Oh my gosh, its in our history book! Is there anything else? What else is there?' And he was just like, 'I'm sorry there isn't'. I wish there was more information about the history of other countries outside of just American history and Canadian history, but this is just one of the holes of the education system.

Experiences of stigmatisation and invalidation such as those recounted above can communicate the message that one is not valued in their society, which has a significant impact on shaping and shifting identities. The intensity of this sense of marginalisation varied among my respondents, however it generally played a key role in shaping YDEO social landscapes. Many turned to their Ethiopian heritage in the hopes of finding a place, community, and identity where they could more comfortably belong.

5.4.2 Seeking a Sense of Belonging and Community

'Belonging' has been a theme of central importance for scholars, policy makers, and artists examining migrant and diaspora experiences. For children and descendants of migrants, questions of belonging can be particularly complex and even painful, especially for racialised people who might not have the option of 'blending in' to their North American contexts. For many of my respondents, their ability to claim a close ancestral connection to

Ethiopia was an important part of their orientation and sense of place in the world. However, many of them were not born or raised there, had very little if any Ethiopian language skills, and did not sufficiently conform to cultural prescriptions and norms. Their sense of belonging within the Ethiopian diaspora was often either tenuous or disrupted by gatekeepers who challenged the authenticity of their affiliation.

There was like the community that was very very tight knit, and my mother was very connected with them, but I felt like a little bit more of an outsider [...] I didn't speak Amharic, I felt a little bit of an outcast from the community of people my age, [...] So you kind of get it on both sides. You're not quite Ethiopian, but you're definitely not being raised American. So I didn't really have much of a desire to connect with the Ethiopian community for a long time (Dereje: male, early-30s, Ethiopia).

I know I am Ethiopian but it made me question what it means to be Ethiopian. It was just awkward. [...] I am more outgoing and talkative, I'm not shy, I speak more openly on [taboo] issues and these are disconnects. I understand why other [Ethiopians] don't accept me [but] I choose not to hate them. [...] I don't want others like me to think they are less Ethiopian because of their differences. The majority of my life felt like I wasn't Ethiopian enough, now that I'm older I've decided to think that's ok (Ruth: female, late-20s, Toronto).

There's always been this question in my mind in terms of what does it mean to be Ethiopian? I've always had that because I don't speak Amharic well, I grew up outside, born outside Ethiopia, Ethiopians say you're not Ethiopian, and Kenyans definitely say you're not Kenyan, and so what am I? And for a long time I wanted to belong, I had romanticised Ethiopia and I wanted to belong (Selam: female, late-30s, Toronto).

Feelings of alienation were commonly expressed by YDEOs as they spoke about their interactions with others in the diaspora who charged them with not being 'Ethiopian enough'. Many of them found ways to make peace with this, such as Tarik (male, late-30s, New York) who stated, "*I accept this marginalisation*"; however, this did not preclude them from also seeking out experiences and relationships that brought them culturally and physically closer to Ethiopia.

Many YDEOs described searching for an 'authentic' Ethiopian experience in the hopes that it would fill their gaps of cultural knowledge and aid in their

efforts to belong. For these individuals, engaging in development often provided an opportunity to connect with other Ethiopians in a way that was concrete and legitimised, and drew praise rather than scrutiny from the community. Some found that sense of purpose and belonging through initiatives that were run by YDEOs like themselves. One of these organisations was Ethiopian Student's Association International (ESAi), which several of my respondents had been involved with in some way. Samuel (male, late-20s, Ethiopia) was one of the founding members of ESAi, and credited the organisation for helping him feel like he was "not alone".

Everybody had the same feeling and aim. [The] goal was to contribute to Ethiopia in some way or another. [...] No matter the make up, we all wanted to give back. [...] More than an organisation, what we became were friends.

For Samuel and several others, ESAi created a community that they could relate and belong to, and the fundraising events and organisational activities became the mechanism through which they could connect.

Staying connected and active in the community within North America was sufficient for some, while others ventured to Ethiopia to find that sense of belonging that was so important to them. Often, just being in the presence of so many other people who looked like them was a profound experience in itself. Amina (female, late-20s, DC) explained that her vacation to Ethiopia is what changed the trajectory of her career from the entertainment industry to development. *"I went to Milan to visit a friend and had never seen so many White people in such a long time. When I came back to Ethiopia from that trip it was empowering to see so many people that looked like me."* While belonging within an Ethiopian context was very important to many of my respondents, the nature and composition of the Ethiopian identity they would then adopt was still a matter for negotiation.

5.4.3 *Substantiating an Ethiopian Identity*

Engaging in Ethiopian development provided a means for my respondents to connect with other Ethiopians, but also created an opportunity to test the limits and significance of that connection. Many YDEOs identified as 'Ethiopian', however they claimed this identity with reservation and caution. They generally had no legal status in Ethiopia, nor had they spent enough time in the country to forge relationships and tacit knowledge that could be leveraged as a source of validation. However, YDEOs found themselves in a position where they had an adopted or ascribed association with a place that they did not fully know or understand. Those who valued this association felt compelled to explore it further and sought ways to add substance and meaning to it, but on their own terms.

Even though my parents were not emphasising to me, 'you're Ethiopian, you're Ethiopian', my school was, and my peers. Because I went to a private school, I was the only Black student and the only Ethiopian student. So they would also emphasise, 'oh give us the African perspective', or, 'oh you're Ethiopian what's it like'? And then I think because regardless of whether I labelled myself as Ethiopian they did, I thought ok, I better know, outside of what my family taught me, I've gotta go there and see it (Elsa: female, mid-20s, Toronto).

Not understanding my connection to Ethiopia really created uncertainty in me. Because I started a business here [in Toronto], I hustled and made money, and things were as great as they could be. [...] So I was comfortable, but always something – it still tells me, I don't know what it is, it's like you belong there. Have I figured out a full answer for it, no. But going to Ethiopia allowed me to see that there could be a purpose, there could be a reason. [...] But that reason or purpose hasn't been fully defined yet, and maybe its not meant to be defined (Teodros: male, mid-20s, Toronto).

Through Elsa and Teodros' narratives, we are able to see how feelings of marginalisation in the West, even when they are subtle, help to animate and strengthen connections to other places. In both of these cases, it was a desire to deepen these connections that motivated these YDEOs to travel to Ethiopia and engage in Ethiopian development. They describe their pursuits in

investigative terms; they sought to 'figure out' how an Ethiopian identity fit in with what they already knew about themselves and where they belonged.

Claiming an Ethiopian identity can be even more problematic for YDEOs who come from communities that have experienced exclusion within Ethiopian contexts, such as the Oromos. While Ethiopia is an incredibly heterogeneous country, markers of Ethiopian identity that receive validation are often those that reflect the languages and customs of the Highland groups (Amhara and Tigrayan) which have historically held political and economic power in Ethiopia. Lelisa (female, early- 30s, New York) described the challenges she faced as she attempted to establish then reconcile both an Ethiopian and Oromo identity:

I took a Human Rights course freshman or sophomore year, and I did my paper on the Oromo cause for self-determination, and I delved really deep into research and scholarship and that's where my identity crisis came from (laughing). Like, I did not know we were this oppressed within the general Ethiopian culture. [...] When I graduated, I went back to Ethiopia for a year because: A) it had been eleven years, I had never been back since I had left. B) I needed to reconcile my identity issues cause I was really – I went from 'Miss Ethiopia' (laughing) to just questioning everything about what it means to be Ethiopian and not even claiming it you know?

Ultimately, Lelisa became interested in development work and was able to find a related job that was located in Ethiopia.

Once YDEOs decide to deconstruct their Ethiopian identities, or have encounters that do so for them, reconstructing it can take a lot of hard work. They cannot lean upon memories and relationships in Ethiopia with the same ease of their parents' generation, nor can they construct a sense of belonging through efforts of their own. It is *meaning* that makes identities what they are, and meaning is only created through interaction within social contexts. YDEOs generally came to a point where they could no longer take their Ethiopian identity for granted, nor could they choose to adopt one without

some analysis first. If they were going to continue to claim this identity, they would need to substantiate their relationships to Ethiopia, and come to terms with what being 'Ethiopian' meant about who they were and how they should relate to the world around them. For my respondents, engaging in Ethiopian development provided a mechanism with which they could wrestle with these complex issues through a familiar structure and in a way that felt meaningful to them.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked closely at the motivations that have driven YDEOs to engage in Ethiopian development efforts. Conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews allowed respondents the time and flexibility to connect their decision-making processes to experiences and encounters that occurred over the course of their lives. Their desires to engage in Ethiopian development were rarely expressed as an extension of preformed patriotic values or commitments. Rather, YDEOs were in the process of constructing complex social, political, and cultural identities, and their engagement in development was integrated into these processes. Taking the time to deconstruct these motivations – rather than using them as a starting point – proved analytically fruitful. YDEO motivations embodied a myriad of values, strategies and discourses that gave meaning to their actions, and this meaning is what connected their actions to their perceptions of who they are and where they feel they belong in the world. For most respondents, these self-perceptions were precariously formed at best; therefore, their development engagements served a critical function in helping them cultivate or validate the characteristics that they wanted to ascribe to themselves.

As I will discuss further in Chapter 8, engaging in development was a social action that helped YDEOs develop a sense of self that was morally coherent, connected to a social group, and effectual in bringing about meaningful change. The extent to which their development activities served to reinforce, shift or undermine these self-perceptions is a matter for further analysis (See Chapter 7). However, the intentions behind YDEO motivations are salient in themselves, as they helped to frame the nature of their development engagements (See Chapter 6), as well as the benchmarks they used to interpret and evaluate their own efforts.

The following excerpt is taken from my interview with Ruth (female, late-20s, Toronto), who was preparing to go to Ethiopia for the first time since she left as a small child. Her narrative is particularly useful in bringing together many of the themes discussed in this chapter including: self-actualisation, giving back, duty, and the search for belonging.

I used to think of going back [to Ethiopia], but I would always think of, what am I going for? I don't speak the language, how am I going to relate to these people when I can't even relate to them in North America?! So me going back home would be just pointless to me. But now, I think that with being able to go with this type of project, I'm not only going back home, I'm also going back home to give back. So I felt like [...] what better way to go back home than to give back to my country? [...] I think by not going back you're not allowing yourself to [heal]. For me, [it may be healing] because I may go back there and decide that I don't ever want to go back because it's not for me, which could happen to a lot of people. But at the same time it will close a door in my life and in my mind that needs to be closed. [...] For me, I think that's part of figuring out who you are, which I would think at the end of life that's what everybody is kind of just figuring out, what their purpose was here. But in order to do that you have to go back to where it all started, so you can connect the dots.

I spoke with Ruth at an opportune time to learn about her motivations, as she was just gearing up to participate in this development initiative and many of the feelings of excitement and anxiety were close to the surface. She spoke about going back to Ethiopia as a 'healing' process – an opportunity to test

and resolve her tenuous relationships to the Ethiopian community and help 'connect the dots' of her life.

The first few sentences in this excerpt are particularly important to my analysis, as they demonstrate how diasporic identity and engagement in development are fundamentally social and mutually constitutive processes. The development project provided the 'point' or reason in going back to a country that Ruth had otherwise struggled to feel connected to. It served as a mechanism to engage with the country on her own terms and in a way that felt accessible, legitimate, and meaningful. It is through social practice that diasporic identities take shape and are imbued with meaning, and in the case of the YDEOs in my research, engaging in Ethiopian development served this practical function by helping them build a tangible relationship to their country of origin. Further, the development framework made it possible for them to forge a relationship that also resonated with their other identities, and could even be leveraged to further other personal and professional goals. In the following chapter, I will examine the nature of these development activities and how they do and do not reflect the discourses and objectives that motivated YDEOs to engage in them in the first place.

Chapter 6. Doing It Their Way: Modes of YDEO Engagement in Ethiopian Development

The African Foundation for Development (AFFORD) is a non profit organisation based in the UK with a mandate to “expand and enhance the contribution that Africans in the diaspora make to Africa's development” (AFFORD UK, 2015). On January 21, 2014, AFFORD launched a report, in partnership with AMREF, CGAP, and The Rockefeller Foundation, entitled “Mobilising Resources for Africa: What Role for Young Africans in the Diaspora?”

While the importance of diaspora contributions to their countries of heritage is increasingly well known and understood, particularly when it comes to monetary remittances, little is known about the ways in which successive generations choose to give back to their ancestral lands, whether they are repeating the patterns of giving of their parents who remit huge amounts to Africa, or whether they are adopting different approaches (Orefuwa & Chowdhury, 2013, p. 4).

While the respondents in the AFFORD research were all based in the UK, and were primarily connected to African countries other than Ethiopia, many of the findings aligned with those in my own research. AFFORD found that many young African diasporans are actively engaged in philanthropic initiatives connected to their countries of origin, however they engage in a manner that often differs from their parents’ generation. For example, “in contrast to older generations, young Africans are more inclined to give of their time and skills, rather than financial resources, as sustainability is a key determinant in influencing motivations for giving” (Orefuwa & Chowdhury, 2013, p. 7). Many of their respondents were also wary of mainstream development and charitable organisations, and “felt more inclined to give to an African organisation than a non African organization” (Orefuwa & Chowdhury, 2013, p. 8). This sentiment was echoed by many attendees at the

report launch that I attended in London, including one panellist who remarked, “I am *really not* enamoured with the development industry”.

Like the respondents in the AFFORD research, most of the YDEOs I interviewed were eager to engage in Ethiopian development efforts, however they wanted to do so on their own terms. They were disillusioned with the politicised nature of initiatives and organisations led by people from their parents’ generation, and they were equally disillusioned with the legacy of the Western-led development industry in Africa. YDEOs often represented their own development activities as marked departures from both the transnational practices of their parents’ generation, as well as the discourses and structures established by the Western-led development industry. While they saw themselves as unique actors with unique approaches to Ethiopian development, there was a certain amount of continuity in the approaches that they pursued. In examining the discourses, entry points, and practices that characterised YDEO engagement in Ethiopian development, I found that the novelty and innovation came out of a blend rather than departure from the practices of these other established actors.

In the previous chapter, I examined the factors that initially motivated YDEOs to engage in Ethiopian development. My analysis established that these actions were part of a process of constructing a complex social, political and cultural identity. These insights, which explored the *why*, are very important in understanding the *how* and *what* aspects of my research, which I will examine in this chapter. In the sections below, I will discuss how YDEOs conceptualise, enter into, and ultimately participate in Ethiopian development. In section 6.1, I begin by analysing the discourses and frames that served as enabling and mobilising forces among my respondents. I utilise

a social movement framework in order to highlight how YDEOs evoke various socio-political and historical narratives in order to construct a sense of collective and meaningful action. In section 6.2, I discuss the particular entry points and gateways that facilitated YDEO engagement in Ethiopian development. This section will focus on the important roles played by family, diaspora communities, student groups, and other volunteer experiences in inspiring, encouraging, or organising YDEO development activities in Ethiopia. Finally, section 6.3 provides a descriptive analysis of the actual Ethiopian development activities that my respondents participated in. I will provide detailed insight into the nature and structure of these activities, as well as how they align with and differ from the development practices of other actors in Ethiopia.

6.1 'There's something Continent-wide that's happening': Enabling and Mobilising Discourses and Frames

In Chapter 5, I discussed Sökefeld's (2006) application of social movement theory to the study of diaspora identity formation. "The social movement approach suggests that there must be opportunities, mobilizing structures and practices, and frames that enable this mobilization" (Sökefeld, 2006, p. 271). I found this overly deterministic as a framework for analysing diasporic *consciousness*, as it masked both the role of agency and the individualised meaning-making that shapes diasporic identity formation. While it is important to draw attention to the socially constructed nature of diasporic identities, characterising any process of identity formation as a form of collective action is a problematic approach. However, the social movement literature becomes more helpful when looking at particular social *actions* within diaspora communities, such as their engagements in homeland

development efforts. Social movement literature has traditionally focused on protest movements and other forms of contentious and violent collective action. However, the literature has expanded considerably over the years, and the term is now used to refer to a wide variety of social mobilisations (Christiansen, 2011). As Tarrow (2011) argues, social movements do more than just ‘contend’:

They build organizations, elaborate ideologies, and socialise and mobilise constituencies, and their members engage in self-development and the construction of collective identities. Moreover, some movements are largely a-political, and focus on their internal lives or those of their members (Tarrow, 2011, p. 8).

The social movement literature aligns with the interactionist framework, in that it links social practice to individual and collective identity formation, making it particularly useful for analysing the relationship between diasporas and homeland development.

While many of the YDEOs I interviewed engaged in Ethiopian development through ad hoc and personal efforts, they often described their actions as being part of a larger purpose or movement. A discourse analysis of my interviews revealed that there were particular histories, processes, and movements that YDEOs identified with and drew from when constructing meaning around their actions. As della Porta and Diani (2006) observe, social movement processes engender “a sense of common purpose and shared commitment to a cause, which enables single activists and/or organisations to regard themselves as inextricably linked to other actors” (p. 21). YDEOs often spoke very directly about the other actors that they felt connected to through their actions, as well as those that they wanted to distance themselves from and even challenge. While their means and methods may have differed, my respondents were unified in a common purpose, which was to work towards a better and brighter Ethiopia. They also drew from a

common script as they described their perspectives on the history of aid and development in Ethiopia, and the future prospects of the country and Continent. These scripts, or discourses, included anti-development sentiments and 'Africa-rising' proclamations, which were important in both mobilising YDEOs around particular development issues, and in creating meaning and energy around their chosen forms of action.

6.1.1 Anti-Development Development

It is no longer considered provocative or contentious to criticise the legacy and practice of the development industry in Africa. The widespread success and influence of Dambisa Moyo's (2009) book (and in many cases just the phrase) 'Dead Aid' is indicative of a shift in Western public opinion about the international development sector as a whole (despite the fact that Moyo was specifically criticising government-to-government foreign aid). Many YDEOs I spoke with also shared this sentiment and pessimism towards the sector. My respondents were particularly critical of aid and philanthropic efforts led by Western governments and large international development organisations. Most of my respondents were university educated, which was evident in the ways that they would describe the connections between the global economic system and contemporary African development issues. Their views were also highly influenced by their proximity to Ethiopia in particular, which is a country that has a longstanding and complex history with Western aid and development (See Chapter 4). They took these historical failings and wrongdoings in Ethiopia very personally, and while they often used discursive and material infrastructure developed by Western development actors in their own efforts, YDEOs were determined to do things differently this time around.

Tarik (male, late-30s, New York) was born in Ethiopia during the late 1970s and left before the age of one. He grew up in New York around a small but tight knit Ethiopian community. Tarik's father was a senior level diplomat in Ethiopia who went on to a long and successful career in international development through the United Nations. He was very involved in brokering international aid and development efforts in Ethiopia during the drought in the 1980s. As a result, Tarik grew up with a keen sense of awareness about the realities and challenges of the development sector in general, and in Ethiopia in particular, which had a significant impact on him. He was committed to pursuing a career of international service like his father, however he was completely disillusioned with the system as it currently existed.

Your formative years are before the age of ten, and you basically don't see your father for indefinite periods of time. And then he tells you about his job and one of the frustrations was, you know, there were billions of dollars of aid going to the region at the time. And yes there were hang ups in terms of the distribution by the government at the time, but of the billions of dollars, not even a third of the money made its way to the people during the drought. There were a lot of people who would tout their relief efforts during that time, but the reality is, it was all eaten up by external administrative costs. That was the first nudging towards me thinking about how I can give back in a way that not just was nominal in nature but actually added value on the ground.

Tarik went on to medical school with the intention of pursuing international health. He had initially envisioned himself using his skills in Ethiopia through some health related development organisation. However, he felt conflicted because he was increasingly convinced that *"the NGO world is a little too bloated"*, and as a result he no longer *"believed"* that this system could bring about meaningful change.

Eventually, Tarik decided to spend a year volunteering in Ethiopia where he served as a hospital administrator and doctor in a rural town. His placement was facilitated through an existing non-profit program established by the hospital where he was doing his residency in the U.S. However, he was very

careful to explain that he was not interested in reproducing the legacy of unsustainable international development efforts in Ethiopia.

For me to go back to Ethiopia, my bent was, I'm going to teach. I'm going to try to find resourceful people, motivated people, and I'm going to teach. And I'm going to deliver a difficult health care standard, but I'm going to prove to them that it will be different. [...] I've told you, I've had this hang up from my childhood about just dropping aid on people and walking away. You just create cycles of need dependency, so that's what I wanted to change when I went to Ethiopia.

While Tarik was very concerned with the inefficiencies of existing efforts in Ethiopia, he was equally concerned with the healthcare gaps in the country and ultimately did see a need for external intervention. Many other respondents shared perspectives that were very similar. For example, Samson (male, early-20s, Toronto) was very active in local community development efforts within the Ethiopian diaspora in Toronto. He had only participated in Ethiopia-related international development efforts tangentially, such as fundraising events that were embedded in Toronto-based initiatives that he was already connected to.

Like Tarik, Samson also saw the international development sector as inefficient and counterproductive.

The reason why I don't really believe, personally, anymore in the NGO system, or in philanthropic endeavours is because I've seen the way that it's organised. The money is only kinda used to do surface work, but there is nothing ever systemic that's being done to change the system. So efforts are always put forth to help the people but in essence you're not actually changing the root causes of the issues that are occurring back home.

Despite these concerns, Samson still wanted to find an alternative way to affect change in Ethiopia. He had aspirations to volunteer in Ethiopia when he was younger; however, he was more focused on making money at the time that we spoke.

Well my ambition to make money is partially philanthropic. The reason why I want to make a whole lot of money is so I can give it away. [...] I honestly would rather build schools myself back home. I'd rather build better housing, or

invest it in businesses. [...] Different ways in which other people from the outside don't have a say, and you're actually building a community itself.

Like many other YDEOs, Samson was wary of the intentions of “outsiders” in Ethiopia, which he later qualified as Westerners. He felt that mainstream development efforts in Ethiopia were largely driven by self-interest, which is why they were lacking in impact and sustainability. As his narrative reveals, he was more concerned with ‘outsiders’ driving philanthropy in Ethiopia than he was with philanthropy itself.

Many of my respondents were also deeply affected by Western representations of Africa in general, and Ethiopia in particular, that were generated through development discourse and practice. They were disturbed by the characterisation of Africans as poor, backward, and helpless, and were cognisant of the structures of power and inequity that perpetuated these perceptions. This reinforced their concerns with the sector, and provided a sense of direction and purpose for their own development efforts. Nafkot (female, late-20s, Ethiopia) was born in the U.S. but her parents sent her to Ethiopia to spend a year in an international high school as a form of cultural education. Most of the other students in the school were children of expats and development workers. She explained that this provided her with an inside perspective into the “*culture of international development*”, which she described to me as “*messed up*”.

Lelisa (female, early-30s, New York) had previous experience working in the development sector through an American initiative based in West Africa. She described the discomfort of being an ‘insider’ within a sector that she saw as increasingly problematic.

I was considered part of the international community so I was invited to dinners and drinking parties and so on. And the conversations that were held,

and the ways they spoke about [the locals], it tore my soul apart. I was shocked! So I think I left [the country] greatly disillusioned, and I made a promise to never work for the big international organisations like that again. And I realised, again, local grassroots-based interventions are the best.

Many YDEOs found themselves in a paradox similar to the one described here by Lelisa. They were invested in the idea of contributing towards Ethiopian development; however, they did not want to be associated with mainstream development actors.

Faiven (female, early-20s, Toronto) was pursuing a degree in International Development, however she was very hesitant to use the word 'development' when describing her future plans in Ethiopia.

The word 'developed' or 'developing' kind of has the implication that things in 'undeveloped countries' aren't right or, they could be better with the help from someone from the West, which would be me. So, but ultimately, what I want to do is just focus on the needs of a specific community. And the reason why I'm saying 'community' is because I feel like if I want to make change, I believe it starts from the roots, like the ground.

As these excerpts demonstrate, language mattered deeply to my respondents. Many of them understood all too well what it felt like to be looked down upon and underestimated based on ignorant assumptions about one's heritage or race. They did not want to be implicit in activities that perpetuated this kind of discourse. As a result, YDEOs used a number of strategies to distance themselves from mainstream Western development actors. Some were very selective about the nature of development activities they engaged in, and usually made efforts to support local and grassroots initiatives. Other YDEOs were working in mainstream development organisations in Ethiopia, however they were very self-critical and spoke about future plans to do more meaningful work. In most cases, YDEOs spoke about the legacy of international development in Africa with a sense of righteous indignation that reinforced their conviction that a fresh approach to

development was in need. They were, in effect, searching for an anti-development form of development – something that worked towards positive change, and something that they could support whole heartedly and with a clear conscience.

6.1.2 *Africa-Rising Discourse*

The AU Conference Center and Office Complex is the headquarter building for the African Union (AU), which is located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The building itself is architecturally impressive and was commissioned as a ‘gift’ to the African Union by the Chinese Government. The late Meles Zenawi, the then-Prime Minister of Ethiopia, delivered the opening remarks at the inauguration ceremony on January 28th, 2012. He spoke about the symbolic, and almost prophetic, nature of the new AU building as a marker of a new Africa.

This building, which will now house the headquarters of our continental organization, is built on the ruins of a prison that represented desperation and hopelessness. [...] The African Renaissance that we all dreamed of is beginning to happen. [...] The magnificent new headquarters [...] is a symbol of the rise of Africa. [...] It is very interesting to note, that just as Africa is rising from the ruins of desperation and Afro-pessimism this magnificent new headquarters of the AU is rising from the ruins of a prison of desperation and hopelessness (Zenawi, 2012, pp. 1-4).

There was in fact much excitement and pride around the new AU building among Ethiopian people, both local nationals and those in the diaspora.¹⁵

Many people were particularly drawn to the large golden emblem on the wall inside the Great Hall, which depicted Africa embedded within a rising sun¹⁶.

¹⁵ There was also controversy that surrounded the new AU headquarters. Some critics were concerned with the fact that building was constructed using Chinese rather than African labour. There was also dissent that emerged after the unveiling of a statue of Kwame Nkrumah, the founding President of Ghana, on the building grounds. Many political figures and community leaders in Ethiopia and in the diaspora criticised the Ethiopian government for failing to memorialize Emperor Haile Selassie instead, who spearheaded the establishment of the AU (then called the Organization for African Unity).

¹⁶ Visit <http://oasisinternational.typepad.com> to see an image of the golden emblem inside the Great Hall of the African Union.

This image, according to Meles Zenawi, signified that “a new era of hope is dawning” for Africa (Zenawi, 2012, p. 5). Several YDEOs within my own personal network have taken pictures next to this golden emblem on their travels to Ethiopia and posted it with pride on their social media platforms. This hopeful image of Africa has clearly struck a chord with many people, particularly among young Africans in the diaspora who grew up in a context and period that was saturated with negative representations of the Continent.

The ‘Africa rising’ discourse was perhaps the most consistent narrative among my respondents across all of the cities. YDEOs were excited by the notion that Africa was on the rise towards prosperity and influence, and this provided a lot of momentum and purpose to their development activities. Not only was Africa rising, but Ethiopia was leading the pack – with its much-touted (and contested) double-digit economic growth figures and rising geo-political influence. YDEOs were frustrated and exhausted with the poverty-stricken image of Ethiopia that dominates Western representations of the country, and they were ready and willing to rally behind initiatives that shed a new and positive light on their country of origin.

Netsanet (female, late-20s, Toronto) grew up in Toronto and spent most of her youth actively avoiding the Ethiopian community and culture, which she felt very disconnected from. However, she began to explore and claim an Ethiopian identity during her university years, and eventually became very involved in leading community initiatives. Netsanet very much identified with the idea that Ethiopia was rising, and she explained that this was an important part of how she spoke about Ethiopia to people who were not from or familiar with the country.

I was speaking with someone recently, someone I consider a very worldly person, he's half Indian, half Filipino himself, and I was talking to him shortly after I came back from Ethiopia. And he's like, 'honestly I know this is going to sound really ignorant but the only image and impression I have of Ethiopia is from the 1984 campaign'. Still!!! [laughing] and I'm like, what? [laughing] Really? How? Like, do you read the news? It's like one of the booming economies of Africa. Anyways, so ignorance – you know, people will gravitate and educate themselves on things that are interesting to them.

Most YDEOs, including Netsanet, were very much aware of the persisting social, political, and economic challenges in Ethiopia. However they were selective and strategic about how they spoke about Ethiopia to 'outsiders' so as not to deny or highlight these negative features.

Amina (female, late-20s, DC) spoke to me at length about the role she sees for herself in shifting the public discourse about Ethiopia.

When I explain Ethiopia to them I tell them, you know it's developing. You've got parts of the country where electricity is limited, there's no plumbing. And then you've got parts of the country where the hottest parties, the most exciting things are happening, like in the capital. I tell them its capital of Africa, it's the base for the AU, and it's one of the fastest growing economies, and I just let them know there's so much opportunity there – even for them to think about what they can contribute to it. [...] It becomes this conversation about the other side of Africa no one ever hears about. I kinda think sometimes, ok I talk about it a lot. But I see myself as a diplomat for Ethiopian culture and for African culture, and it's just like, if I'm not telling this story then, you know, who will?

YDEOs utilised their 'diplomatic' status to speak about and identify with the positive changes happening in Ethiopia. These positive developments, and the shifting public perceptions about Ethiopia that came along with it, were very edifying for my respondents on a personal level. However, it was the nature and pace of these changes that really energised YDEOs and moved them to want to be part of that change. There was a sense of excitement and urgency in the way that my respondents spoke about current developments in Ethiopia, and a notion that Ethiopia was on the cusp of something great that they did not want to miss out on.

Lealem (male, early-30s, Ethiopia) spent his childhood in Kenya, and then grew up in the Washington, D.C. area. He had recently made a permanent move to Ethiopia when we met in Addis Ababa. He described the ‘energy’ in Ethiopia in a manner that was consistent with the way that many of my other respondents spoke about this.

I think it's like a bigger thing that's happening; it's not just us. There's something Continent-wide that's happening. [...] There's a really exciting energy, a young energy, and it's exciting to be a part of that. And being here in Ethiopia of course, you really feel you're having an impact or making a difference. [...] And it's nice too, because most of the diaspora that have moved back in the last four or five years, or seven eight years, no one did it because it's necessarily easy, or like a quick buck. For the most part, there really was this passion to try and help. [...] There's a pretty big network, a loose network of Ethiopians that are back [in Ethiopia] that really are trying to create something positive. There's that nice energy as well that's surrounding us, so it's nice to be a part of that.

The YDEOs who I spoke with in Ethiopia were the most likely to describe Ethiopia as this fast-paced and exciting place. They would often complain about different challenges they encountered when living there, like inefficient services and very bad traffic. However, they would always quickly qualify this by saying that enduring these frustrations was part of the cost that must be paid in order to ‘get in on the action’ early. They saw themselves as pioneers, particularly among their peers, and as people who were driving a movement that others were already beginning to follow.

Endrias (male, early-30s, Ethiopia) had only been in Ethiopia for a week prior to our interview; however, he spoke about the country in a tone similar to those who had been there longer.

I've only been here for a short period but I'm already convinced it was the right move. And I was willing to move back to the 2003 Ethiopia, that was what I had in my head. And now it's all modern and I'm like man, this is cake man [laughing]! [...] I'm excited about the future. [My friend] is loving it out here too. He's on the same page as me, like forget about America, that's over. Eventually there's going to be an exodus of people coming here. [...] I'm not saying it's perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but now that it's moving forward, a lot of people are going to move back.

I found evidence of this chain reaction that Endrias alluded to, as many of my respondents made reference to following the footsteps of other friends and family who made the move back first.¹⁷ However, their decisions may have had as much to do with the ‘buzz’ created by people like Endrias as it did with the actual opportunities that existed in Ethiopia. As Aster (female, early-30s, Toronto) described to me, discussions among YDEOs in North America are filled with excited observations and speculations about opportunities to be successful and make an impact in Ethiopia; *“everyone is talking about that recently”*.

A very important feature of the new ‘Africa rising’ discourse is the notion that Africans are themselves driving the change on the Continent. This is particularly compelling considering the history of externally driven processes in Africa, such as colonial political systems and structural adjustment development policies. While non-African actors and institutions still yield significant power on the Continent, socio-political movements, economic developments, and technological advances are creating more opportunities for African voices and initiatives to be heard and seen around the world. YDEOs are unsurprisingly supportive of the idea of ‘Africans helping Africa’, and what makes it even more meaningful is that many see themselves as part of this collective African movement. Throughout our interviews, my respondents would often shift subject positions in relation to Ethiopian nationals, Ethiopian diaspora, and Western actors depending upon the topic of our discussion. When they spoke about the importance of Africans leading the change in Africa, YDEOs usually positioned themselves alongside those living on the Continent.

¹⁷ See Section 6.2 for a discussion of the importance of peers and family in paving the way to YDEO movements to Ethiopia and engagements with Ethiopian development.

Sewit (female, late-20s, DC), for example, was born and raised in the Washington, D.C. area; however, she consistently used the pronoun ‘we’ when speaking about the role of Ethiopians in driving future development in the country.

Now it's like the spotlight is on Ethiopia, all these different countries are coming in, whether it's Asians, whether it's Indians, cause they see that, oh this is the new developing country, we can bring our workers here, we can do this, we can do that. Well why don't we, as Ethiopians – we need to understand like, ok this is a place for us to be, we can do business here. [...] Tomorrow, Ethiopia is going to be like the super capital of Africa, and Ethiopians are going to be pissed off, like why didn't we think of that [laughing]? Seriously, I really think that's going to happen. So I think, as far as what our younger generation here in the States and Canada, or even abroad, we need to start thinking of what we can do to not be left out of that conversation. When people are talking about Ethiopia, we need an Ethiopian at that circle. It should be majority of Ethiopians at that circle; it shouldn't be someone else making that decision for our country.

Sewit saw the increased foreign investment in Ethiopia as a signal of better things to come, and even compared it to the process of gentrification happening across U.S. cities. She spoke about the waves of Asian immigrants, LGBTQ communities, and young White people moving into inner-city neighbourhoods and driving up the property value; “...and then you turn around and it's not the hood no more [laughing]!” The point of her illustration was to suggest that Ethiopians (both in Ethiopia and in the diaspora) should be the ones driving *and* benefitting from development in the country.

There were, however, other YDEOs who were more careful in differentiating their position and role as a diaspora from that of local nationals. Often, these respondents saw themselves as partners or allies rather than representatives, such as Lelisa (female, early- 30s, New York) who said: “*I realised Africans had to drive change if we're going to see change, and that my role as a diaspora is that of an intermediary.*” While there may have been variation in the way that they described their own positions, most of my respondents were similar in that

they were highly invested in and inspired by the changing status of Ethiopia. Further, finding a way to support and facilitate Ethiopian development helped them develop a sense of connection to an Ethiopia that resonated with them and that they were proud to be identified with.

Within the realm of social and collection action, the discourses that people draw on to frame their practices provides insight into the meanings that individual actors attach to their own action, and points us towards the broad historical processes and contemporary social and political movements that this meaning is drawn from and embedded within. The 'anti-development development' and 'Africa rising' discourses were the two most prominent narratives among YDEOs as they described the push and pull factors that inspired or otherwise directed their engagement in Ethiopian development. In both cases, these discourses injected a sense of legitimacy around YDEO initiatives and stimulated an enthusiasm that energised and sustained their efforts, at least at the outset. These enabling discourses helped YDEOs link their individual efforts to broader change processes, and connected them with a wider set of actors who they could identify (or disidentify) with.

6.2 'That connection to Ethiopia was established': Entry Points and Gateways to Engagement

In the section above, I outlined the ideas and discourses that helped to frame and animate YDEO engagements with Ethiopian development. I turn now to the relationships, institutions, and social structures that facilitated and enabled their actions. Together, these discussions provide a framework for analysing YDEO development activities (outlined in section 6.3), drawing particular attention to the social and symbolic practices that shape and are shaped by their actions. As discussed in Chapter 3, I borrow this method of

“thick description” and interpretive analysis from Clifford Geertz (1973), who described the study of culture as “the sorting out of the structures of significance” (p. 9). Geertz (1973) aptly describes the challenges that are inherent in doing this type of interpretive research:

In finished anthropological writings, including those collected here, this fact – that what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to – is obscured because most of what we need to comprehend a particular event, ritual, custom, idea, or whatever, is insinuated as background information before the thing itself is directly examined (p. 9).

Geertz argues that this ‘background information’ is more than just the descriptive context underpinning social action and behaviour; it provides meaning to these actions and behaviours. Following in this interpretive tradition, my research engages deeply with the ‘background information’ of my respondents as a matter of analysis and not just description.

I spoke to my respondents at length about their connections and relationships to other people of Ethiopian descent, including their families, peer groups, enclaves, and community organisations. They described the nature of these social groups and the ways in which they were personally influenced by these interactions. This initial exposure provided an entry point into more structured initiatives in the Ethiopian community, both within the diaspora and in Ethiopia. YDEOs described these as formative experiences that often played a significant role in facilitating or otherwise shaping their engagements in Ethiopian development activities. Analysing YDEO social landscapes is critical to understanding the relevance of their engagements in Ethiopian development. The organic and structured relationships discussed below were very instrumental in influencing YDEO social actions, and in most cases these relationships were strengthened and imbued with meaning through these actions in turn. This is a key contribution of my research, as it

highlights the ways in which individual human action is shaped by social interactions, how human action serves social functions, and how interpretive processes hold these social systems together.

6.2.1 *Influence of Ethiopian Diaspora Communities*

Being exposed to a city with large and active population of Ethiopians is one of the most important factors in facilitating YDEO engagement in Ethiopian development. This was of course an assumption that was built into my methodology, as I focused my interviews in North American cities with large Ethiopian diaspora populations: Toronto and Washington, D.C. Living in a community with a large Ethiopian population provides more opportunities to learn the language and culture, build relationships with other Ethiopians, hear about issues and events in Ethiopia, and become active in Ethiopia-related initiatives. However, I was surprised to learn how important these ‘enclave’ cities were even to my respondents who did not grow up in those locations.

Often, YDEOs would travel to these larger cities from other locations in North America to attend large family gatherings, community events and festivals, and sometimes just to be around other Ethiopians. In some cases, YDEOs selected particular university campuses or simply picked up and moved to these cities, with the explicit aim of being closer to the Ethiopian community. This was an important finding, as it indicated that my respondents were *actively* working to construct these Ethiopian relationships and identifications, rather than passively absorbing them through some form of environmental osmosis (which is often implicitly suggested about migrant descendants). As Clifford (1994) argues, “the term diaspora is a signifier, not simply of

transnationality and movement, but of political struggles to define the local, as distinctive community, in historical contexts of displacement” (p. 308). YDEOs played an important part in ‘defining local’ Ethiopian diasporic spaces within North America, and these ‘distinctive communities’ also became platforms for YDEO transnational practices, relationships and movements.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the Ethiopian community in Washington, D.C. is the largest and most established Ethiopian community outside of Africa (Lyons, 2007, p. 546; Terrazas, 2007). The community is so large and influential that Amharic (one of the many languages spoken in Ethiopia) is one of five non-English languages in which people can access government services in D.C.; this is in accordance with the *D.C. Language Access Act* (District of Columbia Office of Human Rights, 2004). Washington, D.C. often operates as a ‘Mecca’ in itself for Ethiopians across the diaspora, even outside of any organised events or activities. Several YDEOs spoke about their travels to Washington, D.C. as an important first encounter with the Ethiopian community writ large. The city operates as a hyper-transnational space, and experiences and relationships formed in Washington, D.C. were often important in influencing future travels to Ethiopia itself.

What is particularly interesting is that for many of my respondents, it was not the fact that they were being exposed to ‘traditional’ or ‘authentic’ Ethiopian culture that had the greatest impact. Often, they had access to these kinds of experiences through their families and smaller community gatherings in their own cities – and generally, they found them to be uninteresting or stifling spaces. It was actually encountering so many other YDEOs that my respondents described as being particularly meaningful to them. YDEOs from

cities with smaller Ethiopian diaspora communities were often one of only a few people within their age group who could relate to the specific experience of being of Ethiopian descent *and* being born and/or raised in North America.¹⁸ However, since the initial flows of Ethiopian migrants to Washington, D.C. were chronologically earlier and larger, there is a significant and very active population of YDEOs present who are the offspring of these early migrations (i.e. 1970s-1980s).

Dereje (male, early-30s, Ethiopia) grew up in a White suburban neighbourhood in California, with very little exposure to Ethiopians outside of his immediate family. He spoke about how he could relate more to the Ethiopians he met in D.C. than the ones in the cities where he grew up and studied.

I started going to D.C. more often, so I started getting involved in the habesha¹⁹ community there through cousins and family friends and things like that. [...] Cause people kind of take it personally sometimes if you don't – 'Why aren't your friends Ethiopian?' 'Why don't you speak Amarigna?'²⁰ So I just didn't want to deal with all that kind of conversations. [...] It wasn't like I went and sought out an Ethiopian community, it was just the people that I happened know there were Ethiopian and it didn't seem different than if I was with my [non-Ethiopian] friends in – I mean it was obviously different but I was just as comfortable with them as I was with my friends in high school or college or anything.

¹⁸ This was a lament that was common among many of my respondents who did not grow up in Toronto or Washington, D.C. The reoccurrence of this narrative has to do with a combination of my methodological sampling process and Ethiopian migration patterns. I tended to interview people who were between the ages of 20-35, and Ethiopian migration to North America began *en masse* in the early 1980s. Therefore, most of my respondents were part of the first cohort of people of Ethiopian descent born and raised in these new places of settlement. YDEOs whose parents settled in cities with large Ethiopian populations were often socialised alongside many other YDEOs of the same age whose parents also settled there. However, those whose parents settled in other cities were usually the oldest among a much smaller population of YDEOs, and therefore these other YDEOs were generally too young to become peers and friends.

¹⁹ 'Habesha' or 'abesha' is a supra-national/ethnic term often used to describe people of Ethiopian or Eritrean descent among people within these communities. However, a number of groups within this region have historically been excluded from and/or have rejected this term.

²⁰ *Amarigna* is another term for Amharic, one of the primary languages spoken in Ethiopia. 'Amarigna' is often the word used by Amharic speakers to refer to the language.

For Dereje, it was the 'American-ness' of the YDEOs he met in D.C. that appealed most to him and put him at ease. Other respondents were more intentional in their travels to D.C., and sought out the 'Ethiopian' elements of the community there. For instance, Nafkot (female, late-20s, Ethiopia) grew up in the American West Coast, but made a conscious decision to attend a university in Washington D.C.

One of the reasons that I moved to D.C. was because I wanted to be closer to a big Ethiopian community. Seattle has a big one, but at the time I felt like I knew everybody because it was kind of small. Maybe now it is closer to 50-60,000 but at the time it was like a lot smaller and I felt like I knew a lot of the people. And I wanted to meet more young people that were Ethiopian, and all that kind of stuff. Plus, I wanted to be in a big city. So I moved to D.C. and I lived there for five years and went to finish my undergrad there.

Nafkot's experience is a very clear example of how active many YDEOs are in constructing their own transnational spaces.

Living in Washington, D.C. also served to facilitate future transnational activities and movements. After living in Washington, D.C. for five years, Nafkot landed a job at a local NGO that was run by an Ethiopian woman.

It was an NGO that connected Africans in the diaspora with Africans in Africa, so kind of like a pan-African approach to development. I really enjoyed it but it was an entry-level job and I was like, you know, I really actually want to move there where the action is. And then I got a really cool opportunity to work at [a health related organisation] here [in Ethiopia].

Each of these experiences – growing up in Seattle, moving to Washington, D.C., and then working for the local NGO – became gateways bringing Nafkot closer to and more comfortable with her ultimate decision to move to Ethiopia. In their seminal book *The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation*, Levitt and Waters (2002) urged scholars not to underestimate “the strong influence of the transnational social fields in which the second generations is embedded” (p. 4). Their research found that many children of immigrants express strong attachments to their countries of origin

and make plans to act on them in the future. However, they argued that it was “impossible to predict what they will actually do”, as these communities were still young and there was very little data to examine at the time (Levitt & Waters, 2002, p. 3). The field has grown considerably since then, and my research is among several others²¹ demonstrating that many of these young people *do* in fact act upon their transnational plans and ambitions.

6.2.2 *Influence of Structured Ethiopian Initiatives and Organisations*

As discussed, simply being around other people of Ethiopian descent can have a powerful effect in shaping YDEO social lives and practices. However, being actively involved in structured Ethiopian community events, organisations, and institutions was particularly important in influencing and enabling YDEO engagements in Ethiopian development. I asked my respondents to list the places and events where they tended to interact most with other Ethiopians within their North American cities. The responses were usually consistent and often included some combination of the following:

- Ethiopian churches (both orthodox and protestant)
- Annual Ethiopian soccer tournaments
- Annual Ethiopian new year celebrations and festivals
- *Mahabir* (small home-based community associations or social clubs)
- Ethiopian youth groups and organisations
- Ethiopian student groups on university campuses
- Ethiopian concerts, parties, and fundraisers
- Neighbourhoods with many Ethiopian residents, restaurants, and/or businesses (i.e. Teesdale in Toronto, U Street in Washington, D.C.)

²¹ See the following for examples of research that examines the transnational practices of migrant descendants, often referred to as ‘second generations’ (Espiritu & Tran, 2002; Kibria, 2002; King et al., 2011; Levitt, 2009; Mahieu, 2015; Potter, 2005; Wessendorf, 2013).

These spaces and events are important in shaping YDEO social landscapes, even if they only participate in them periodically.

A number of respondents (predominantly males, but also some females) spoke about how impactful the annual Ethiopian soccer tournaments were in forging and sustaining relationships with other people of Ethiopian descent. These annual soccer tournaments are organised by the Ethiopian Sports Federation in North America (ESFNA), a non-profit organisation established in 1984, and are hosted in different North American cities every year (though they tend to reoccur in the cities with larger Ethiopian populations like Washington, D.C). While most of my respondents simply attended the soccer tournaments, Kiros (male, early-40s, Ethiopia) actually played for the team representing Seattle, which meant the experience was particularly significant in shaping his social life.

I mentioned earlier that I was a soccer player. So I joined the Ethiopian soccer team in Seattle, and that also gave me an opportunity to engage with various Ethiopians. As you know, there is a big, or at least it used to be a big annual Ethiopian soccer tournament, so I used to go to those, which is a very large collection of Ethiopians from the U.S. and Canada mostly. There is also a large Ethiopian community in Seattle, so by virtue of being there, playing soccer, and going to school, and connecting with others – I made a lot of friends, so that connection [to Ethiopia] was established.

As Kiros' experience demonstrates, these social activities and spaces help to establish and reinforce relationships that become instrumental in building a sense of connection to the Ethiopian community and Ethiopia itself.

The 'Brief History' of ESFNA, documented on their website, provides important context to the soccer tournaments, and demonstrates how intentional diaspora communities can be in creating these social spaces.

ESFNA holds a week-long soccer tournament every year. The soccer tournament is a medium, the organization's highest aim is bringing Ethiopians together for a multitude of reasons. ESFNA's growth in North America has its roots in Ethiopians' migration to the United States and Canada—especially since the 1980s. [...] Some of the founding

principles of ESFNA were borne out of the desire for Ethiopians at the time and in the future to have something they claim as their own for generations. [...] Over the past three decades, ESFNA has become a cultural and sports Mecca for Ethiopians in North America. Every year, thousands of Ethiopians and friends of Ethiopia spend one week in one of the 25 North American cities selected as a host city; they watch dozens of soccer games amongst the 30 member clubs. Pilgrims also witness and interact with hundreds of food and dry good vendors and non-profit charitable organizations – in one venue. [...] Outside of the sports events, ESFNA has contributed in initiatives to be part of development and humanitarian efforts in Ethiopia (Ethiopian Sports Federation of North America, N.D.).

Over the years, ESFNA soccer tournaments have also become sites of contestation and political controversy, which in many ways contradicts the aims of the organisation. However, in my view, this is overshadowed by the fact that the tournament did become the intergenerational cultural exchange that the founders envisioned, particularly in the early decades of migration (1980s-1990s) when Ethiopian community spaces in North America were scarce.

The religious metaphors used on the website (i.e. 'Mecca', 'pilgrims') signal the level of importance afforded to these events and the fact that they represent much more than sporting activities. Having attended a few of these soccer tournaments myself over the years, I know that there are usually only a handful of the thousands of attendees that spend their time actually watching the soccer matches. Most people attend to catch up with old friends, make new friends, advertise businesses and organisations, and simply 'plug in' to the energy created when the community comes together in such large numbers. As Kiros alluded to, the soccer tournaments have diminished in their prominence, particularly among the younger generations; however, they remain a key institution in the Ethiopian diaspora community in North America.

Another, and far more influential, institution within Ethiopian communities are the churches. Most of my respondents were either Christian or had a

Christian heritage, which I believe is at least partially reflective of my limited access within the other faith communities, including the Muslim community. As discussed in Chapter 3, it is also possible that fewer YDEOs from Muslim communities felt a connection with my research and did not volunteer to participate. This could be because they have found other ways to negotiate relationships with Ethiopia outside of development initiatives, or perhaps other social identities and communities are simply more salient to them. Beyond these considerations, the majority of the Ethiopian diaspora population in North America do come from a Christian tradition (either Coptic Orthodox or Protestant), and Christian churches tend to be more established and visible within the larger Ethiopian diaspora community.

There are significant populations of Muslim communities within the Ethiopian diaspora as well. The Harari people, for example, are from the predominantly Muslim city of Harar in Ethiopia. The largest population of Hararis outside of Ethiopia live in Toronto, with large concentrations also found in Washington, D.C. (Gibb, 2002). While there are established community structures, such as the Harari Heritage Centre in Toronto, these tend to be solely utilised by people from within this community. In future research, I hope to gain a better understanding of the transnational dimensions of Muslim YDEO social practices, particularly within the Harari community (see Section 8.3).

The Christian churches have played an important role in facilitating a number of the engagements in Ethiopian development among my respondents. First and foremost, the church was usually the primary entry point into the Ethiopian diaspora community for most of my respondents. For example, Meskerem (female, early-20s, Toronto) went to an Ethiopian Protestant

church in Toronto as a child, and recently started attending the church again as a young adult. She explained, *“That’s probably my main way of connecting with Ethiopian people”*. The Ethiopian Orthodox churches are particularly influential as community structures, and a majority of my respondents stated that their earliest exposures to the Ethiopian community came through attending these churches regularly as a child.

While many respondents did not attend as regularly (or at all) as adults, the Ethiopian churches still had a lasting impact on YDEOs. As Levitt (2009) argues, “religion, as well as ethnicity and nationality, can motivate cross-border activism among the second generation” (p. 1239). Receiving a moral and spiritual education through a diaspora church helped my respondents connect their commitment towards being and doing good, with their commitment to helping those in the homeland. Sometimes, this connection materialised as a personal expression of faith, and other times the churches played a more concrete role in facilitating this connection by organising fundraising events and mission trips to Ethiopia. Much like other institutions and social structures, the influence of the church in the lives of YDEOs has as much to do with its discursive power as it does material power.

As discussed in other sections, the majority of my respondents were university students or graduates. A large proportion of them were involved in the Ethiopian Student’s Associations at their universities, and many of them founded and/or were involved as executive members of these student clubs. Many YDEOs described these experiences as particularly transformative in terms of their engagements with the Ethiopian community, and their connections to Ethiopia itself. It was often the first time they became meaningfully involved in a form of Ethiopian community organising, and

also the first time they could craft a space within the community that fit just right. Lundy (2011) discusses the important role that Haitian student associations have had in mobilising 'second generation' Haitians in the U.S. and Canada, and in strengthening their identification with Haiti itself. These university student organisations became platforms for organising humanitarian responses to events such as the earthquake in Haiti, which also served to reinforce a sense of community and collective identity among the students.

Samuel (male, late-20s, Ethiopia) spoke to me at length about how his involvement with the Ethiopian Student's Association (ESA) at his university in Washington, D.C. became both the outlet and platform he had always looked for.

I was exposed to a lot of Ethiopians through ESA. At that point, we started going out on our own [within] the social scene in D.C. Because you're in college, you're in a social environment where that was the first time you're not with your parents. So that sort of exposed us to other social aspects of being an Ethiopian in college, in D.C., and all these things. That component really impacted our view of Ethiopia. In the ESA even the goal and objectives, it was always to help Ethiopia. So it was like, oh let's just send them books – those were the kinds of ideas that people would suggest. We used to collect books, we used to do cultural shows – always the idea was to do something here [in Ethiopia], so I think my biggest influencer in the larger scheme of things was – of course I sought those things, I sought Ethiopia, I sought something about Ethiopia – but I didn't know how. So in college, that articulated it, you know, we have an association that actually can direct me to just do something here [in Ethiopia]. That was the sort of outlet we were looking for. The ESA was the one that had a lot of impact in why I am here [in Ethiopia] – definitely here, because I can tell you there's a lot people that were in [those] same peer groups that are here [in Ethiopia]. And I think all of us at some point were looking for that journey to be here, and it's funny how all of us ended up here at different times and are doing different things, because we were all seeking the same thing.

Samuel's narrative is very insightful, as he outlines the many social functions that these Ethiopian student organisations ultimately served for him and his peers. These spaces provided an opportunity for YDEOs to enjoy the freedom of young adulthood with other peers; however, the recreational objectives

also dovetailed with their desires to connect with Ethiopia in a meaningful and accessible way. In Yacob's (male, early-30s, DC) case, his interest in getting involved in an Ethiopian student group peaked after taking his first trip to visit Ethiopia. *"Interestingly enough, in the summer that I spent in D.C., especially after my first trip to Ethiopia, I aggressively courted the non-familial Ethiopian peers."* This is illustrative of how different interactions and experiences within YDEO transnational social fields reinforce the strength and meaning of their identifications with Ethiopia and – in the case of my respondents – ultimately influence their engagements with Ethiopian development.

6.3 'We are a non-governmental, non-religious, non-everything': Forms and Nature of YDEO Development Activities

My research is fundamentally focused on understanding the relationship between identity, social interaction, and social practice. I am interested in understanding how each of these processes reinforce or otherwise shape the others. This has translated into a case study that specifically explores the relationship between the diasporic identities of YDEOs and their engagements in Ethiopian development. I am restating this here in order to point out that *engaging in Ethiopian development* is just one of any number of other social practices that could have been examined in order to understand the construction and translation of YDEO diasporic identities. Homeland development initiatives are often represented in the literature as the 'holy grail' as far as manifestations of diasporic identities. Early conceptualisations of diasporas were highly influenced by the Jewish and Armenian cases, where there were direct linkages between diasporic identity, transnational mobilisations, and homeland development initiatives. Contemporary

interests in 'harnessing' diaspora remittances and resources have revived an interest in homeland orientations, particularly those that are expressed in institutionalised and material forms.

However, as many scholars have noted, the social interactions and practices that happen among local and transnational diaspora communities are just as salient as those that are connected to the country of origin. This is particularly evident among diaspora communities that do not have a material homeland in the form of a nation-state (e.g. the Black Atlantic African diasporas), yet still manage to build a sense of collective identity and shared experience. There are many YDEOs who do not participate in Ethiopian development initiatives for conscious or circumstantial reasons. However, many of these people find other ways to explore and construct a relationship to Ethiopia, and these are no more or less important than the experiences of the YDEOs I explore through this research – they are simply different.

In my call for research participants that was shared through social media and via email, I stipulated that I was particularly interested in speaking with YDEOs who had been involved in Ethiopian development or charitable activities (See Chapter 3). I expanded upon this in the following manner:

This could include (but not limited to): fundraising initiatives for Ethiopia, volunteering in Ethiopia, organizing campaigns or lobbying on issues related to Ethiopia, studying international development or another field with the intention of applying it to Ethiopia, working with NGOs that are involved in Ethiopia, etc. These activities could take place in North America, in Ethiopia, or even online...on your own, through an organization, government, or religious institution, etc.

It was important that I provide this description, as the word 'development' can be interpreted in many ways, including for-profit initiatives and infrastructure projects. However, I was also trying to cast the net as wide as possible within the realm of international development, in order to capture

the diversity of ways in which YDEOs work towards driving change in Ethiopia.

I interviewed anyone that expressed interest in participating, and in some cases I was not sure that their ‘development’ activities fit within the framework I had established. For example, some of my respondents were involved in setting up businesses or investment firms in Ethiopia. However, through the course of our discussions I learned that most of these initiatives were developed as social enterprises, or were attached in some way to broad charitable objectives. Ultimately, the fact that respondents conceptualised their initiatives as philanthropic was more important than whether they initially appeared to be so. Their self-perceptions are what make these activities meaningful in terms of constructing a sense of connection to an Ethiopian collective identity. Also, the fact that these respondents designed and/or represented their private sector initiatives as philanthropic points to the influence of this discourse within the Ethiopian community, and the desire on the part of YDEOs to associate their initiatives with a larger social movement.

In the end, most of my respondents were involved in activities that were more readily recognizable as development or charitable projects. The following table, which also appears in Chapter 1, outlines examples of the Ethiopian development initiatives that my respondents were engaged in:

Working in the development sector
• Working at Ethiopian branches of INGOs and multilateral organisations • Studying International Development with the intention of helping Ethiopia in the future • Working within the corporate social responsibility unit of a company based in Ethiopia

Awareness and fundraising initiatives based in North America • Creating virtual platforms to mobilise funds and raise awareness about poverty and injustice • Auctioning art in the U.S. to fund a home for children with HIV in Ethiopia • Organising a fashion show in Toronto to raise funds for water projects in Ethiopia • Raising funds and collecting books for Ethiopia through university student club events and initiatives
Volunteer and missions trips to Ethiopia • Going on a Christian missions trip which included visiting orphanages • Taking a sabbatical to work as an medical doctor in a rural Ethiopian hospital • Volunteering at a local human rights organisation providing pro bono legal support • Accepting a quasi-volunteer secondment at a department within the Ethiopian government to provide policy support
Establishing Ethiopian development organisations and initiatives • Establishing education focused NGOs in Ethiopia • Creating an investment firm to seed local Ethiopian businesses • Partnering with corporations in North America to send school supplies to Ethiopia • Establishing a volunteer placement organisation that sends young people in Ethiopian diaspora to local Ethiopian NGOs

Table 2: Examples of YDEO Ethiopian development initiatives

A range of factors, including the availability of resources and personal skills and interests influenced the methods and mediums of engagement that individual YDEOs chose. Some of these activities were organised within the Ethiopian diaspora community, and other times they were through mainstream organisations. As discussed earlier in this chapter, my respondents were motivated by a desire to take an approach to Ethiopian development that was different from both their parents' generation and mainstream Western development organisations. In most cases, YDEOs landed somewhere in the middle by drawing on networks, ideas, and resources from both of these sources.

6.3.1 *Remittances and Family-Run Initiatives*

Remittance flows have been the focus of much of the contemporary diaspora/development literature. In addition, many developing country states have established formal institutions and initiatives aimed at encouraging and channelling these remittances to particular projects or industries. Gamlen (2014) highlights the role that the United Nations and other “global decision-makers” have played in proliferating the ideas around diaspora engagement, which have been taken up by states so rapidly over the last few decades. Much of the Ethiopian Government’s diaspora engagement efforts, which have been bolstered by international organisations like the International Organisation for Migration, are focused on the diasporas in North America, who remit the most money and are the most politically active (Terrazas, 2007). In 2010, the National Bank of Ethiopia reported more than \$600 million USD in official remittance inflows, with the actual volume (including informal channels) likely in the range of \$1 - \$2 billion annually (Geda & Irving, 2011, p. 113). Of the Ethiopian diaspora remittances recorded by the UNDP, North America accounts for the largest flow (41%) in dollar value (Fransen & Katie, 2009, p. 24). These figures are not disaggregated by anything like country of birth, so there is currently no way of knowing how much can be attributed to YDEO contributions.

My research, and anecdotal experience, would suggest that some YDEOs do send remittances to family members in Ethiopia, however in small amounts and irregular intervals. Often, YDEOs do not have the strong interpersonal relationships with family members or individuals in Ethiopia that normally drive larger and/or regular remittance flows. However, almost all of my respondents grew up in households where their parents remitted money to

Ethiopia regularly, and this often had an impact in shaping their transnational activities. Sewit (female, late-20s, DC), who was born and raised in Washington, D.C., stated that she sends money to her family in Ethiopia on a fairly regular basis.

As far as giving back to Ethiopia, that was more of me just growing up and seeing that that's a need! Like, they need it. Even whether it's like clothes, or sending other stuff back home. My dad literally sends money back home all the time. Like he just called me the other day and said, 'hey you need to send your grandma some money'. And it's not just the first generation. He's like 'no, like you're an adult, you need to send her some money too, like this is your grandmother'. And I remember going back, and when I'm giving money to my family members it wasn't money from my dad, it's money from me, and it's like a lot of money. I mean my boyfriend was like, 'why are you giving everyone money', and I'm like this is just something we do. This might be a hundred dollars for me, but it's a lot to them. [...] Also, it just made me feel better knowing that the money I'm giving them is really from my heart, my hard earned money. It's me; it's not my dad's money.

In Sewit's case, her father played an active role in influencing her decision to remit money, both in modelling the practice himself and in insisting that she do the same. However, Sewit took pride in the fact that it was her own money, not her father's, and that it was something that she did from 'her heart'. A number of other respondents referenced sending money to family members in Ethiopia, however they tended to happen on an ad hoc basis, and, unlike Sewit, were usually not part of a sustained commitment or obligation to do so.

Family members played other important roles in facilitating and shaping YDEO engagements in Ethiopia. First of all, having parents, siblings and other close family members move to Ethiopia often meant that YDEOs were more likely to travel to Ethiopia regularly and consider relocating there permanently. Sometimes, my respondents would travel to Ethiopia to visit immediate family and then search for something meaningful to do while they were there. For example, Aaron (male, mid-40s, Ethiopia) initially moved to Ethiopia from Washington, D.C. along with his father who needed help

running the family business there. However, he phased out of the business and began doing communications-related consulting work with international organisations based in Ethiopia.

Russom's (male, mid-30s, Ethiopia) parents lived in Ethiopia, while he lived in the U.S. After his father passed away, he was concerned that his mother was getting lonely and that her health was deteriorating. He explained that his decision to move to Ethiopia was influenced by the fact that the family wanted someone to be with his mother, and that he was the only sibling that was unattached. After moving to Ethiopia, Russom, who was trained as a lawyer in the U.S., took a position as a Program Manager in a local humanitarian organisation. Ruth's (female, late-20s, Toronto) engagement in development was through an international organisation established by her father. The organisation was conceived of after her father and brother were shocked by the lack of resources for children in a rural part of Ethiopia that they had visited during a family trip. The next Christmas, her father decided not to buy any gifts for Ruth and her siblings and donated the money to the town in Ethiopia instead. He continued to do this year after year – much to her dismay at the time – and eventually his friends and co-workers started to support and join in on his initiative. This evolved into a rural education project in Ethiopia, and eventually Ruth took an interest and began raising funds and volunteering with the project herself. These experiences illustrate how instrumental the family can be as both a model and pathway for YDEO giving.

6.3.2 *Initiatives and Fundraisers Based in North America*

While the focus of YDEO development activities might be overseas in Ethiopia, many of the activities themselves happen where they live, work, and play in North America. The social, political, and economic environment where development activities take place can have very significant implications for how YDEOs choose to organise and direct their efforts. This sets the stage and also impacts the range of players that are brought into the fold of YDEO initiatives. Winta (female, mid-30s, DC) was a recent PhD graduate, and was teaching a university course in Political Science when we met. She integrated current political events happening in Ethiopia into her course material, including the state-sponsored violence that erupted after the contested 2005 elections. Her students decided to develop a response to this issue as part of their ‘political participation’ grade in Winta’s class.

The students came together to actually work on this issue [by] encouraging the U.S. Government to have a harsher stance against what was going on in Ethiopia. So they organised themselves, and we held this big forum, they scheduled protests, called Congress-people, signed petitions. And we invited five professors from three different [local] universities to talk about democratic stability in Ethiopia. So that was really a great opportunity. My brother and my cousin were also grad students at the time [in the same school], so we all got together and really pushed that issue. [...] It got a little bit of media, but not much. And the purpose really was to talk about what’s going on there. Because the Ethiopia-U.S. relations are very good because of geopolitics, so the idea that we can just [ignore] what’s going on domestically didn’t feel quite right.

Winta was instrumental in mobilising a response to this issue that she has been following so closely. The nature of these advocacy activities were influenced by the environment she was embedded within, which was a community of diverse and politically active students in an American university.

Winta had also travelled to Ethiopia for a week as part of a graduate class research project on emerging markets. She used the policy recommendation

report that came out of this class as a platform to speak about Ethiopian issues in the U.S.

I was also invited to speak with [an American politician]. They had a briefing on the Hill and invited young Ethiopian Americans to come and talk about their different organisations. So I came to speak as Youth Coordinator for [a local Ethiopian community organisation] but I asked them if I could also talk about this policy recommendation report as another hat that I wore.

Winta felt strongly that she needed to use the civil liberties and privileges that she had as an American citizen in order to draw attention to the political and development issues in Ethiopia. Many other YDEOs used their access to networks and resources in North America to support their interests in Ethiopian development. This, however, translated into initiatives as diverse as the individuals themselves.

One of the most common models used was hosting parties or social events that doubled as fundraisers for development projects or organisations in Ethiopia. These drew upon YDEO networks both within and outside of the Ethiopian community, allowing them to access a wide net of support and resources. Nardos (female, early-30s, DC) is a successful party promoter, and was described to me by another respondent as one of the key “socialites” within the Ethiopian community in the D.C. area. She was part of a group of Ethiopian and Eritrean party promoters that came together to organise a response to the 2011 drought that affected several countries in East Africa, including Ethiopia.

So we started this non-profit and we raised funds for the drought. We registered it, I don't know how far that went. For the purposes of raising funds we had to start the registration process [as a non-profit]. [...] I was very very active in the planning. We started doing weekly Happy Hour fundraisers, and we also were planning to do a dinner that didn't quite come through. [...] We created a connection to Oxfam, so we raised funds to donate money to Oxfam. I'm not sure how far that went because I wasn't part of accounting; I was more event planning and networking aspects – more the marketing side because that's my strength. [...] I was approached [to join the group] because of my connections within the music industry, because the idea behind it initially was to do a large

concert with different artists, and raise funds that way. It was too grand of a plan because it was so last minute and it was time sensitive to get that many people on stage, to raise that amount of money in that period of time, and send it back. So we thought if we did multiple events, we would be able to raise a certain amount of money.

Ultimately, Nardos became disillusioned with the lack of structure and transparency within the organisation, so she withdrew herself from the organisation.

When it came to the fundraising aspect of things, it wasn't people that had fundraising expertise. It wasn't people that have any sort of non-profit expertise. It was a bunch of promoters, a marketing person, people that were heavily interested in doing something, and that's how everything usually starts. But there needs to be some sort of structure, and there was no structure. We tried to create structure and the structure – there was 10-12 people involved, and 10-12 people on each email chain, which is ridiculous! You don't need that many. But because it was such a community thing and everyone felt so strongly about it – so I cancelled myself out. I told them I don't want to get involved this anymore because I realised the power struggle that was happening and I didn't want to be held accountable for anything. And I didn't want to put my name out there on the line anymore by reaching out to people, important people that I thought could make a difference, and not following through.

Nardos felt that this initiative devolved into an ineffective and disreputable fundraising initiative, much like the ones she criticised her parents' generation for. She was still committed to using her skills and networks as an event planner and promoter to affect change in Ethiopia; however, she no longer trusted the Ethiopian diaspora community to help facilitate this.

Several respondents explained that hosting parties and social events is the most effective way to mobilise community support and raise funds among YDEOs. This also makes these initiatives more accessible to people outside of the Ethiopian community, who may be open to supporting a good cause but are not invested enough to attend a more 'serious' or formal event. Netsanet (female, late-20s, Toronto) established an annual fashion show in Toronto that showcased urban and Ethiopian cultural wear, and raised money for an international water charity that worked in Ethiopia.

But I knew that [the event] was masked as – in the way that it was styled, presented, and promoted – it was masked as something that everyone can come to, that appealed to everybody, it was a fashion event. So it was my way of kind of sneaking it in – sneaking in the culture and being like, by the way funds are going to [the water charity] and this is the cultural dress of the country the money's going to. You know, I really tried to find a way to make it all make sense. Yeah, it was just important for me, and it was my show, so I was like, I can do whatever I want! And I also knew that by adding that element, the people that were habesha²² in the room would have been proud, happy, and excited by that as well. Just a combination of things. It was a strategic decision (laughing).

Netsanet was able to leverage her contacts in the arts and media scene in Toronto to produce a very professional and well-attended annual fashion show. The charitable element was 'snuck in', as she described it, and not necessarily the primary draw for people who paid to see the show. However, it was important for Netsanet that she incorporated this fundraising element in order to add depth and meaning to the event and to express a sense of solidarity with the wider Ethiopian community. She was working hard to achieve a number of social objectives and bring her various worlds together through this event.

6.3.3 Volunteer and Professional Efforts Based in Ethiopia

Over one-third of my interviews were conducted with YDEOs who were currently working or volunteering in Ethiopia, and many of the people that I interviewed in North America spoke to me about their development activities based in Ethiopia in the past. Most of my respondents who had never travelled to Ethiopia to do some sort of development work, expressed a strong desire and intention to do so in the future. A number of YDEOs I spoke with had also been involved in international education, volunteer, or

²² 'Habesha' or 'abesha' is a supra-national/ethnic term often used to describe people of Ethiopian or Eritrean descent among people within these communities. However, a number of groups within this region have historically been excluded from and/or have rejected this term.

professional initiatives in developing countries other than Ethiopia. These international development experiences were important in exposing my respondents to the practices and models that they wanted to replicate in Ethiopia, in addition to those that they wanted to avoid.

As discussed in Chapter 5, engaging in development work *in situ* is seen by many diasporans as a privilege bestowed upon those who can afford to sacrifice the time or resources to do so. There is the social capital and adventure that comes along with these experiences, as well as the opportunity to see the impact of one's efforts immediately and up close. Najam (2007) argues that diaspora philanthropy should be viewed as an "identity maintaining mechanism". This view "leads us to a better understanding of not only why diaspora communities give, but also of what they give to, and how they wish to be involved in the giving process and in directing the use of their gifts (Najam, 2007, p. 127). Najam's perspective is also useful in understanding why so many YDEOs were particularly interested in travelling to Ethiopia to support development efforts. I argue that YDEO engagements in development serve as 'identity *constructing* and maintaining mechanisms'. Thus, the closer they can get to the social and emotional impact of their development initiatives in Ethiopia, the stronger the desired impact on their sense of personal connection with the people and place.

Elsa (female, mid-20s, Toronto) attended a Christian university that was based in the U.S. for part of her undergraduate degree. Her school facilitated study abroad trips and happened to be offering one in Ethiopia during her time there. Students who participated received a school credit, and the three-week trip involved volunteering in orphanages and hospitals, visiting local NGOs, and seeing historical sites. Elsa decided to participate in this particular

study abroad trip largely because she had never been to Ethiopia before. She described being somewhat envious of her friends who were international students from West Africa and would go back to visit their countries of origin regularly.

They went back home often, they go for Christmas, summer break, they were born there, they knew the language. And when I would claim Ethiopia, they would laugh and say you're not Ethiopian, can you speak the language, and stuff like that. And I couldn't really answer for that. So I kind of wanted to prove myself, I guess as an African.

Yacob (male, early-30s, DC) travelled to Ethiopia to provide volunteer legal services at a human rights organisation while he was a law school student in the US. He decided to do this partly because he was considering becoming a human rights lawyer. However, his specific decision to volunteer in Ethiopia was influenced after being profoundly impacted by the inequity he witnessed on his first trip to Ethiopia a few years prior.

The Ethiopian experience for me, like why did I choose – cause that's forever a dilemma for me. [...] I've been there once, and I know plenty of people whose rights are not being guaranteed [in Ethiopia]. So there is most definitely other areas of the planet, probably in my city, where people's rights aren't being guaranteed, but this sounded like a good enough place to start. [...] Stepping back, ok, it's not unfair that I chose Ethiopia over anything else, or anywhere else to go. But why else did I choose Ethiopia? I think for me it involves this turn toward my heritage that began when I first went there. It was about a series of promises that I made to myself when I first went there, that this wouldn't be lightening in a bottle for me. This experience wouldn't be as cathartic as it is, as therapeutic, as revelatory, as it is without me following up on it. Because if I didn't make that promise to follow up then it would be this kind of, you know, almost this (long pause) selfish, or superficial kind of feeling.

Ultimately, Yacob's volunteer placement in Ethiopia was cut short because his arrival happened to coincide with the 2005 post-election violence in Addis Ababa. He could not contribute his time and skills as he had hoped, however he learned a great deal about the harsh realities of doing human rights advocacy work in the politically tense environment of Ethiopia. Elsa and Yacob's excerpts above speak to their motivations for engaging in these development activities, which is the subject of focus in Chapter 5. However, it

is useful to bring this context back here to demonstrate how the modes and nature of YDEO development activities are so intimately connected to their process of diasporic identification.

A number of my respondents moved to Ethiopia to take up professional positions within the development sector. For example, Lissan (male, late-20s, Ethiopia) was on his fourth development job after three years of living in Ethiopia. He started his development career in the country office of ILO, and then became the country representative for a German NGO, then worked for the UN as a consultant before taking a social development job with the World Bank. Part of the reason why he switched jobs so frequently was because he was so disillusioned with the sector, and was unsatisfied with the impact his efforts had on the ground. As discussed, YDEOs often expressed dissatisfaction with the development efforts of both mainstream development organisations and older diaspora generations.

Bewnet (male, early-20s, DC) established a youth-led organisation in D.C. that supported children in Ethiopia through efforts like book drives and fundraisers. He explained how challenging it was to work or partner with the older generation of Ethiopians in D.C.

There's a perfect example of what I mean. We wanted to get on a radio to advertise an event that we had. And they said, 'are you for the government or against?' And we were like, oh no – cause my dad prepared us for this, he coached us. So we were like, alright, we're ready (laughing) you know what I mean? So we were like, 'here's the thing sir, we are a non-government non-religious, non-everything, we just want to help Ethiopia.

Bewnet's organisation and efforts were based in Washington, D.C.; however, he describes his intentions in a way that resonates with many of my respondents, including those who worked and volunteered in Ethiopia. YDEOs wanted the freedom to 'just help Ethiopia' without the burden of

diaspora politics or the bureaucracy of development organisations. They wanted to interact with the people they were helping, and hoped to see how their particular skills and resources were having an impact.

Some YDEOs had the networks and capital to find or engineer development initiatives in Ethiopia that aligned with their particular objectives. For some people this just meant using personal contacts to secure a volunteer position at a local organisation of their choice. For example, Meron (female, mid-20s, Toronto) travelled to Ethiopia after her university graduation and then began contacting people she knew in Canada to ask them to refer her to an NGO. She ended up spending three months volunteering with a local NGO that worked with women and girls.

Actually back in university, I've always had this need to volunteer with the women and young children programs, I don't know why, but it's always just stuck out. I always wanted to give back to those kinds of programs because I felt like it would make a greater impact, and then more so, thinking back about Ethiopian culture, and just Ethiopians period, I think it does have a bigger impact when you focus on women and children, and just girls in particular. So actually the organisation that I was volunteering with focused solely on women and young girls, so it just spoke to me, everything about it I wanted to do.

Abrehet (female, late-20s, California)²³ had a contract job with a large international development initiative in Ethiopia, which involved interviewing girls about early marriage. She recalled that it was the first time she felt that her position as a diaspora was particularly “useful”. *“Because [the other staff] were all white American [and] instead of having a cultural deficiency, all of a sudden not being either [fully American or fully Ethiopian] is actually better.”*

After completing graduate school in the U.S., Abrehet launched a non-profit organisation that facilitates volunteer placements in Ethiopia specifically for YDEOs in North America. She had just launched the initiative at the time that

²³ Abrehet is based in California, however I interviewed her via Skype. I requested this interview with her because her initiative was so uniquely aligned with my research topic.

we spoke and was in the process of recruiting the first cohort of volunteers. The organisational model for Abrehet's initiative was designed after surveying over 400 YDEOs online about what they would want out of an experience like this. As it stands now, participants must commit to six months in Ethiopia, where they will rotate between placements in 'indigenous non-profits' and local businesses. Volunteers also receive mentorship and leadership training opportunities throughout the program. What is most interesting, for the purposes of my research, is the program's identity-focused objectives.

This initiative is specifically tailored for skilled YDEOs who can contribute towards Ethiopian development and are also looking to explore and express their Ethiopian identities. As such, participants "will be encouraged to document their experience thoroughly through different mediums, in order to define and redefine what it means for them to be an Ethiopian". The program is advertised as "an opportunity [for participants] to increase their own cultural identity and be a catalyst for growth and change in Ethiopia." I learned about Abrehet's initiative after I had completed my interviews and began writing this dissertation, and in many ways it felt like validation for my research. My analysis is focused on the manner in which YDEO diasporic identities are constructed and shaped through their engagements in Ethiopian development, and how their positionality as YDEOs also shapes the nature of these activities. Abrehet's initiative, which was borne out of her experience both as a YDEO and a development worker, makes all of these connections quite explicit and helps to bring my analytical framework into greater focus.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the ways in which YDEOs became involved in Ethiopian development initiatives, and the nature of the activities themselves. I dedicate a significant amount of discussion to deconstructing discourses that enable YDEOs to envision themselves as meaningful actors in this space. Most of my respondents described their actions as being part of a larger purpose or movement and drew upon similar ideas and frameworks to rationalise and interpret their development efforts. Often, the ‘anti-development’ discourse helped to construct something to rally against, while the ‘Africa-rising’ discourse provided something to rally around. These rallying points are particularly important in helping YDEOs feel like they are part of a larger communal movement, even if their development activities are seemingly small, individually led, and/or detached from the region.

Patriotic appeals to ‘support the motherland’ did not resonate with YDEOs as much as broad social justice and pan-African discourses, which were more accessible and relatable to them. My respondents were certainly passionate about supporting *Ethiopian* development, however they often conceptualised this support as part of the effort to help *Africa* rise and prosper. These discourses are proliferated and reinforced through social interactions and structures within YDEO transnational landscapes. In most cases, these are the same social relationships and institutions that facilitate specific YDEO development activities. Spending time in a hyper-transnational space like Washington, D.C. provided many opportunities for YDEOs to interact with individuals and groups that inspired, encouraged, or organised development activities connected to Ethiopia. Structured diaspora initiatives and organisations, such as Ethiopian churches and university student groups,

were particularly influential in shaping future YDEO transnational activities and development practices.

These Ethiopian development initiatives ultimately took a myriad of forms ranging from familial remittances, to fundraising events, to volunteer placements in Ethiopia. What connects these initiatives is that they were all fundamentally *social* experiences, and they allowed YDEOs to connect with Ethiopia in a way that was meaningful to them. These development activities were a space for YDEOs to envision and work towards creating a less political, more equitable, and more prosperous Ethiopia, and this animated their relationships to the country and its people.

YDEOs were careful to point out that they did not want to repeat the same mistakes of other transnational and development actors, such as their parents' generation and Western-led development organisations. However, in practice, they often relied upon the models, infrastructure and support of these other actors in designing or choosing their own initiatives. Some YDEOs were mindful of this and grew frustrated by their experiences; while others did not reference this as a failing and seemed confident in their own abilities to do things better. The motivations and ideas that YDEOs begin with are very significant in shaping how they proceed with and ultimately interpret their development initiatives. However, as I will discuss in the following chapter, the actual experiences do not always align with YDEO expectations and this can impact YDEO social relations, identities, and life trajectories in complex and unanticipated ways.

Chapter 7. Epiphanies and Uncertainties: Shifts and Influences in YDEO Lives After Engaging in Ethiopian Development

In 2013, a group of YDEOs from the U.S. launched their documentary entitled ‘Sincerely Ethiopia’ (also discussed briefly in Chapter 5). “Sincerely Ethiopia is an exciting new documentary that showcases the lives of ordinary people in Ethiopia who are addressing illiteracy, disabilities and other social issues” (Sincerely Ethiopia, 2013b). Nathan Araya, the Producer and Writer for the film, was primarily motivated by a desire to re-cast the image of Ethiopia in the West by demonstrating the ingenuity of local people, and highlighting their ability to create social change.

The entire crew used their own resources to finance the travel and production of the film, and used money raised through fundraising campaigns to provide donations or gifts to the initiatives featured in the film (footage of the presentation of these gifts is included in the documentary). In an interview with the online blog ‘International Policy Digest’, Hellen Kassa, a Producer of the film, described how personally connected the crew felt to this project.

Everyone that worked on the film is Ethiopian, but most had not grown up or lived there. For the film’s director, it was his first time there. For him, it was very interesting to travel there and have a cultural connection but not be able to speak the language. We all had a family history connected to Ethiopia, which made the experience very personal (P. Hall, 2013).

The film has been screened in universities, churches, and Ethiopian community events around the world, including a screening in Toronto, which I attended.

While Nathan Araya was not able to travel to Toronto for the screening, the organisers of the event prepared a Q&A in advance and provided printed copies to everyone in attendance. In the Q&A, Nathan discusses his

inspirations for the film, and how he has been personally affected through the process of making it.

I started to really want to help after I watched a movie called “black gold” a documentary about Ethiopian coffee farmers and how they don't get paid fairly for the work that they do. I remember clearly mentioning to my friends who were born or have been to Ethiopia before, that I wanted to really help. [...] I would simply love the people and projects in the documentary to be among the topics that you would discuss at the dinner table, a coffee shop, a classroom or church. Then it may lead to how you can support those projects in the documentary or how you can start your own initiatives in your communities that address global challenges. [...]

How had this experience impacted you as an individual? What did you gain from this? (emotionally/mentally/spiritually etc.). Many of the things that I have learned were off camera. One day we were shooting one of the scenes with Birukti outside of Addis Ababa University and we stopped recording for a bit to watch kids play soccer on the side of the dusty road barefooted with raggedy clothes and a small rubber ball. They had the biggest smiles on their faces and had so much joy!!! Moments like these shifted my perspective of life. Their happiness was not dependent on what they have or didn't have, but it was God given. I realised that day how important it is for me not to be wrapped up in what I have or don't have, but rather, to appreciate the life God has given me and use it for His glory to impact others (Sincerely Ethiopia, 2013a).

Nathan is a Christian, and this experience helped to affirm his faith and fulfil his spiritual commitment to help others. He was also able to travel to Ethiopia for the first time, develop meaningful relationships there, and create a representation of the country that he could identify with and share with others in his social networks.

‘Sincerely Ethiopia’ is an illustration of how deeply personal YDEO engagements with Ethiopian development can be, and how these interactions influence YDEO self-perceptions, identifications, and social relations. Their experiences are not defined by *fixed* encounters with people, places, and things, which have a specific impact at a specific point in time. Rather, YDEOs interpret and reinterpret these encounters through the frames and filters they entered into these experiences with, which are also being shaped and shifted through time. Not only do these ‘frames and filters’ shape YDEO motivations entering into their engagements in Ethiopian development, they also influence their eventual interpretations of these experiences and set the benchmarks that they use to evaluate their own efforts.

Through their narratives, I was able to see how various aspects of YDEO psychosocial lives are reinforced, challenged, or supplanted through the interactions and experiences that defined their engagements in Ethiopian development. In Nathan's case, the process of making and screening 'Sincerely Ethiopia' reinforced his moral commitments, allowed him to realise his objective to effect change, and created an opportunity to socially interact with people in Ethiopia and establish a stronger sense of connection to the country.²⁴ My respondents in this research were also influenced in these various aspects of their lives, however the result of this influence differed from person to person.

In the sections below, I will discuss the reflections of my respondents as they described the ways in which their engagements in Ethiopian development have shaped or changed their lives. For many of my respondents, my questions prompted them to reflect on and 'make sense' of these experiences in this way for the first time. Other people had clearly thought this through in the past and were recounting a narrative they had been developing for some time. It is important to note that my interviews with YDEOs are but a snapshot in their on-going process of interpreting these experiences; their perspectives of these same experiences may very well change over time.

In section 7.1, I discuss the ways in which YDEO engagements in Ethiopian development shaped their day-to-day life decisions and social relations. This includes impacts on the nature and structure of their family and marital relations, as well as their education and career paths. Following this, in section 7.2 I discuss the shifting visions of Ethiopian development that

²⁴ I have met Nathan on a few occasions prior to this film, however; I did not have the opportunity to interview him as part of this research. My reflections here are based on his commentary in the film and interviews accessible online and at the screenings.

resulted from YDEO experiences. Many of my respondents began with optimistic and fairly defined ideas about how they wanted to shape Ethiopian development, and these perspectives were often challenged through the course of putting these ideas into practice. YDEOs often described a process of re-evaluating their role and ability to help Ethiopia, and shared new perspectives about the role of local communities and the private sector in driving meaningful change in the country. Finally, in section 7.3 I present an analysis of the various ways in which YDEO relationships to and identifications with Ethiopia have been affected by their development practices. I demonstrate the fluidity of YDEO diasporic identities, and highlight the ways in which these identities are both constructed and redefined through the social experience of engaging in Ethiopian development.

7.1 *'I hold my family much closer now': Shaping Social Relations and Day-to-Day Decisions*

There is a robust body of literature that examines the personal experiences and transformations of people who are development, humanitarian, and volunteer service workers within international contexts (Chang, Chen, Huang, & Yuan, 2011; Cook, 2012; Heron, 2007; Hudson & Inkson, 2006; McBride et al., 2012; McKenzie & Fitzsimmons, 2010; Starr, 1994). This research is usually informed by in-depth interviews with people who discuss how their lives and perspectives have been affected by these work experiences – experiences that are often described by respondents as being particularly profound. Individuals encounter new people, ideas, and environments, which often results in a re-evaluation of their own life priorities, future decisions, and

worldviews. Such research is important, as it focuses our attention on the social relations that shape and structure international development initiatives.

Unfortunately, this kind of analysis is rare within the diaspora/development literature, literature that has been highly influenced by policy agendas and institutional interest in capturing remittances (as discussed in Chapter 2). As a result, diaspora-led development practices are often represented as transactions or commodities, which masks the rich and complex social relations that motivate, characterise, and are affected by these practices. In my research, YDEO development initiatives are represented as fields of social interactions that implicate a range of different actors and subjects. This section focuses on the effect that these social interactions have had on shaping the day-to-day decisions and social relations of my respondents. Just like any other field of social interaction, engaging in Ethiopian development initiatives provided opportunities for YDEOs to form new relationships, gain new perspectives on life, and build social capital.

7.1.1 Influence on Relationships Within the Family

Chang et al. (2011) studied the personal transformation of Taiwanese international volunteers who travelled overseas to provide educational and medical assistance to local children and adolescents. They apply the concept of 'environment-person interaction' to analyse the process and nature of transformation that occurs within individual volunteers as a result of their international service experiences.

Environment-person interaction theory provides a foundation for transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990, 1997) in which the disequilibrium or disorienting dilemmas that occur during an individual's life sometimes serve as an important trigger for significant growth (Brock, 2010; Hussey, 2009; Locklin, 2010; Mezirow, 2009). [...] During the learning process, cultural disequilibrium was an important trigger that encouraged change (Chang et al., 2011, p. 233).

These authors suggest that the 'disorientation' that results from being in an international environment creates conditions ripe for self-reflection and significant personal transformation.

This framework is helpful for understanding how YDEO experiences in Ethiopian development influenced their family relations and structure. Most of my respondents described their experiences as being profound and transformative, however this narrative was particularly strong among those who travelled to Ethiopia as part of their development initiatives. While Ethiopia was somewhat more familiar to my respondents than the overseas locations many international volunteers travel to, it was still a relatively new and 'disorienting' environment. YDEOs values, priorities, and cultural frameworks were being challenged through each new encounter, and this often led to significant changes in their social relations, particularly within their immediate families.

A number of my respondents explained that their travels to and work within Ethiopia helped them better understand their parents and family members, and created a stronger sense of connection and responsibility on their part. For some YDEOs this related to the cultural education they received by being immersed in Ethiopia, which helped them understand the idiosyncrasies and expectations of their older family members. Other YDEOs attributed this change to a process of thoughtful reflection and re-evaluation of priorities that was prompted by their experiences in Ethiopia. Tarik (male, late-30s, New York) explained that he became a more attentive older brother upon returning from a yearlong placement in rural Ethiopia as a volunteer doctor.

In terms of value set, my mother and I were just having this conversation today. Growing up, she was like, 'you know you need to be a better brother to your sister'. And by U.S. standards, I was a pretty good brother, but by Ethiopian

standards – you’re not just like a brother, you’re like part sibling, part father, part best friend. You take on all these roles, and it’s implicit, but no one ever explains it to you. And so it was only when I went there and I had a context, I was like, ooohhhh, this is what you expect!

Following this, I asked Tarik whether he felt that he became a “better brother” after he came back from Ethiopia. He responded as follows:

Absolutely. So my sister and I are tighter than ever. And I’ve taken on those roles, and I see the importance of it. Being controlled, not getting overly emotional, handling things delicately, intonations of the voice. That affects your communication. So I think in a lot of ways it’s allowed me to have a stronger relationship with my family than I had before I left. It’s allowed me to understand the expectations of people I cared about more now than before.

While Tarik was in Ethiopia providing volunteer medical services, he was also interacting with local Ethiopians on a day-to-day basis. He was regularly confronted with the cultural norms and practices that govern these interactions and was within a context where he had to adapt. In the process, he gained a new sense of appreciation and cultural competence that helped him live up to the expectations of his family back home in the U.S., which created a greater sense of harmony within these relationships.

Dereje (male, early-30s, Ethiopia) also explained that spending time in Ethiopia helped him strengthen his relationships among family members in Ethiopia and in the U.S.

In terms of family, I hold family much closer to me now. I try to keep in touch with family here [in Ethiopia] and there [in the U.S.] as much as possible. I’ve met a lot more family here around my age. Even at family functions now, not that I have so many here, I see the value in that much more.

Once again, being immersed within Ethiopia created a stronger sense of connection to and value for family. Like many African and non-Western cultures, extended family networks are highly valued and relied upon within Ethiopian communities. These family expectations are often cumbersome and stifling for YDEOs, who were socialised within more individualistic societies in North America. However, a number of my respondents described their

time in Ethiopia as a 'turning point' in their relationships with their family members, as they grew to tolerate and even enjoy the same familial interactions they used to avoid.

Yacob's (male, early-30s, DC) experience in Ethiopia also caused him to reflect on the quality of his familial relationships. He began evaluating the extent to which he was leading his life *"in a way that's consistent with moral values"*, particularly as this relates to his relationships with women in general, and women in his family in particular. *"I'm going to try to honour my mother and all the women that I have relationships with, my sister, my girlfriends [and] every woman that I encounter."* I found that it was more common for my male respondents to describe a profound shift in their familial relationships as a result of their time and experiences in Ethiopia. Female respondents were more likely to describe strong pre-existing connections to their family members, which were reinforced rather than newly constructed through their engagements in Ethiopian development initiatives.

It is likely that this relates to the differing gender norms and socialisation patterns within YDEO households. Within Ethiopian families, young women are often expected to stay close to home and generally shoulder a disproportionate amount of social responsibilities within the family when compared to their male siblings and counterparts. This may account for the gendered pattern in YDEO narratives regarding their familial connections prior to and following their time in Ethiopia. Overall, the shifts reported by my male respondents in this respect seemed to have been welcomed by their family members, and strengthened the quality of their relationships at home.

7.1.2 *Influence on Marital and Career Decisions*

There was another gendered pattern that emerged within my interviews, which related to the impact that experiences in Ethiopia had on YDEO romantic relationships. A significant amount of female respondents met partners in Ethiopia, or stated that they began to seek out relationships with people of Ethiopian descent after becoming more engaged in Ethiopian initiatives. A few of the male respondents also made reference to dating women while in Ethiopia or within the Ethiopian community in North America. However, women spoke to this issue more directly, and it appeared to be more closely connected to their experiences engaging in Ethiopian development initiatives. The age range of my respondents did not differ significantly based on gender, however YDEO men and women were at significantly different stages in their lives when it came to marriage and children.

While most of my respondents were not married and did not have children at the time that we spoke, my female respondents often spoke about these as important short-term goals or concerns. Social pressures and biological restrictions mean that finding a long-term partner is often more top-of-mind to a woman in her twenties and thirties than it is to a man. This is particularly the case within the Ethiopian community (as it is within many others), where getting married and having children are important rites of passage into what is considered a 'successful' adulthood. While these are expectations set upon both women and men, women generally feel and internalise these pressures sooner and more strongly than men do.

In Selam's (female, late-30s, Toronto) case, she had achieved significant professional success, however her ambitious lifestyle left very little time to date and settle down. Her family was initially very concerned when she announced that she was leaving her career and life in Toronto behind to move to Ethiopia. However, as she explained, they also understood that this was an important step towards finding a partner and beginning a family of her own.

I think [my parents] realised my desire for a family and they knew that I was approaching forty in a couple of years and if I had stayed at my job I wouldn't have had that – I would have had a cottage and a Porsche and I would be coming to visit you with them (laughing) in my nice little house in Rosedale, but I would have been a single woman without a family and my family knew that all the other stuff meant nothing to me if I didn't have a family because it was more important to me than anything.

Selam went on to explain that part of the associated challenge with finding a partner was the fact that she hoped to find someone who was of Ethiopian, if not, African descent.

And also, I have to add this, it was important to me [...] that I be with an Ethiopian or an African. And I felt like if I stayed at my job I would not end up with an Ethiopian or an African. It was just important to me, I was never attracted to – I hate to say this – I've never been attracted to White guys. In my field, that was all I was going to end up with and I didn't want that. And I knew I wanted to go back to Africa at one point, and I knew if I ended up with John Smith²⁵ from Toronto you can kiss that goodbye. So there are these things personally that made me say you know, if I stayed here I'm unconsciously making a decision not to have a family and I'm unconsciously making a decision that I may end up with John Smith and have a house in Toronto and live here for the rest of my life. And is that what I want? And it was not what I wanted.

Selam did find a partner in Ethiopia; at the time that we spoke she was engaged to an Ethiopian national and had given birth to her first child. Her narrative is an important example of how YDEO motivations (as discussed in Chapter 5) can profoundly shape the structure of their social interactions during and following their engagements in Ethiopian development initiatives. It highlights how very personal these development experiences can be, and

²⁵ Selam's reference to 'John Smith' was meant as a generic Anglo-Saxon male name and was not connected to any individual by that name.

how they have as much (if not more) to do with broad social identities, like marital status, as they do Ethiopian-specific ones.

In most cases, YDEOs were negotiating and constructing these various social and diasporic identities simultaneously. They were cognisant of the fact that getting married was important; however the 'kind' of person they married was often just as important to them and to their families. Like Selam, Netsanet (female, late-20s, Ethiopia) was thinking about how her travels and choice of residence would impact her marital status. She had moved to Ethiopia from the U.S. to take a job within a large international education initiative in the country. I asked her what her future plans looked like, and whether she was going to stay in Ethiopia long term.

I don't see myself living in the States for an extended period of time. You know, I'm still single and living with family, so you never know. Either way, I still want to keep travelling, I still want to give back to Ethiopia, but I can't say I'll always always be here [in Ethiopia], but I definitely want to stay connected.

I then asked whether it was imperative for her that she marries someone who was an Ethiopian. *"For my parents, especially for my mom, it's ideal. She freaks out at the idea of me marrying anyone else outside of an Ethiopian. Personally, for me, no."* About two years after we spoke, Netsanet married another YDEO who had also moved to Ethiopia, and at the time of writing she is still living in Ethiopia.

I do not highlight these examples to suggest a direct correlation between spending time in Ethiopia and marrying an Ethiopian. It is very possible that Selam, Netsanet and a number of other respondents who married people of Ethiopian descent would have done so even if they had not moved to Ethiopia. However, their stories suggest that their engagement in Ethiopian development played an important role in facilitating and strengthening interpersonal relationships among people within the Ethiopian community,

and that these relationships were very important in structuring YDEO lives, including their future marital decisions.

A number of my respondents were engaged in Ethiopian development initiatives professionally, that is, they were employed within the development sector or had started their own initiatives and were dedicated to them full-time. There were also a number of respondents who engaged in Ethiopian development through short-term or part-time voluntary service initiatives based in North America or Ethiopia. These experiences often had a profound impact on shaping YDEO future career aspirations and decisions. McBride et al. (2012) designed an experimental study to assess the perceived impacts of international service on international volunteers.

We focus on four internationally oriented outcome categories: international awareness, intercultural relations, international social capital, and international career intentions. International service provides exposure and immersion to develop these perspectives, relationships, and intentions (McBride et al., 2012, p. 969).

They found that international volunteers reported a statistically significant higher intention to pursue international or development-related careers than the non-volunteers who formed the baseline.

Other studies of returnee overseas volunteers have found a similar relationship between volunteer experiences and career progression into professional aid or development work (Hudson & Inkson, 2006). Some of my respondents also indicated that their volunteer experiences related to Ethiopian development inspired or confirmed their interest in pursuing a development-related career. These YDEOs tended to be younger in age at the point of their engagement, and thus these experiences coincided with the time when they were making decisions about their postsecondary studies and career direction. As a result, these respondents tended to concentrate their

post-secondary studies in subjects related to international development or global public health following their volunteer experiences.

Kidus (male, early-20s, Toronto) travelled to Ethiopia for a Christian missions trip that involved volunteering in orphanages and other local charitable organisations. After returning from his trip he was determined to find a way to affect structural change in Ethiopia but was initially uncertain of how he would go about this.

At the time I had this kind of really awesome idea that I felt no one else had had, like you know, I'm just going to get an education and come back and change the government here [in Ethiopia]. [...] When I came back, all I knew was that I needed to affect structure – I could just work in an orphanage but that wouldn't address the deeper issues, is what I felt. So I knew I needed some kind of education, I just didn't know what. So I came back and I talked to [my friend] I had a conversation with her on Ethiopian Day, funny enough, and she was telling me that she was getting into this program called International Development, and it's a really wide program and there's a lot that I could study within that. [...] She really opened my eyes; I was really interested after she said all that.

When Kidus had this conversation with his friend, he was out of school; however, within a matter of months, he enrolled in an International Development program at a university in Toronto.

Amina (female, late-20s, DC) also decided to pursue international development studies after volunteering in Ethiopia. She spent several months in Ethiopia exploring and experiencing the country, while also volunteering at an orphanage in Ethiopia. When she returned to the U.S. she decided that she would apply to a Masters program in International Development at a school in Washington, D.C.

I never planned to go to grad school until I realised I couldn't do real development work if not. [...] [The trip] really changed, I think, the trajectory of my career. I wouldn't be in D.C. if I hadn't gone to Ethiopia. [...] It was something different about being in a place where everyone looks just like you. I would go out to clubs [in Ethiopia] and stuff and I would meet Ethiopians who lived there and never left who are doing amazingly well, had businesses and non-profits. It was just really empowering. I felt like I could do anything,

they're just like me. [...] So I decided to move to D.C. and not New York because I heard it was more of a scene of like people from abroad who were in diplomacy and foreign affairs. New York was just too hectic and I wanted more of an Ethiopian community as well.

Amina was greatly affected by her trip to Ethiopia and wanted to stay as closely connected to Ethiopia as possible thereafter. Moving to Washington, D.C. allowed her to stay embedded within a large Ethiopian community in the short term, and it was a step towards a career that would facilitate her return to Ethiopia in the long term.

Earlier in our conversation, Amina had mentioned that she was particularly interested in supporting economic development when she returned to Ethiopia, so I asked her why she chose to pursue a Masters in International Development rather than an MBA. She explained that she had seriously considered this option, but later ruled it out.

I learned that I cannot be in a class and learn about all of these formulas, it's not going to entice me – I feel like it will be a waste of money. Maybe I will be inspired in a class where we're discussing how to create innovative ideas on the ground in rural Rwanda. You know, that's the kind of experience I want. Because when you're in business school you're also not getting the social benefits of being in an International Development program. You would have people who aspire to be CEOs of Fortune 500 companies and have no interest in Africa, no interest in Third World countries and what's going on there in the field and politics. I just thought that International Development expanded the matrix of economics but included the human condition and I really hope I get into [this school] because its like the perfect mix of the two.

I followed up with Amina later on the in the year and learned that she had indeed received acceptance into the program and had begun her studies.

Amina's trip to Ethiopia had intensified her sense of connection to the country, and she reasoned that a career in international development would allow her to return to Ethiopia with what she felt were legitimate credentials and valuable skills. For Amina, and for many of my respondents, development practice facilitates both the exploration and expression of

Ethiopian diasporic identity. This animates YDEO transnational social fields and often strengthens interpersonal relationships and professional ties that imbue YDEO connections to Ethiopia with value and meaning. The experiences discussed in this section demonstrate the intersecting nature of social practice and identities, and the process by which they are mutually constructed and reinforced.

7.2 *'I have to be realistic about what I can do': Shifting Visions of Ethiopian Development*

In Chapter 5, I discuss the motivations that initially drove YDEOs to engage in Ethiopian development. These narratives were often optimistic in nature and revealed the idealistic notions YDEOs held about the process of international development and/or their own ability to bring about meaningful change in Ethiopia through development initiatives. Chapter 6 discussed the enabling discourses and modes of engagement that facilitated YDEO development activities. My respondents were often aware and critical of the legacy of Western-development organisations in Africa, and saw their own initiatives as more ethical and sustainable alternatives. In this chapter, I look at the influences that these experiences have had in YDEO lives, some of which were envisioned from the outset and others that were not. This section focuses on the shifts that have occurred in YDEO visions of Ethiopian development through and subsequent to their own experiences participating in development initiatives.

I found a correlation between the length of engagement in Ethiopian development and the level of optimism or pessimism expressed by my respondents. The further along YDEOs were in their initiatives, the more cynical they were regarding the development sector and their own ability to

affect change in Ethiopia through development practice (this often related to their age as well). Few people expressed a complete abandonment of the ideals they set out with, however YDEOs often described a process of learning that has made them more aware of the complexity of the challenges in Ethiopia and the limitations of their original approaches to development. They were questioning their initial assumptions and experimenting with new ideas about how to bring about change in Ethiopia. YDEOs who began their initiatives just wanting 'to help' were often confronted with the fact that their efforts were either unproductive or that local Ethiopian nationals were far better placed to do such work. Further, there was an exciting 'buzz' regarding private sector growth and business opportunities in Ethiopia, which seemed to offer better odds for personal success and a more compelling case for social impact than non-profit development efforts did.

In many ways, my respondents' shifting visions of Ethiopian development mirror the shifts that have been happening within the development sector as a whole, particularly in Africa. In a Briefing Paper for the International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC), Green (2013) argues that international development discourse and practice is increasingly reorganised around a "growth agenda".

The place of civil society in the organisation of development is changing. An emergent aid paradigm is moving away from the previous model in which government and civil society were viewed as primary actors in achieving development as a right of citizens, to one in which development is envisaged as the project of economically empowered individuals who can lift themselves out of poverty (Green, 2013, p. 2)

At the beginning of this shift, self-help systems such as microfinance were very popular, as these put the onus and agency in the individual's hands and fit comfortably within a liberal market ideology. More recently, global agribusiness has gained prominence as a development and poverty reduction

strategy.

This model is particularly popular with local and international policymakers in Ethiopia, where rapid industrialisation of agriculture has become a hallmark feature of the country's market-oriented development strategy (Makki & Geisler, 2011). The private-sector led development model presumably levels the playing field and blurs the lines between benefactors and beneficiaries. Under the right conditions, governments, businesses, foreign investors, and ordinary citizens can all turn a profit while also maintaining a moral high ground. This shifting discourse in Ethiopia played an important role in re-shaping YDEO perspectives about development in general, as they were re-negotiating their own role in Ethiopian development in particular.

7.2.1 Re-evaluating Their Role and Ability to 'Help'

Some YDEOs described a sense of 'empowerment' that emerged out of their engagement in Ethiopian development initiatives. They became aware of their agency and ability to affect change through their own successful efforts or through the examples of success they encountered along the way. For some YDEOs this sense of empowerment translated directly to their desire and ability to affect change in Ethiopia, and for others this translated to their broader goals and ambitions. Elsa (female, mid-20s, Toronto) explained that her volunteer trip to Ethiopia, and subsequent move to Toronto from a smaller city in Ontario, had a profound impact on her self-confidence.

Before these sorts of trips that I had and moving to Toronto, I didn't really have access to other East African professionals, and so I kind of doubted my own agency and my own ability to be successful or make change, because I didn't really see it happening around me. [...] But after going [to Ethiopia], I met Ethiopian doctors, engineers, business people, even seeing my own family, like the shift – where my parents are struggling but [my uncle] in Ethiopia is doing

very well and seeing that its possible for us to have our own businesses and communities supporting each other. So it kind of empowered me too, knowing that I shouldn't question my abilities and instead go ahead and do what I can. [...] Also it made me really want to bring other people into this sort of awareness. I really wanted to see other East Africans have the opportunity to either go back home or have some sort of meaningful engagement back home. And I'm still working on that, but I hope in the future if I have money or something, I really would like to start a scholarship where students can go ahead and go and see what I did but with their own facilitators.

Elsa's sense of empowerment had as much to do with things that *did not* go well as those that did.

Elsa also had a series of negative experiences with the team of Canadian students and faculty that she travelled to Ethiopia with, which forced her to become vocal about her concerns during her trip. The process of having to stand up for herself taught her to become a more assertive person in general, and she even credits this for her enhanced public speaking and advocacy skills following her trip. *"Now I'm just like ok, if I get embarrassed oh well. And I think that made me go ahead and be more vocal in my classes and challenge things here [in Canada]."* YDEO engagement in Ethiopian development often coincided with a time of life when most people are 'self-actualising', or becoming more comfortable with their skills and potentials. Therefore, these experiences often become the playing fields where these personal transformations take place as YDEOs test their own limits and abilities.

Sometimes, YDEOs enter into this playing field with a sense of confidence and purpose that becomes deflated and clouded instead of reinforced over the course of time. Emnet (female, late-20s, DC) was involved in a number of American-based development initiatives, including a diaspora-led organisation working on HIV/AIDS related issues in Ethiopia. At the time that we spoke, she was enrolled in a graduate program in International Development, however she was in a state of deep personal conflict about the

integrity and efficacy of this line of work.

In engaging in these organisations I also see how disconnected – and that’s kind of my – it’s like when you’re bubble bursts. Because I always thought of development as like, you’re the person with the shining sword that saves these countries and these people and that’s totally not the case. Just the politics of international organisations has burst my bubble in many ways. And how disconnected even a lot of the diaspora efforts – how disconnected the people in those projects are from what’s going on on the ground – and I’m saying this as a victim of that process as well.

Emnet explained that she was very invested in the idea of contributing towards Ethiopian development, however the prospect of travelling back to the country and being confronted with potential failure terrified her.

So number one, yeah, I’m scared that my dreams will be crushed, that I’m thinking I’ll go save the world and I can’t. And number two, I am scared of being the idiot that thought she can. ‘Oh look at this Americanised person, another diaspora comes and tries to save the world, let’s see what you’re going to do about it’. And my brother explicitly says, ‘stay in America’. He’s just like, ‘you can probably do more for Ethiopia at a distance than you can for Ethiopia within the system of Ethiopia because they will mute you in ways that I don’t think your heart can handle’. That’s just explicitly how he puts it. So, yeah, I’m kind of scared.

Emnet had become more aware of her distance from Ethiopia and she was no longer certain that there was an important role for her to play in shaping the country’s future.

Another source of insecurity for my respondents related to the level of importance they could afford to their own efforts. Some YDEOs felt that their Ethiopian development efforts did not measure up against others’, and they felt ill equipped or unmotivated to ‘rise to the challenge’. Danny (male, late-20s, DC) had become involved as a volunteer for a diaspora-led charitable organisation that raised funds in the U.S. to finance a children’s home in Ethiopia. However, the more that he learned about the efforts of the founder of the organisation, the less important he felt his own contributions were.

There’s people who do so much, you know, like [the founder] who has opened up a house, people who go back every year to teach. What I’m doing is like, I might donate money here and there, volunteer at [the organisation], you always get

the feeling like you're not doing anywhere near what you could be doing, compared to people who like literally dedicate their life to this. [...] First it goes back to that feeling of guilt, and then past that, it goes back to the feeling of feeling bad that you're don't feel guilty. Because after a while, you don't feel anything.

While Danny admired the founder's commitment to the organisation, this seemed to eclipse anything that he was doing, and he was disappointed that this was making him lose interest in the cause. Instead of feeling empowered like Elsa did (as discussed earlier in this section), Danny found that volunteering with the initiative made him doubt his capacities and relevance. Like Danny, most of my respondents wanted to feel that their efforts mattered and were bringing about meaningful change. When these self-perceptions were fractured rather than validated, it was often difficult to remain motivated to stay involved in Ethiopian development efforts.

Finally, some YDEOs were re-evaluating their role in Ethiopian development vis-à-vis the roles they saw fit for local actors and communities. These respondents often explained that they had underestimated the capacities of Ethiopian nationals at the outset of their engagement, however they later became aware of the value of their knowledge and skill sets. Eleni (female, mid-teens, Toronto), who was my youngest respondent, had already been through a process of re-evaluating her own limitations and recognising that local Ethiopians were interested in driving their own social change.

I have learned that I am the kind of person who likes to do as much as I can, and solve all the problems in the world. It's great because I'm surrounded by people who can bring me back to reality and help me focus on a few key issues that are important, and then do everything in my power and use my voice to solve those problems. I have to be realistic about what I can do and pick and choose, and then from there give 100% of myself. [...] The people [of Ethiopia] are very bright and very inspiring and they do their best with what they have there, and when you try to do something for them they won't let you because they want to do it themselves. You can provide them with the resources but after that its up to them, they want to be in charge of their own transformation. They don't want anybody to do anything for them. They want to be able to take charge.

Eleni is still very invested in a number of development initiatives in Ethiopia, however she is more conscious of the role that local Ethiopians see for themselves in these processes.

Haile (male, late-20s, Ethiopia) explained that he had always felt that locals were better positioned to lead development initiatives in Ethiopia.

At the end of the day it's also important to be realistic about the level of impact that you're making. To be honest with you, there is a very qualified highly capable local staff that will do a very good job. [...] I am often very surprised by the capacity of local workers here. It could be selfish to come here because you feel like you're doing something important when in fact you just print paper in some NGO and then you're getting paid in your Swiss account.

After living in Ethiopia for a couple of years, Haile was also struck with the reality that many development organisations had little incentive to pay a salary that was competitive for an expatriate like himself when there were so many capable local staff.

Financially for me these past two plus years haven't been that amazing, you know. I'm barely paying the principal on my student loan; I'm basically making minimum payments. So in that sense, somebody can luck out and get a good job at the UN, but there could be that initial sacrifice involved for someone to come over here.

Haile warns other diasporans who seek his advice about moving to Ethiopia about this shrinking competitive advantage. He also wrote about it in an article for a local magazine that is widely read within the Ethiopian diaspora.

There are undoubtedly numerous challenges facing many dynamic and creative young professional Diaspora pursuing careers in Ethiopia. For one, there is competition in the form of a local workforce that is well educated, highly competent, and presents extensive local work experience [...] Secondly, there is the critical issue of remuneration. As a fresh graduate, it is difficult to land a job as an expatriate. These organizations know they can hire local staff that can do the job well. Although you could live a moderately comfortable life with local wages, it would be difficult with debts or college loans.²⁶

Often, YDEOs begin by conceiving of local Ethiopians as beneficiaries of the skills and resources that they have to offer. However, the process of engaging

²⁶ Haile shared this article with me and provided me with consent to use it in my research. However, I have not cited the source of this article in order to preserve his anonymity.

in Ethiopian development initiatives challenges YDEOs to think more critically about these constructs and presumptions, and often drives them to re-evaluate the roles they initially envisioned for themselves.

7.2.2 Interest in Private Sector-Led Development

In Chapter 6, I discussed the non-profit initiative that Abrehet (female, late-20s, California) founded, which facilitates volunteer placements in Ethiopia specifically for YDEOs in North America. Abrehet explained that when she initially designed this program model, volunteers were only supposed to be placed within local charitable and non-profit organisations in Ethiopia. However, after conducting market surveys and discussions with YDEOs she learned that many of the people that would be interested in such volunteer placements were also very interested in gaining exposure to the private sector environment in Ethiopia. As a result of this significant demand, Abrehet modified the program model so that volunteers rotate between placements in local non-profit organisations and local small businesses and enterprises. Abrehet's market research picked up on a growing interest in private sector opportunities within Ethiopia, as well as Africa more generally. There is a perfect storm of factors that makes business and investment in Ethiopia an increasingly attractive option for the diaspora, including recession in the West and the rapidly growing economy in Ethiopia. In addition to this, there have been a number of initiatives aimed at encouraging diaspora investment in Africa, including efforts by the Ethiopian Government (See Chapter 4) as well as by large international institutions such as the World Bank. The U.S. Government has also taken a lead on this issue through USAID, the State Department, and other institutional wings.

Mimi Alemayehou was born in Ethiopia then did some early schooling in Kenya before moving to the U.S. as a teenager. In 2010, President Barak Obama appointed Mimi to be the Executive Vice President of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, which is the U.S. Government's development finance institution. She became an important symbol of success among YDEOs in North America, and was invited to speak at an event in 2013 hosted by the Young Ethiopian Professionals Network (YEP) in Washington, D.C. I attended the sold-out event and listened to Mimi as she described her personal and professional journey and took questions from the attendees. One YDEO (who I later interviewed for my own research) asked Mimi the following question:

We know that diaspora, like us, we have a large role we can potentially play in development. And that doesn't seem to be a focus area right now, but do you see diaspora groups having a big role, especially when it comes to private sector led growth? Because we know that more money goes into developing countries through remittances than aid does. So do you think that we can leverage that, because we know that diasporas do have financial assets and we can use that. Does OPIC think about diasporas?

Mimi was "very glad" that this question was raised, and provided a lengthy response detailing the various initiatives that exist aimed at engaging diasporas in private sector-led development in Africa. Mimi explained that OPIC itself was also working with diaspora investors in Africa.

Increasingly our clientele is becoming the diaspora, they're investing back. A lot of the investments we've made in Ghana, for example, the last couple of years have been with a Ghanaian-American business called Belstar, based in Florida. We have the same with Nigerian-Americans investing in their country of origin. And these are not small investments. People always think about the diaspora wiring money to their grandmothers; that's not all. I mean they're making very sophisticated huge investments and they're important partners because they're in there for the long hall, they really do care about the country of origin. They're not just thinking about just making an investment, making a return and then leaving. [...] I mean they have families that live there, so they are also good partners for us that way.

Mimi's responses seemed to resonate with the YDEOs in attendance (many of whom I interviewed for my research), in part because they could express an interest in business opportunities in Ethiopia without having to 'sell out' or

betray their social justice leanings. Under this new paradigm, private sector initiatives in developing countries are more than simply drivers of economic development; they have been christened with the moral attributes normally afforded to humanitarian and philanthropic initiatives.

In my own interviews, I was surprised by how many of my respondents expressed their growing interest in the Ethiopian private sector alongside their waning interest in philanthropy and charitable initiatives. This was a particularly strong theme among the YDEOs that I had interviewed in Ethiopia itself. What I found most interesting was that they did not describe this shift as a departure from their altruistic ideals, but rather, as an opportunity to pursue these ideals in a more direct and effective manner. Samuel (male, late-20s, Ethiopia) moved to Ethiopia four years prior to our conversation to work within the public health development sector there. He made multiple references to a 'shift' that has happening in his life and explained that he was now re-considering his career options.

In the development world, there's a lot of stagnant things [and even] things like health become politicised [depending] on who our funder is. [...] That's why I want to seek some kind of independent route [to development]. Because I don't want to be in a route where there is inefficiency or some sort of bureaucracy, I don't think it's as effective.

Samuel was growing frustrated with the politics of international development in Ethiopia and the bureaucracy and lack of autonomy made the work less interesting and rewarding for him.

At the same time, being based in Addis Ababa meant that Samuel was witnessing the industrial boom first hand, and the opportunities and pace of change within the private sector was increasingly alluring and hard to ignore.

I value more independence now, like doing your own thing, and opportunities like that are in your face here in Ethiopia. There's all this construction, and the change of the country itself, for me that really impacts me. I see a lot of

opportunity here that you can invest. [...] That's why I'm telling you I'm considering doing an MBA because I feel like it's going to give me more options to [contribute to development] [...] When you're here and you're physically seeing the change right in front of you, you want to be part of that too. I think our view of 'contribution' changes, so I think for me it shifted from a non-profit world to something that I run as a business. [...] Something where you could employ a lot of people, something at a higher level.

Samuel articulated a sentiment that was shared by many of my respondents based in Ethiopia who were re-evaluating what it meant to make a 'contribution' in Ethiopia. It was difficult for them to justify their time, effort, and resources within the philanthropic sector when all the real 'action' seemed to be happening in the business sector.

Helen (female, mid-30s, Ethiopia) works in the corporate social responsibility unit of a private sector company, and this exposure has shifted her perspective significantly as well.

I definitely have been humbled to the fact that it's just so hard to make a difference, and I've also learned that making a difference is different. Before I was like, Development! Aid! NGOs! Now I'm much more thinking about how businesses can help.

YDEOs like Samuel and Helen describe their experience engaging in Ethiopian development initiatives as somewhat of a 'wake up call' to the realities on the ground. While their experiences were often disheartening, they looked to the private sector as a new way of connecting with Ethiopia. For these respondents, philanthropic development initiatives created a point of entry, and now this relationship may evolve into a more sustained and deep-rooted form of engagement with the country.

7.3 'I am Ethiopian, in my own form': Change in Relationship to and Identification with Ethiopia

Dinaw Mengestu was born in Ethiopia in 1978 and immigrated to America with his parents at the height of the revolution two years later. He is now an

accomplished novelist and writer, and even received a MacArthur Fellowship in 2012 (dubbed the “Genius Grant”) in recognition of his literary success. As of this year (2016), Mengestu has written three novels, all of which explore themes of African migration, nostalgia, and identity within the storylines. His debut novel was published in 2007 and is entitled *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*. The novel tells the story of Sepha Stephanos, an Ethiopian immigrant living in Washington D.C. who is struggling to find a place of contentment, meaning, and belonging. In the passage below, Sepha walks towards his old neighbourhood in Washington, D.C. and reflects upon the conflicting emotions that are evoked when ‘going back home’.

There is a simple and startling power to that phrase: going back home. There's an implied contradiction, a sense of moving forward and backward at the same time, but there's no tension in the phrase. Instead, the contradiction gives in to something else: an understanding, perhaps, that what you're returning to can never be the same as what you left. I understand now that distant, faraway look I've seen in other immigrants when they talk about returning to wherever it was they first came from (Mengestu, 2007, p. 174).

Mengestu’s writing reminds us that while people’s identities are intimately connected to physical places, these orientations are delicate and the points of reference are in constant flux.

While not all of my respondents travelled to Ethiopia physically, they were all on some form of a journey that was connected to the country. In the process of engaging in Ethiopian development initiatives, YDEOs met new people, encountered new ideas, and interacted with new environments. Further, much like Mengestu’s character Sepha, YDEOs often found that their relationships to and identifications with various places were reconfigured through these experiences. Some of my respondents had an existing conception of Ethiopia that became complicated as they grew more familiar with the country, and for others the country that once seemed so distant and inaccessible suddenly came to life. The process of engaging with Ethiopia,

either directly or indirectly, created a tangible experience that individual YDEOs interpreted in their own ways. These experiences could serve to construct, validate, or undermine a sense of connection to Ethiopia, and this connection (or lack thereof) often had a significant impact in shaping YDEO lives.

Not only was their understanding of Ethiopia influenced, so too was their identification with the country and the extent to which this shaped their future relationships and social practices. As Chambers (1994) argues, “Our sense of being, of identity and language is experienced and extrapolated from movement: the ‘I’ does not pre-exist this movement then go out into the world, the ‘I’ is constantly being formed and reformed in such movement into the world” (p. 24). Therefore, my aim in this section is not to describe a process by which YDEOs ‘discovered’ or tapped into an essentialised diasporic identity. Rather, their narratives demonstrate that diasporic identities are constructed (not unearthed) through meaningful social interactions, and these identities are complex and take many forms.

7.3.1 Becoming Familiar with Ethiopia as a Country

It is important to re-state that my respondents were born and/or raised in North America. While Ethiopia is their country of origin, it is also a place that often felt very unfamiliar or abstract to them as they were growing up. In many cases, YDEOs had an impersonal and superficial understanding of Ethiopia that was filtered through their parents’ narratives and experiences, and shaped by Western media representations. Getting involved in an Ethiopian development initiative, based in North America or in Ethiopia, provided an opportunity for my respondents to ‘experience’ the country in a

way that was more direct and required an emotional investment. This was a sensory experience, and it facilitated a range of social interactions that made the country more 'meaningful' to YDEOs – meaningful in the sense that they could better understand and/or relate to it.

Meskerem (female, early-20s, Toronto) spent ten months interning at a women's economic empowerment organisation in Ethiopia. When she reflects back on her time there, it is the positive memories that emerge despite the fact that she was physically ill for much of the time she was there and often felt homesick as well.

I always say to people when I talk about Ethiopia, you know I got sick so many times, and there's a lot of, it's really uncomfortable being there, I'm really outside of my comfort zone. And so there's a lot of negative things. But when I think of Ethiopia, I don't think about those negative things. I remember how much fun I had and how great it was being with family. For some reason, I don't know why, it's just the positive things that stand out to me, even though, if I were to go through the stories with you, I was in and out of the clinics all the time, I have some pretty negative stories but those are not the ones that stand out to me.

The positive social interactions Meskerem experienced, particularly with her family, overshadowed the challenges of being there and created a fond lasting impression of the country. The experience of being in the country had such an impact that Meskerem is now considering moving to Ethiopia in the future to continue work within the development sector. She is significantly younger than many of my respondents who grew cynical after their development experiences, so it is possible that Meskerem's disposition may also change over time.

One of the most important aspects of YDEO experiences was the opportunity to simply learn more about Ethiopia, including the language, its histories, and its geographies. This created depth to their relationships with the country, and helped to fill many knowledge gaps that were often sources of

embarrassment or confusion for my respondents. Teodros (male, mid-20s, Toronto) travelled throughout Ethiopia extensively while he was in the country, an experience that he has credited for providing clarity in his life.

Not understanding my connection to Ethiopia really created uncertainty in me. Because I started a business here [in Toronto], I hustled and made money, and things were as great as they could be. [...] Sometimes you give some sort of test to yourself, to kind of test waters that you want to put one foot into. So I was comfortable, but always something – it still tells me, I don't know what it is, it's like you belong there [in Ethiopia]. Have I figured out a full answer for it, no. But going to Ethiopia allowed me to see that there could be a purpose, there could be a reason. Because, as I mentioned, we went to twenty kilometres away from the Eritrean border [...] I saw every possible corner of Ethiopia, and especially the North, which is politically and socially much more influential in what happens in the whole of Ethiopia.

It is not clear to me precisely how gaining this historical knowledge helped Teodros find a 'purpose' or 'reason', as he was still in the process of interpreting this connection himself. However, what *was* clear was that 'knowing' Ethiopia in this way meant more to him than simply feeding an intellectual curiosity.

Basu (2004) examines genealogical heritage-tourism among the Scottish highland diaspora, and contends that there is nothing that is banal or superficial about these trips.

I contend that homecoming, quest and pilgrimage together provide a more appropriate 'grammar' (including a repertoire of actions and attitudes) for roots-tourism than tourism itself is able to offer: a grammar, furthermore, which has the potential to bear fruit and empower these journeys with the capacity to effect personal transformations, rendering them quite literally 'life-changing' experiences for many participants (Basu, 2004, p. 157).

These trips are imbued with symbolic meaning, and often the process of gaining knowledge of the country is interpreted as part of a process of knowing one's existential 'self'. For YDEOs and other post-migrant descendants, this can be like finding a piece of a puzzle that always felt like it was missing, or at the very least seems to now fit in.

For some of my respondents, it was their growing sense of comfort with Ethiopia that mattered more than their knowledge of particular aspects of the country or its history. Nafkot (female, late-20s, Ethiopia) had been in Ethiopia for eight months at the time that we spoke. She explained that one of the most significant shifts for her was the sense of normalcy that now characterised her life in Ethiopia. Feeling like part of the social fabric in Ethiopia added an important layer of authenticity to her experience.

I am so used to being here now that a lot of things have become my new norm. [...] I have definitely learned that I want to stay [in Ethiopia]. I didn't necessarily know that I wanted to stay for a long time when I first moved here, but now I don't see myself going anywhere anytime soon.

Genet (female, early-30s, Ethiopia) offered a very textured analysis of how this routine familiarity with Ethiopia can translate into a deep sense of connection for YDEOs like herself.

Ethiopia is much less foreign to me than it was before. Even just the idea that someone like me can just pick up and move here and survive and be ok is a little surprising. It was much more of a place that was like at arms length for me before I moved here. It was like, it's Ethiopia, it's this big long flight. And now that I come back and forth like four times a year, its just kind of like going back and forth between Seattle and New York when my parents were in Seattle and I was living in New York. It's another home, it's a place where I have friends and family, and it's just a much more tangible place. It's kind of like, you read books about a place or whatever, and you have this idea, but it doesn't feel real until you go see it, and then you understand what the descriptions really mean. I guess it's that. It's being able to interact with people in small ways, and you're just here for every random little holiday, and having those little interactions on the street, it's the mini-bus you take every day, it's that kind of stuff. You have this nuance that you don't if you've never lived in a place about how people exist there and what it means to be from there. I think that's something I've absorbed over the last couple of years. And there's still a lot I don't know, a lot of places I haven't been to [...] but it's like, knowing that those places even exist.

As Genet so helpfully articulates, the social interactions that animate YDEO experiences in Ethiopia help make it a clearer and more “tangible” place. This clarity often relieves some of the initial angst and pressure YDEOs felt to better understand this country to which they are unwittingly linked. However, while they may have learned more and may feel more comfortable

with and in Ethiopia, this affects their personal identities in a multiplicity of ways.

7.3.2 *Ethiopian Diasporic Identity*

In 2007, Rebecca Haile published a memoir titled *Held at a Distance: My Rediscovery of Ethiopia*. The short book chronicles her first journey back to Ethiopia twenty-five years after her family was forced to flee the country when she was eleven years old. Rebecca took this trip with her White American husband but without her parents.

And I wondered especially what it would mean to be in Ethiopia without my parents. My relationship with Ethiopia is largely derivative of and dependent on theirs; I know that I have been able to develop that private identification as Ethiopian because of my parents' decision – conscious or unconscious – to allow me and my siblings to claim whatever elements of the culture suited us, without insisting that we take on a fuller set of associations and obligations. Was I ready to find out whether this identity and sense of connection would hold up without the filter and shield of their presence (Haile, 2007, pp. 16-17)?

Rebecca's account of her experience in Ethiopia is far from romanticised, and she provides candid reflections about the ambiguity she was left with upon returning to the U.S. While she still identified with Ethiopia, this identity was far from the version her parents claimed, and in many ways far from the version she set out on the journey to find. The dedication at the front of Rebecca's book reads as follows: "To my children and their cousins who will decide for themselves how to define their relationship to Ethiopia" (Haile, 2007). Like Rebecca, many of my respondents looked to Ethiopia as an opportunity for exploration and discovery into parts of themselves. They too wanted a relationship with Ethiopia, but they wanted to 'decide for themselves' what that would and would not look like.

Emnet (female, late-20s, DC) was born in Ethiopia and held very conservative cultural values even after moving to the U.S. She became engaged in a

number of Ethiopian development initiatives that involved interacting with Ethiopian diasporans that held a wide variety of cultural and political views. Also, working on social issues such as HIV/AIDS challenged many norms and behaviours she had previously held as sacred and core to her Ethiopian identity.

I think in a lot of ways I have shifted away from what I would have thought is Ethiopian. I don't know if that's a good thing or bad thing. But I'm a lot more accepting of things that I would not normally be accepting of. [...] I'll go off of [homosexuality] as an example. I mean I think homosexuality is such a huge part of the general discourse about HIV/AIDS treatment or education programs or whatever. [...] Before, I would have been like it's more important that we stick to our religious values. But now, I'm kind of a lot more aware that it doesn't matter what your stance is in terms of whether you believe homosexuality is a right or wrong thing, or whether you condone it or not, at the end of the day, [there are] lives that are at stake because we're not discussing this [...] But its very difficult to make that culture shift and have ninety million people understand that it needs to be discussed.

Ethiopian cultural, political, and religious values have always had a particularly intimate relationship (See Chapter 4). This posed a challenge to Emnet, as she worked hard to maintain a sense of cultural connection to Ethiopia while her social and political views shifted away from norms that were widely held within the community.

Kiros (male, early-40s, Ethiopia) also made reference to his liberal views about homosexuality as an indication of the ways that his thinking differed from Ethiopian community norms; however, he did not see this as diminishing his Ethiopian identity. Emnet was far more concerned about this issue. Throughout our interview she explained that she was not sure whether her shift in thinking was a 'good or bad thing', which seemed to reflect a fear that she was betraying or abandoning a core Ethiopian identity that she valued very much. Ultimately, Emnet, like most of my respondents, wanted to hold on to a sense of 'Ethiopian-ness' without having to compromise or withhold her personal views and perspectives.

Selam (female, late-30s, Toronto) described her decision to move to Ethiopia as an 'emotional' rather than 'logical' one. She left a very prestigious career in Toronto to support business development in Ethiopia, which she saw as a service to the country and an investment in its growth. A large factor in her decision-making was a desire to substantiate and live up to an Ethiopian identity that she longed for. However, over the course of her time in Ethiopia, Selam grew increasingly frustrated with various aspects of the country, particularly the gender norms and barriers she encountered as a young woman in the male-dominated business circles.

I just said, why am I here? And if the answer is because emotionally I wanted to identify and see if I was Ethiopian, the romanticism of Ethiopia is gone! The question for me about identity, it's irrelevant now. I am Ethiopian, in my own form. No one will define that for me. If I don't speak the language fluently – so what? If I haven't lived there – so what? I define it for me. And Alpha, for me, that was a huuuge monkey off my back and so liberating! So now for me, I will only invest in Ethiopia if it makes sense, I want my country to grow, but I'm not investing if it doesn't make sense. Charitable stuff I will do. But for professional, what I am trained to do, it has to make sense, and it has to make sense relative to any of the other African countries that I'm looking in. And that's been liberating.

Selam left Ethiopia for Toronto, and at the time that we spoke she was still deciding where she was going to settle in the long term. Her negative experiences in Ethiopia had liberated her from the sense of inadequacy that she had held on to for so long. As she explained, "*The people that said I was not Ethiopian – I didn't want to be their Ethiopian*".

Like Selam, Yacob (male, early-30s, DC) settled on a definition of Ethiopian identity that he was comfortable and confident with; however, he explains that this was after a long and painful process.

I had to go through countless number of encounters [...] where someone with implacable certainty and effortless tone told me that I'm not Ethiopian. [...] [I decided that] I could allow them their definitions of Ethiopian identity without having to have their definitions encroach upon my own. It's like Ethiopian was a synonym for Ethiopia! That's what it felt like in a way. The question was what to do. And for me, the answer was to say, 'I will keep my notion of

Ethiopian and I'll keep it to myself'. It's another feat of introversion, that you don't have to share things (laughing) you can keep it to yourself. That's another interesting thing about identity.

The interesting thing about Selam and Yacob's new definitions of Ethiopian identity is that they were highly personalised and oppositional. These identities were informed by their individual experiences and interactions more so than a sense of shared history with other Ethiopians or patriotic allegiance to the nation itself. I found this to be a very common theme across my respondents, and observed that most YDEOs described their identifications with Ethiopia in evolutionary terms. YDEOs are often motivated to engage in Ethiopian development initiatives in order to validate an Ethiopian identity that they assume is already there to be claimed. However, this identity is often constructed through the process of engagement itself, and in many cases YDEO connections to Ethiopia are inevitably complicated rather than clarified like they had hoped.

7.4 Conclusion

YDEOs engage in Ethiopian development initiatives for a variety of reasons, through different modes and mediums, and with varying expectations about how these experiences and encounters will affect them. In this chapter, I discussed the connections and tensions between these motivations and expectations and the ways in which YDEO relationships, ideas, practices, and identities were eventually affected through and by their experiences. In the process of reflecting on these shifts and influences, many YDEOs were also able to better articulate what their motivations and expectations were at the outset. At times, they found a significant gap between their aspirations and experiences, and other times they found clarity and contentment in ways they had not anticipated. My respondents' narratives demonstrate that their

engagements in Ethiopian development were not simply *interventions*; they were fundamentally social *processes* defined by social *interactions*. In the process of organising fundraising events, volunteering at orphanages, and working on project reports, YDEOs were also building personal connections, picking up on cultural nuances, learning new skills, and challenging their previously held assumptions.

The spheres of influence extended far beyond the scope of YDEO development initiatives. Often, the process of travelling to Ethiopia or working within the Ethiopian diaspora community helped YDEOs understand their parents a little better and served as a form of cultural education that enabled them to navigate family and community expectations with more comfort and ease. Their social and professional lives were also affected, as some formed long-lasting, and even marital, relationships, and others began to re-evaluate their academic and career paths. YDEOs who travelled to Ethiopia to engage in their development efforts often described a shift in their perspectives about the nature of Ethiopian development, the capacities of Ethiopian nationals to drive social change, and how this all affects the relevance and nature of their own engagements. Finally, in many cases YDEOs searched for or were confronted with experiences that tested their connections to and understanding of Ethiopia. However, when they found clarity and resolution it was rarely in the form of an essentialised notion of 'Ethiopian-ness' that they initially conceptualised. My respondents often found it difficult to fully identify with the Ethiopia they encountered; however, in the process of trying, they developed a more fluid form of attachment that aligned with their other social identities and ambitions.

When YDEOs described these processes of personal change, they often did so in revelatory terms – speaking about ‘aha moments’, turning points, and epiphanies relating to various aspects of their lives. In his writing about ‘interpretive interactionism’, Denzin (2001) speaks about the analytical importance of ‘epiphanies’, which he defines as “those interactional moments that leave positive and negative marks on people's lives” (p. 143). He also outlines four major structures or types of epiphanies.

First are those moments that are major and touch every part of the fabric of a person's life. Their effects are immediate and long-term. Second are those epiphanies that represent eruptions, or reactions to events that have been going on for a long period of time. Third are those events that are minor yet symbolically representative of major problematic moments in a relationship. Fourth, and finally, are those episodes whose effects are immediate, but to which the individuals involved attach meanings only later, in retrospection and in the reliving of the events. [...] These four types may build upon one another (Denzin, 2001, p. 34).

What I find most helpful about Denzin's framework is that he privileges individual meaning-making and demonstrates how this is an ongoing and iterative process. He suggests that an epiphany is not necessarily a singular and instantaneous moment; it can be cumulative and might only take shape after time and retrospection.

In Denzin's framework, there is nothing banal about these various processes and no value judgement made on the part of the researcher about what is or is not actually transformative. The analytical task, therefore, involves asking open and thoughtful questions, and following the respondents' narratives as they lead to sites of meaning, significance, and often, deep emotion. Analysing the epiphanies and uncertainties that emerged through YDEO engagements in Ethiopian development was less of an audit of their initiatives, and more so an exercise in better understanding YDEOs themselves. Exploring their post-hoc reflections helped illuminate my respondents' interpretive frameworks, and these frameworks functioned as a

lens into the points of connection between YDEO social identities and practices.

Chapter 8. Discussion and Reflections

I am the first grandchild born outside of Ethiopia on both sides of my family. At the time of my birth, my grandmothers were still alive and were ecstatic upon hearing the news. While my given name, Alpha, was bestowed upon me by my father, both grandmothers also gave me names as symbolic gestures of affection. My mother's mother named me *Yeruknesh*, which translates from Amharic to mean 'you are from afar'. My fieldwork trip to Ethiopia coincided with what turned out to be the last year of my

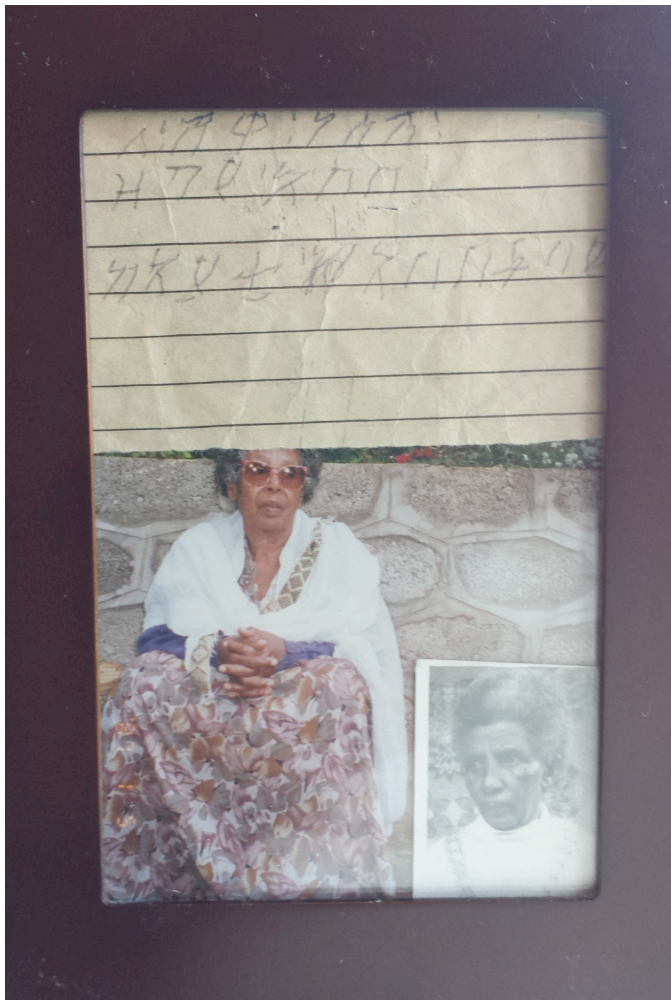


Figure 7: A collage of memories of my grandmothers that sits in my living room. Photo credit: Alpha Abebe

grandmother's long life. On this trip, I spent a lot of time at her bedside taking pictures and videos that would serve as memories for both my mother and I when I returned to Toronto. Her eyesight was very poor by then, and her dialogue oscillated between lucid and childlike. One afternoon, my aunt and I were in her room keeping her company and I began to record our conversations.

My grandmother was only vaguely aware of my presence in the room, and my aunt began to tell her stories about me – reminding her that she had given me the name '*Yeruknesh*'. She was pleased by the memory and stated, "Right,

that was me. I named her *Yeruknesh*". After some more thought she said, "Good, I'm glad that she exists. I'm glad that she was born". My father's mother gave me the name *Shewa Anesesh*. 'Shewa' was the historical name of the province in Ethiopia where my family originated (in 1995 Ethiopia was divided into new regions along ethno-linguistic lines). When directly translated, *Shewa Anesesh* means 'Shewa was too small for you'. I am told that in giving me this name, my grandmother was suggesting that Shewa was not enough so I needed to live in distant lands. I never had the pleasure of meeting this grandmother, as she passed away before my first trip to Ethiopia. However, I do have a patchwork of memories stitched together from second hand stories and family pictures.

Much like the YDEOs I interviewed, my relationship to Ethiopia is defined by my distance from it as much as my proximity and connection, as is exemplified in the names my grandmothers gave to me. Ethiopia has always been a part of my social landscape in one form or another, however it took a lot of *work* to transform what could otherwise have been an immaterial ancestral connection into a meaningful and intimate one. In my childhood and early adolescence, much of this 'work' was led by my family and other Ethiopian adults in my life; however, as I matured I took on much of this 'work' myself. Growing up, Ethiopia was the posters in my living room, the injera we ate for dinner, and the stories my parents told me. At the age of thirteen, I took my first trip to the country with my mother, at which point the Ethiopia in my imagination began to take shape as a physical place, sensory experience, and site of interpersonal encounters.

Over time, I began to reconcile my relationship to Ethiopia with my other social identities, political positions, and aspirations in life. I continued to

nurture the connections to Ethiopia that my family impressed upon me as a child, and found opportunities to utilise and enhance this connection to further social, academic, and professional objectives. It is important to note that the nature of my identification with Ethiopia was not always on my own terms, nor was it always in my favour. There were a myriad of other actors, institutions, and social structures that mediated my access and experience throughout this process. However, attaching meaning to these various encounters, interactions, and ideas was a task left to myself, and this interpretive process is what animates my shifting relationships to Ethiopia.

8.1 Summary of Learnings

This thesis has focused on examining the relationship between identity, social interaction, and social practice, and how each of these processes facilitate, reinforce, or otherwise shape the others. I have examined these processes through a case study of young diasporans of Ethiopian origin and their engagement in Ethiopian development initiatives. Rather than focusing my analysis on how diasporic affiliations prompt people to engage in homeland development, or on how homeland development does or does not hinge upon diaspora contributions, I have examined the *social dynamics* that simultaneously shape both YDEO identities and their engagements in Ethiopian development. My methodology was designed to be open and flexible, and a wide net was cast in order to capture the various motivations, practices, interpretations, and effects that were associated with YDEO engagements in Ethiopian development.

In my analysis I found that the time in which my respondents began their forays into their various Ethiopian development initiatives often coincided

with a particular transition in life stage, as they were wrestling with broad and often existential questions about their place and contribution in the world. Sometimes this involved reconciling their relationship to Ethiopia in particular, and other times engaging with Ethiopia played a more instrumental role as they embarked upon other quests for meaning, contentment, success, and belonging. YDEOs were quite vocal in describing the type of development they did and did not want to align themselves with. They drew upon different discourses to carve out a space within Ethiopian development that felt meaningful, legitimate, and accessible. Access was also facilitated through community structures, as YDEO connections to Ethiopian diaspora communities and organisations often provided a gateway into and infrastructure for their ensuing Ethiopian development initiatives.

YDEO development activities took on many different forms, including familial-based practices, North American-based initiatives, and various volunteer and professional efforts that involved travel to Ethiopia. Many of my respondents spoke candidly about the gap between their motivations/expectations and the nature of their actual experiences engaging in Ethiopian development. YDEOs could often point to a particularly profound or important shift that was connected to their experience, however it was not always affirming in the ways they had expected it to be. The idealism that initially characterised their attitudes often waned, and many of my respondents described coming to terms with a more complex process of Ethiopian development, and a role for themselves within this process that was less central than they had originally envisioned.

YDEOs also described broader shifts and influences in their lives and perspectives that they attributed to their experiences engaging in Ethiopian

development initiatives, and examining these really brought the *social* nature of development practice into clear focus. In the process of deepening their connections within the Ethiopian community, travelling to Ethiopia, or simply learning more about Ethiopia, YDEOs were also meeting new people and encountering new ideas that often reshaped their everyday social landscapes in important ways. This included meeting marital partners, strengthened familial relationships, re-envisioning of their careers, and fashioning a flexible relationship to Ethiopia that aligned with their various social goals and identities. Overall, engaging in Ethiopian development played an important role in facilitating YDEO constructions and expressions of Ethiopian diasporic identity, however this was but a part of a much wider and interconnected web of social processes and experiments.

Many of the key findings in this research emerged as I zeroed in on and unpacked the social dimensions of YDEO identities and practices. For example, family relationships played an important role in my respondents' lives, however the nature of these dynamics was not always predictable. Family members exerted important influence in that they taught YDEOs Ethiopian languages and cultures, took them on trips to Ethiopia, and often facilitated transnational connections; however, they were rarely involved in directly encouraging YDEOs to engage in Ethiopian development activities. Family relations also re-emerged as an important issue as YDEOs described the ways in which their engagement in Ethiopian development influenced their everyday lives. Many respondents described their time in Ethiopia as a 'turning point' in their relationships with their family members, as they grew to tolerate and even enjoy the same familial interactions they used to avoid.

They explained that being immersed in Ethiopia and within Ethiopian cultures created a stronger sense of connection to and value for family.

Another important finding with respect to social dynamics relates to the relationships that YDEOs worked to construct with Ethiopian diaspora community members, and other YDEOs in particular, prior to, through, and following their engagements in Ethiopian development. In some cases, YDEOs selected particular university campuses or simply picked up and moved to certain cities, with the explicit aim of being closer to a large Ethiopian community. Also, many YDEOs joined particular organisations or engaged in specific Ethiopian development activities explicitly because it allowed them to connect with other YDEOs in the process. These deliberate, often autonomous, actions demonstrate that my respondents were *actively* working to construct these Ethiopian relationships and identifications, rather than passively absorbing them through some form of environmental osmosis. Further, this highlights the dynamic ways in which diasporic identity is constructed and shaped through social interaction, and how development practice takes on particular forms and functions through diaspora engagement.

8.2 Key Theoretical Insights

Being the child of Black immigrants to North America, I have learned never to take questions of home, belonging, and identity for granted. At times, I am actively negotiating my place in the world, and other times I watch as realities beyond my control make these decisions for me. This is not a lament (though it could be), as *not quite fitting in* has in fact become my greatest analytical tool. These experiences have heightened my sensitivity to the fluid and precarious

nature of our social worlds, and sharpened my sense of curiosity about the threads that hold these worlds together. At a time when worldwide displacement is at its highest level ever recorded (UNHCR, 2015), I am conscious of the danger of feeding overly-romantic notions of the 'outsider' or 'nomad'. It is important to acknowledge the incredible privileges I was born into (e.g. Canadian citizenship) and accumulated (e.g. Western educational credentials) that set me apart from the millions of people who are in dire need of the stability and safety of a permanent home.

The unprecedented movement of people, goods, and information around the world raises important public policy questions and requires strategic thinking and collective action. However, as scholars, we should also take advantage of this time of flux and uncertainty to look at our conceptions of social identities, structures, and practices with fresh eyes, and reimagine the ways in which these various processes might be operating and connected to each other. Exploring the perspectives and experiences of people who are straddling different social systems, such as YDEOs and other migrant descendants, can be very helpful in this analytical endeavour. There is much to learn from speaking with individuals who have had to *consciously* construct their social worlds – people for whom there are few guarantees in the patterns of their everyday life.

As Schuetz (1945) argues in his classical work on the sociology of everyday life, there is a familiarity and intimacy that characterises the ways in which one moves through the world when one feels 'at home'.

Life at home follows an organized pattern of routine; it has its well-determined goals and well-proved means to bring them about, consisting of a set of traditions, habits, institutions, timetables for activities of all kinds, etc. Most of the problems of daily life can be mastered by following this pattern. There is no need to define or redefine situations which have occurred so many times or to look for new solutions of old problems hitherto handled satisfactorily (Schuetz, 1945, p. 370).

However, the matter of 'home' and belonging was far more problematic for my respondents, and required a more deliberate approach to social situations and challenges. The YDEOs I spoke with were the first cohort of people born to Ethiopian immigrants and raised in North America, therefore they could not rely on their parents or previous cohorts of YDEOs to provide a clear social blueprint as they navigated their everyday lives. Common points of reference such as home, nationality, language, and social norms, were complicated and open to question, and their approach to everyday problem solving included trial and error combinations of various social tools, frameworks, and capital.

YDEOs drew from their parents' narratives, their Western education, media representations, their experiences with racism and discrimination, and global development discourse as they interpreted and responded to various encounters and opportunities in their daily lives. YDEO daily concerns and experiences may not have been particularly remarkable; however, they took on a more active and conscious role than most in fashioning the infrastructure of their social worlds as they lived it. To borrow from the adage – they were *building the plane while flying it*. This is what makes their narratives and experiences so theoretically rich and instructive, and why they can help us learn a great deal not only about YDEO experiences, but also about the nature of human behaviour in our increasingly globalised and heterogeneous world. The following is a summary of some key theoretical insights from this research, which expand our understanding of the social dynamics at play within the diaspora/development nexus.

8.2.1 *Development Practice as a Social Phenomenon*

One of the hallmark features of interactionist research is that its methodology and analysis reflects an actor-centred approach. It is, in effect, a theoretical framework that follows the *action* from the perspective of the *actor*. There are many benefits to this method of analysis (See Chapter 3), and what I found particularly useful was how it drew my attention to the *social* factors driving and shaping development practice. Development practice is often conceptualised as an *intervention* within the literature, and the analysis generally focuses on describing the mechanics, merits, or consequences of particular development projects, activities, or approaches. While this macro-level analysis is valuable, it should be complemented by research that analyses development practice as a *social phenomenon*. This involves an actor-centred approach that examines the interpersonal and social interactions that facilitate, mediate, and give meaning to these practices.

As Blumer (1969) argues, studying social action from the perspective of the actor involves a “shift from a preoccupation with initiating factor and terminal result to a preoccupation with a process of formation” (p. 73). Analysing the Ethiopian development initiatives from the perspective of YDEOs meant that I was asking my respondents questions about why and how they got engaged in these development activities, who they came into contact with in the process, and how these various interactions shifted or shaped their perspectives, practices, and relationships. My evaluation of their development practices, therefore, was primarily in relation to the objectives and expectations as described by YDEOs themselves. This method involved, as Blumer (1969) describes it, “follow[ing] the actor’s line of conduct as the actor organises it” (p. 73).

Through this analysis I found that YDEO development practices – from shipping donated school supplies, to volunteering at orphanages, to working on World Bank projects – were embedded within various fields of social interactions and relationships. Of course, these practices were social in that they always implicated people other than my respondents, including colleagues, intended beneficiaries, benefactors, family members, etc. However, examining the social nature of their practices also involved analysing the dynamics that connected these various people together, how YDEOs interpreted these interactions, and how power and capital structured these practices and relationships. YDEOs were often drawn to their development initiatives because it appeared to offer opportunities to engage with and define a role within the Ethiopian community. They were also interested in activities that brought them closer to their intended beneficiaries in Ethiopia, both in the name of efficiency but also because they wanted to feel the impact of creating change in someone else's life.

The kinds of activities individual YDEOs engaged in often reflected their access to social and financial capital, and these class dynamics were embedded within larger global systems of power and privilege that created and sustain the international development industry. Further, the feelings of guilt and responsibility that often motivated YDEOs to engage in Ethiopian development in the first place emerged as they reflected on their own privileges in relation to the conditions of poverty that people in Ethiopia were living in. Using an actor-centred and interpretive lens highlights these important social dimensions to development practice, and deepens our understanding of both the actors and the nature of their practices. Analysing development practice as a *social phenomenon*, therefore, demonstrates that

these initiatives are not simply mechanical outputs from NGO structures, nor are they unilateral actions within a vacuum; these practices are conceptualised, mediated, actualised, and interpreted by people in and through the same social processes that characterise any other form of human action.

8.2.2 *Diasporic Identity Constructed Through Social Practice*

In his seminal work on diasporic identities, Stuart S. Hall (1990) argued that cultural identities are informed by historical circumstance and constructed through processes of identification.

Cultural identity [...] is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past (S. Hall, 1990, p. 225).

Hall's writings were instrumental in challenging the conception of cultural identities as fixed and primordial, and he helped carve out a unique space for diaspora studies within the social sciences and humanities. His conceptualisation of 'becoming' and 'being' is a particularly important insight. It highlights the role of both structure and agency in shaping individual identities, and demonstrates that this is a fluid, interpretive, and, *active* process.

My research is among many others that substantiate Hall's conceptualisation of diasporic identities, as YDEO relationships to Ethiopia were defined both by their circumstantial ancestral connection to the country, as well as an active and iterative process of identifying with various imaginations of the

country. YDEO *actions*, in terms of their engagements in Ethiopian development, were not instinctive responses to their ancestral connection to Ethiopia. Rather, YDEO development practices were generally an effort to explore and identify with Ethiopia, and it was in and through such practices that their ancestral connection was imbued with meaning and empowered as a salient part of their personal identity.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the contemporary literature on diasporas and development often perpetuates the notion that diaspora actors engage in homeland development because of a pre-existing and well defined diasporic identity. However, this masks the symbolic and interpretive nature of this process, and ignores the ways in which diasporic identities are shaped, shifted, and even constructed through development practice itself. This is a critical gap within the literature, and one that I have devoted much of this thesis to addressing through empirical research and theoretical analysis. The insights of diaspora studies scholars such as Hall (1990) and Brubaker (2005) were important in framing my conceptualisation of diasporas as a de-essentialised and practice-driven social phenomenon. Utilising an interactionist theoretical framework provided a systematic method of analysing the relationship between diasporic identities and practices, and the ways and which they are mutually constituted through social interaction. Finally, my empirical research with YDEOs grounded this theoretical analysis, and their narratives enabled me to demonstrate how these processes take shape through everyday experiences and encounters.

The fact that YDEOs were born and/or raised outside of Ethiopia was critical in that the socially constructed nature of their relationships to Ethiopia was made more apparent than it would have been with migrants who spent their

formative years in Ethiopia. However, the aim of my research was not only to establish that YDEO diasporic identities were socially constructed, but also to examine *how* these identities are constructed through various social practices – in this case, by engaging in Ethiopian development. As scholars continue to explore the social practices of diaspora communities, it is important that we also examine the role that such practices play in constituting diasporas to begin with.

In the absence of such analysis, we are in effect abandoning the conceptual utility of ‘diaspora’ that sets it apart from other categorical terms such as ‘immigrant’. ‘Diaspora’ – in the way that I have used the concept – does more than describe a group of people with shared immigrant ancestry; it is a social manifestation that emerges when people *actively* construct, reimagine, and/or maintain a relationship to a place that they do not live in, and sometimes have never been to. I embarked upon this research with this understanding, and used my analysis of YDEO engagement in Ethiopian development to substantiate the conceptualisation of diasporic identities as being constructed through social practice.

8.2.3 *Transnationalism Among Migrant Descendants*

Over the years I have attended numerous seminars, lectures and conferences related to migration, diasporas, and transnational practices. In most cases, the population under discussion turns out to be people who emigrated from their country of origin as adults and settled abroad. When migrant descendants *are* discussed, they are often represented as a bit of enigma – squeezed into a final PowerPoint slide with a note that *we really should learn more about them*. While an important body of literature examining migrant descendant experiences

has emerged (See Chapter 2), there is still much uncertainty about if, why, and how these groups connect with their countries of origin and engage in transnational practices.

At the beginning of their pivotal book *The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation*, Levitt and Waters (2002) express this sense of intrigue and uncertainty.

And although it is unlikely that the children of immigrants will be involved in their ancestral homes with the same frequency and intensity as their partners, the extent to which they will engage in transnational practices is still an open question. [...] The more information we have about the objective and subjective ties that the children of immigrants have to their ancestral homes, the better we will understand their experiences in this country and in their sending communities (Levitt & Waters, 2002, pp. 2-3).

While Levitt and Waters (2002) see value in examining migrant descendant homeland ties and transnational practices, they appeal to common sense notions that would suggest that these ties and practices will be less 'frequent' and 'intense' than those of adult migrants. However, as my research with YDEOs demonstrates, the relationships that migrant descendants forge with their countries of origin are *different* than those of their migrant parents or ancestors, not necessarily *diminished*.

In order to understand the scope and depth of transnationalism among migrant descendants, we need to step away from the hierarchy of transnational practices that implicitly shapes much of the literature. Sending remittances is not necessarily a reflection of a stronger or more 'legitimate' personal connection to the homeland than organising a party to fundraise for a development project through a student club. Further, measuring the frequency of migrant descendant transnational practices (or lack thereof) is far less insightful than examining when and why they do so in relation to different stages of their life and wider events happening around the world.

When we take migrant descendant narratives and practices at face value, we gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences and also expand our theoretical understanding of diasporas and transnationalism more broadly.

YDEOs looked at Ethiopia with a lens that was informed by their parents' migration experiences, but also their own experiences living, learning, and working in North America. Therefore, their connections and engagements with the country reflected this unique lens, and this lens also affected how they interpreted and derived meaning from their various practices. Life events and stages played a defining role in shaping YDEO identities, sometimes 'activating' an interest in exploring their heritage, and other times reinforcing their connections to other places, communities, or issues. When YDEOs were interested in engaging with Ethiopia through development, they were less likely than their parents to support an initiative on the basis of its regional location or ethnic affinity, and often made a conscious effort to characterise their own initiatives as pan-Ethiopian, pan-African, or even cosmopolitan. My respondents were inspired by appeals to global social justice and the promise of an African renaissance, and distanced themselves from Ethiopian nationalism and rhetoric that was similarly politicised.

YDEO Ethiopian development initiatives ultimately ranged from familial remittances, to fundraising events, to volunteer placements in Ethiopia. What connected these initiatives is that they were all fundamentally *social* experiences, and they allowed YDEOs to connect with Ethiopia in a way that felt accessible, legitimate, and meaningful to them. While YDEO's first trips to Ethiopia were often part of family vacations as young children and adolescents, many of my respondents took the initiative to arrange and finance subsequent trips to Ethiopia, where they could experience and engage

with the country in more depth and on their own terms. Therefore, the transnational practices and homeland ties established by migrant descendants are not simply derivatives or weakened versions of those of their parents. They are a particular set of social practices that emerge from a particular experience, and in fact, this particular social milieu is characteristic of an increasing segment of our globalised world.

8.2.4 *The Universality of Diaspora Experiences and Practices*

Making a case for the universality of diaspora experiences and practices might seem counter productive to the goals of this research, however it actually reinforces its relevance to a wider body of social research. There are of course a number of things that differentiate diasporas from other populations of people who have long historical and more narrow attachments to a singular political geography. However, in the process of examining the unique elements of the diaspora experience, I have learned just as much, if not more, about the broader ways in which humans create meaning and interact with their social environments. In many cases, replacing the subject of my empirical research would have little effect on the nature of my analysis. For example, I could have replaced 'Ethiopian' with another social identity (e.g. race, gender, religion), and/or replaced 'engagement with Ethiopian development' with another social practice (e.g. creating art, marching in protests, attending church), and my conclusions about the constitutive nature of social identities and practices would still stand. Therefore, I see the subject of *diasporas engaging in homeland development* as one illustration of a much broader human dynamic that involves negotiating a sense of worth, meaning, and place in the world.

In my research with YDEOs I found that while their transnational practices appeared to be connected to a process of identifying with Ethiopia, they were often also, or even primarily, connected to other social undertakings or processes of self-actualisation. I conducted my very first interview with Meskerem (female, early-20s, Toronto); I chose her as my first respondent because she was a friend of mine and someone I felt comfortable testing my interview questions with. Meskerem was born and raised in Toronto and highly engaged in Ethiopian development. Throughout our discussion I tried to ask probing questions that would connect her Ethiopian development activities to some form of or process of constructing an Ethiopian diasporic identity; however, Meskerem's responses often went in a direction I was not expecting.

For example, she felt that her commitment to helping people in Ethiopia was a reflection of her commitment to the values of her Christian faith, and she was not particularly invested in the idea of an Ethiopian identity per se. We rode the bus together after our interview and she shared some reflections about our conversation that were still lingering in her mind. I made note of this in my fieldwork journal because it struck me as a particularly important insight:

[Meskerem] seemed very surprised that she was not as connected to her Ethiopian identity as she had assumed, and said she realised this through my questioning. She seemed to be trying to figure out where it factored in, because she felt that "it has to play a part somehow" (Excerpt from my fieldwork journal: Toronto, January 17, 2013).

My first thought was that perhaps I was not asking the right questions, and there were in fact a number of questions that I tweaked, added, and abandoned after the first few interviews. However, upon further reflection I realised that these other non-Ethiopian identities and social commitments

could prove very important to my analysis of YDEO engagements in Ethiopian development.

In examining the motivations, activities, and effects that characterise YDEO engagements in Ethiopian development, I found that this practice and experience often served as a mechanism with which these individuals were wrestling with broader questions about their personal ambitions, values, and place in the world. Utilising an interactionist theoretical framework helped to make sense of these connections, as interactionist literature draws attention to how individuals act to verify their conceptions of who they are in relation to the roles, expectations, and commitments associated with relational and generalised 'Others'. This framework connects the processes that form the self, social groups, and social action, and demonstrates how they are in fact mutually reinforcing. In deconstructing my respondents' narratives, I found that their engagement in development practice offered a structured way for YDEOs to fashion a complex moral and social identity. The figure below reflects a distillation of the themes that emerged in my research through an interactionist lens, and elucidates how the meanings that YDEOs attached to their Ethiopian development activities related to existing or desired perceptions of themselves as *moral*, *effectual*, and *social* beings.

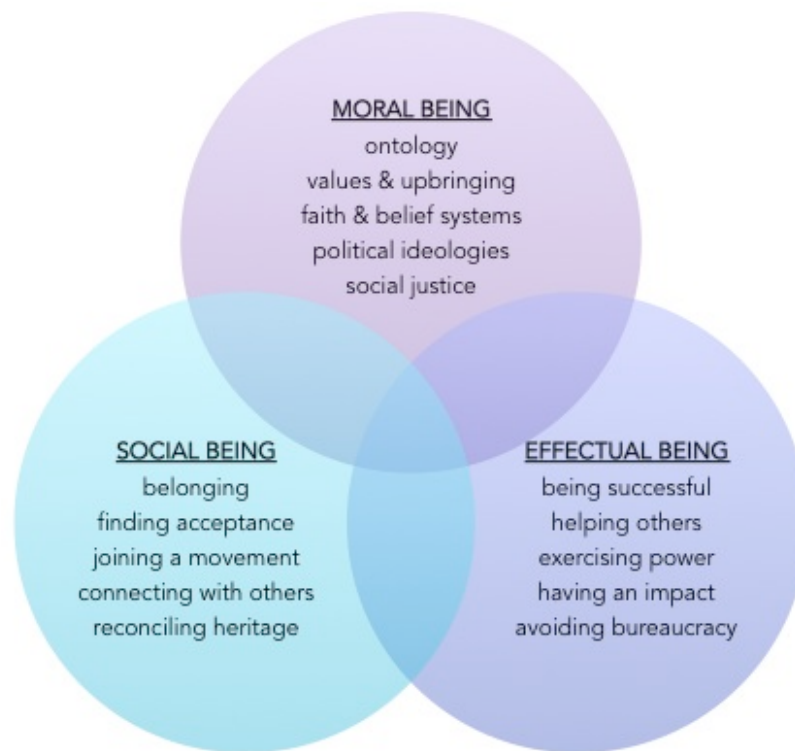


Figure 8: The self-perceptions connected to YDEO engagements in Ethiopian development

Engaging in Ethiopian development was a social action that helped YDEOs develop a sense of self that was morally coherent, connected to a social group, and seemed effectual in bringing about meaningful change. As the diagram above illustrates, the psychosocial needs and aspirations that were expressed by my respondents may have been unique in form, however they are, I would argue, universal in nature. In retrospect and with the benefit of this analysis, I see how insightful Meskerem’s reflections really were, and how examining diasporic practices can enrich our understanding of psychosocial processes that extend far beyond the construction of diasporic identities.

8.2.5 *Class, Race, and Gender as Enabling and Limiting Structures*

This research is actor-centred by design, meaning I have privileged processes of agency in my analysis of YDEO social identities and practices. However, as I have argued throughout this thesis, agency and structure operate as two

sides of the same coin. There is no human action that is completely unmitigated by pre-existing social structures and institutions. With that said, these very structures are constructed, reinforced, and challenged through intersecting processes of social interaction and symbolic interpretation, as well as expressions of power and capital. Put simply, human agency is mediated by social structures, and social structures manifest and shift as a consequence of human agency.

Therefore, the differentiating factor in what I have been describing as actor-centred research is that I focus on how individuals perceive, interpret, and manoeuvre around the social structures that facilitate and constrain their everyday lives. As discussed in Chapter 3, class, race, and gender are generic stratification features of a society, which Stryker et al. (2005) describe as 'large social structures'. These structures limit possibilities for social relationships and organise the distribution of wealth, power, and capital in a given society or social group. For the most part, I have represented YDEOs as freethinking and empowered individuals making conscious decisions about how they want to live their lives, including their social associations and personal identities. However, I aimed to provide balance and context throughout this thesis by also discussing the ways in which YDEO actions are embedded within large social structures that create certain possibilities for action and limit others.

Class, race, and gender – both as features of identity and manifestations of social stratification – emerged as crosscutting themes throughout my interviews with YDEOs, and these structures enabled and limited their social actions in implicit and explicit ways. YDEO social locations shifted considerably at different points in their lives depending upon the social and

material capital they accumulated, their geographic location, and changes to normative structures within their families, communities, and society as a whole. For most of my respondents, their parents were among the elite in Ethiopia but arrived in North America as refugees and found themselves at the bottom rung of the socioeconomic ladder. Many YDEOs grew up in low-income housing in under-resourced neighbourhoods, and their experiences with marginalisation were compounded by encounters with systemic and flagrant racism.

My respondents described experiences such as being racially profiled by police, down-streamed within the school system, and bullied by their peers, and they also spoke about the ways in which this affected their psychosocial development, limited access to social and economic opportunities, and chipped away at their sense of belonging within North America. This often played an important role in motivating YDEOs to deepen their connections in the Ethiopian community, however they did not always feel a sense of belonging in those social spaces either. Most of my respondents' families did eventually transition into the middle (sometimes upper-middle) class, and could re-appropriate some of the economic privilege they left behind in Ethiopia. Further, almost all of my respondents had completed some university education in North America and/or were gainfully employed at the time of our interview. They leveraged this social and economic capital for personal enrichment activities such as international travel, and used it to bolster and promote their advocacy and charitable initiatives.

YDEO social landscapes were also gendered through the roles and expectations of their families and communities, and in the ways in which various practices, behaviours, and decisions were or were not encouraged or

legitimised. These gendered dynamics also shaped YDEO development activities; for example, males were more likely to absorb the risks associated with moving to Ethiopia, and were less encumbered by concerns about settling down and starting a family. YDEOs who travelled to Ethiopia found that the social order was differently structured, and in most cases to their benefit. Their foreign credentials, English language proficiency, and exposure to Western culture positioned them alongside the local elites and White expatriate communities in Ethiopia, and opened up social and professional opportunities that would rarely be accessible to them in North America.

These benefits were not, however, equally distributed among YDEOs, as differing gender norms in Ethiopia constrained many female YDEOs in ways they were not accustomed to in North America. It is important to note that these various social structures do not operate as deterministic forces that unilaterally shepherd individuals in particular directions and block access to others. However hegemonic and pervasive these social structures may be, social actors – even the most disenfranchised – demonstrate a fair bit of ingenuity in the ways that they interpret, navigate, and even circumvent the system of norms and limitations associated with large social structures. These are important stories to tell through research – stories that emerge when we enter into peoples' social worlds through their own narratives, and explore the ways in which they interact with their environments to find meaning, purpose, and a sense of belonging.

8.3 Concluding Thoughts

I think it is fair to say that at the end of most research projects, there are as many new questions that emerge, if not more, as there is clarity on the initial

questions. In the case of my thesis, there are several lingering questions and curiosities that present opportunities for further reflection and future research. I like to think of these as topics I would explore if I had an additional four years to complete my doctorate and an unlimited word count! For example, there is more to explore in terms of the role of faith and faith communities in mediating YDEO relationships to Ethiopia. In my research, I was able to examine some of the ways in which Ethiopian Christian churches have facilitated volunteer missions to Ethiopia, and the extent to which some YDEOs interpret their development initiatives as fulfilling spiritual commitments to live a virtuous life. However, I see a need for a more systematic exploration of these issues, including a comparative analysis of YDEO-Ethiopia relations among people from different religious groups, as well as those without a connection to a religious community or faith.

My research used an interpretive lens and actor-centred methodology, which allowed for detailed and nuanced analysis of YDEOs and their engagement in Ethiopian development. Contemporary diaspora/development studies would benefit from further research informed by this theoretical and methodological approach, to allow for comparison between diaspora communities and to compliment the array of macro and institution-centred research that currently exists. In terms of the Ethiopian diaspora, my research has only been able to scratch the surface of complexity found within these communities and the transnational social fields that connect them with Ethiopia, its institutions, and its peoples. The relatively recent nature of mass Ethiopian migration and settlement abroad provides a unique opportunity to document and analyse these varied experiences and social processes as they

unfold – and this is a project I look forward to continuing in my own future research.

I cannot end this thesis without expressing how much I have enjoyed this research process. This represented much more than an intellectual pursuit or academic credential. Exploring and documenting the experiences of people within my community carries deep and symbolic meaning, and at times feels like a political act in itself. I remember trying to search for academic literature on the Ethiopian immigrant experience as an undergraduate student, and finding very few results to choose from. I still read everything I could get my hands on, as I was incredibly eager to understand and analyse the social dynamics around me. Literature on children of Ethiopian immigrants was virtually non-existent at the time, and eventually I decided that this was where I could make the most meaningful contribution – both to the scholarly and Ethiopian diaspora communities.

It would, however, be misleading to characterise this research process as a noble act of self-sacrifice. It is a great privilege and luxury to have the time and opportunity to explore issues of such deep and personal interest, and to do so as part of my professional life no less. In fact, I wrote the following in my fieldwork journal after a day of conducting interviews with YDEOs in Addis Ababa: *“I can’t believe someone is going to give me a degree for going around and meeting such interesting and inspiring people!”* I felt a deep sense of gratitude to the many people who so graciously shared their life stories and reflections with me, but also a burden of responsibility to do their stories justice, handle them with care and integrity, and share my learning with others in the community. My relationships within the Ethiopian community led me to this research project, and it is these relationships that re-surface as I reflect upon

this research process and the life of this thesis paper hereafter. It is entirely fitting that thoughts about my community relationships are what linger in my mind as I conclude this thesis – it is a final illustration of the social dynamics that shape peoples' identities and bring meaning to the things that they do.

Inheritance

the questions you pose
belong to generations
(and so it goes)

you are the answer to questions that rose
blown into the future
a generation ago.

And the answer to your question today
absent-minded, incidental
comes back, a generation away.

For no question is in isolation
not created, nor destroyed, rather transformed
binding, lingering, energy in motion.

Seeping into another generation
that will ask questions, I suppose,
absent-minded and incidental (and so it goes).

**Inheritance* is a poem written by my friend Jyotsana Saha, as part of a collaborative photo and written project we developed entitled 'Points of Origin' (Abebe & Saha, 2015).

References

- Aalen, L., & Tronvoll, K. (2009). The end of democracy? Curtailing political and civil rights in Ethiopia. *Review of African Political Economy*, 36(120), 193-207.
- Abbink, J. (2006). Discomfiture of democracy? The 2005 election crisis in Ethiopia and its aftermath. *African Affairs*, 105(419), 173-199.
- Abebe, A. (2009). *"I Turn Not Towards My Mother's Land but Into My Own": Exploring young Ethiopian diasporic spaces*. (M.A.), York University, Toronto.
- Abebe, A., Amanuel, R., Jamie, E., Mekonnen, E., & Merid, M. F. (2006). *Youth Perspectives: Challenges to peacebuilding and development in the Ethiopian community*. Paper presented at the Capacity Building for Peace and Development: Roles of the Diaspora | UN UPEACE High Level Expert Forum, Toronto.
- Abebe, A., & Saha, J. (2015). Points of Origin: A visual and narrative journey. In N. Sigona, A. Gamlen, G. Liberatore & H. N. Kringelbach (Eds.), *Diasporas reimagined : spaces, practices and belonging* (pp. 19-31). Oxford, UK: Oxford Diasporas Programme.
- Addis, E. (2014). International Migration in Ethiopia: Challenges and Opportunities. In A. Bariagaber (Ed.), *International migration and development in Eastern and Southern Africa* (pp. 111-169).
- AFFORD UK. (2015). Home. Retrieved September 25, 2015, from <http://www.afford-uk.org>
- African Union. (2005). Report of the meeting of experts from member states on the definition of the African diaspora - April 11-12, 2005. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Agunias, D. R., & Newland, K. (2012). *Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries*. Geneva; Washington, D.C.: International Organization for Migration; Migration Policy Institute.
- Alba, R., & Nee, V. (1997). Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration. *International Migration Review*, 31(4), 826-874.
- Alemu, G. (2009). A Case Study on Aid Effectiveness in Ethiopia: Analysis of the health sector aid architecture *Working Papers Series* (Vol. 9, pp. 1-36): Wolfensohn Center for Development at Brookings.
- Ali-Ali, N., Black, R., & Koser, K. (2001). Refugees and transnationalism: The experience of Bosnians and Eritreans in Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27(4), 615-634.
- Allahyari, R. A. (2000). *Visions of charity : volunteer workers and moral community*. Berkeley, Calif. ; London: University of California Press.

- Anderson, B. R. O. G. (2006). *Imagined communities : reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Rev. ed.). London ; New York: Verso.
- Ankomah, P., Larson, T., Roberson, V., & Rotich, J. (2011). A Creative Approach to Development: The Case for Active Engagement of African Diaspora in Ghana. *Journal of Black Studies*.
- Arthur, J. A. (2010). *African diaspora identities : negotiating culture in transnational migration*. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books.
- Awokoya, J. T. (2012). Reconciling Multiple Black Identities: The Case of 1.5 and 2.0 Nigerian Immigrants. In J. A. Arthur, J. Takougang & T. Y. Owusu (Eds.), *Africans in global migration : searching for promised lands* (pp. 97-116). Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books.
- Bailey, A. J., Wright, R. A., Mountz, A., & Miyares, I. M. (2002). (Re)producing Salvadoran Transnational Geographies. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 92(1), 125-144.
- Bakewell, O. (2008). 'Keeping Them in Their Place': the ambivalent relationship between development and migration in Africa. *Third World Quarterly*, 29(7), 1341-1358.
- Bariagaber, A. (1998). The politics of cultural pluralism in Ethiopia and Eritrea: trajectories of ethnicity and constitutional experiments. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 21(6), 1056-1073.
- Basch, L. G., Schiller, N. G., & Szanton Blanc, C. (1994). *Nations unbound : transnational projects, postcolonial predicaments, and deterritorialized nation-states*. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach.
- Bastia, T. (2013). *Migration and inequality*. London: Routledge.
- Basu, P. (2004). Route metaphors of 'roots tourism' in the Scottish Highland diaspora. In J. Eade & S. Coleman (Eds.), *Reframing pilgrimage: cultures in motion* (pp. 153-177). London ; New York: Routledge.
- Bauböck, R., & Faist, T. (Eds.). (2010). *Diaspora and transnationalism : concepts, theories and methods*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The qualitative report*, 13(4), 544-559.
- Bekkers, R., & Wiepking, P. (2010). A Literature Review of Empirical Studies of Philanthropy: Eight Mechanisms That Drive Charitable Giving. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*.
- Berg, M. L., & Eckstein, S. (2009). Introduction: Reimagining Migrant Generations. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 18(1), 1-23.
- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism : perspective and method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Booth, D. (1994). *Rethinking social development : theory, research and practice*. Harlow: Longman Scientific & Technical.
- Bourdieu, P., & Emanuel, S. (1996). *The rules of art : genesis and structure of the literary field*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Brah, A. (1996). *Cartographies of diaspora : contesting identities*. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Brah, A. (1997). *Cartographies of diaspora : contesting identities*. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Bréant, H. (2013). What if diasporas didn't think about development?: a critical approach of the international discourse on migration and development. *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, 6(2), 99-112.
- Brinkerhoff, J. M. (2012). Creating an Enabling Environment for Diasporas' Participation in Homeland Development. *International Migration*, 50(1), 75-95.
- Brubaker, R. (2005). The 'diaspora' diaspora. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 28(1), 1-19.
- Calhoun, C. J. (1995). *Critical social theory : culture, history, and the challenge of difference*. Cambridge, Mass. ; Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Chambers, I. (1994). *Migrancy, culture, identity*. London: Routledge.
- Chang, W.-W., Chen, C.-H. L., Huang, Y.-F., & Yuan, Y.-H. (2011). Exploring the unknown: International service and individual transformation. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 230-251.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory : a practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage.
- Chikezie, C.-E. (2011). Reinforcing the Contributions of African Diasporas to Development. In D. Ratha & S. Plaza (Eds.), *Diaspora for development in Africa* (pp. 261-282). Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Christiansen, J. (2011). Narrative and Social Movements. In The Editors of Salem Press (Ed.), *Sociology reference guide: Theories of social movements* (pp. 4-13). Pasadena, Calif.: Salem Press.
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2008). Government of Canada provides funding to Ethiopian Association to help newcomers in Toronto. Retrieved April 6, 2012, from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/departement/media/releases/2008/2008-06-23.asp>
- Clark, J. (2000). Civil Society, NGOs and Development in Ethiopia (pp. 1-21). Washington: The World Bank, NGO and Civil Society Unit.
- Clifford, J. (1994). Diasporas. *Cultural Anthropology*, 9(3), 302-338.

- Cohen, R. (1997). *Global diasporas : an introduction*. London: UCL Press.
- Cohen, R. (2008). *Global diasporas : an introduction* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Collet, B. (2007). Islam, National Identity and Public Secondary Education: Perspectives from the Somali diaspora in Toronto, Canada. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 10(2), 131 - 153.
- Cook, N. (2012). Canadian development workers, transnational encounters and cultures of cosmopolitanism. *International Sociology*, 27(1), 3-20.
- Cooley, C. H., & Schubert, H.-J. (1998). *On self and social organization*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Copeland-Carson, J. (2012). Pan-Africanizing Philanthropy: Toward a Social Theory of an Emerging Sector. In M. O. Okome & O. Vaughan (Eds.), *Transnational Africa and globalization* (pp. 125-154). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cowen, M., & Shenton, R. W. (1996). *Doctrines of development* (pp. xv, 554 p. 524 cm.).
- Crush, J. S. (1995). *Power of development*. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Davies, R. (2010). Development challenges for a resurgent African diaspora. *Progress in Development Studies*, 10(2), 131 - 144.
- de Haan, A. (2006). *Migration in the Development Studies Literature: Has it come out of its marginality? : Research Paper*, UNU-WIDER, United Nations University (UNU).
- de Haas, H. (2006). *Engaging diasporas : how government and development agencies can support diaspora involvement in the development of origin countries*. Oxford: International Migration Institute.
- Dekkers, N., & Rutten, M. (2011). *Diaspora philanthropy from a homeland perspective: Reciprocity and contestation over donations in Central Gujarat, India*. ProGlo Working paper. Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR). Bangalore / Amsterdam. Retrieved from <http://dare.uva.nl/document/2/133874>
- della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2006). *Social movements : an introduction* (2nd ed.). Malden, Mass. ; Oxford: Blackwell.
- Denzin, N. K. (1992). *Symbolic interactionism and cultural studies : the politics of interpretation*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Denzin, N. K. (2001). *Interpretive Interactionism*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Denzin, N. K. (2004). The Art and Politics of Interpretation. In S. J. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Approaches to qualitative research : a reader on theory and practice* (pp. 447-472). New York: Oxford University Press.

- DeWalt, K. M., & DeWalt, B. R. (2011). *Participant observation : a guide for fieldworkers* (2nd ed.). Lanham, Md.: Altamira Press.
- District of Columbia Office of Human Rights. (2004). Language Access Program. Retrieved October 8, 2015, from <http://www.ohr.washingtondc.gov/ohr/cwp/view,a,3,q,636135,ohrNav,%7C30953%7C.asp>
- Easterly, W. (2005). What did structural adjustment adjust?: The association of policies and growth with repeated IMF and World Bank adjustment loans. *Journal of Development Economics*, 76(1), 1-22. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2003.11.005>
- Easterly, W. (2006). *The white man's burden : why the West's efforts to aid the rest have done so much ill and so little good*. New York: Penguin Press.
- Eckstein, S. (2002). On Deconstructing and Reconstructing the Meaning of Immigrant Generations. . In P. Levitt & M. C. Waters (Eds.), *The changing face of home : the transnational lives of the second generation* (pp. 211-215). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering development : the making and unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Espiritu, Y. L., & Tran, T. (2002). "Viet Name, Nuoc Toi" (Vietnam, My Country): Vietnamese Americans and transnationalism. In P. Levitt & M. C. Waters (Eds.), *The Changing Face of Home : The transnational lives of the second generation* (pp. 367-398). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher : using our selves in research*. London ; Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Ethiopian Association in Toronto. (2010). Festivity of the Ethiopian-Canadian Day Celebration in Toronto. Retrieved April 6, 2012, from <http://www.ethiocommun.org/ethioday09/index.html>
- Ethiopian Sports Federation of North America. (N.D.). ESFNA: A Brief History. Retrieved October 8, 2015, from <http://www.esfna.net/page/show/724659-esfna-a-brief-history>
- Fahy, K., & Sundin, D. (2008). Critical, post-structural, interpretive interactionism: an update on Denzin's methodology. *Nurse Researcher*, 16(1), 7-23.
- Faist, T., Fauser, M., & Kivisto, P. (2011). *The migration-development nexus : a transnational perspective*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fenta, H., Hyman, I., & Noh, S. (2004). Determinants of depression among Ethiopian immigrants and refugees in Toronto. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disorders*, 192(5), 363-372.
- Fenta, H., Hyman, I., & Noh, S. (2006). Mental health service utilization by Ethiopian immigrants and refugees in Toronto. *The Journal of nervous and mental disease*, 194(12), 925-934.

- Feyissa, D. (2014). The 2007 delegation of the Muslim diaspora to Ethiopia. In L. Laakso & P. Hautaniemi (Eds.), *Diasporas, development and peacemaking in the Horn of Africa* (pp. 98-121). London: Zed Books.
- Fine, G. A. (1993). The Sad Demise, Mysterious Disappearance, and Glorious Triumph of Symbolic Interactionism. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19(1), 61-87.
- Fransen, S., & Katie, K. (2009). Migration in Ethiopia: History, Current Trends and Future Prospects *Paper Series: Migration and Development Country Profiles* (pp. 1-41). The Netherlands: Maastricht Graduate School of Governance.
- Gamlen, A. J. (2014). Diaspora Institutions and Diaspora Governance. *International Migration Review*, 48(1), S180 - S217.
- Garbin, D., & Godin, M. (2013). 'Saving the Congo': transnational social fields and politics of home in the Congolese diaspora. *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, 6(2), 113-130.
- Geda, A., & Irving, J. (2011). Ethiopia. In S. Mohapatra & D. Ratha (Eds.), *Remittance markets in Africa* (pp. 113-132). Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures : selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Getahun, S. A. (2007). *The history of Ethiopian immigrants and refugees in America, 1900-2000 : patterns of migration, survival, and adjustment*. New York: LFB Scholarly Pub.
- Gibb, C. (2002). Deterritorialized People in Hyperspace: Creating and debating Harari identity over the Internet. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 44(1), 55-67.
- Gill, P. (2010). *Famine and foreigners : Ethiopia since Live Aid*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gilroy, P. (1993). *The black Atlantic : modernity and double consciousness*. London: Verso.
- Goldring, L. (1998). The power of status in transnational social fields. *Transnationalism from below*, 6, 165-195.
- Government of Canada. (2011). *NHS Profile, Canada, 2011*. Retrieved from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=PR&Code1=01&Data=Cou nt&SearchText=Canada&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&A1=All&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=10>.
- Government of Canada. (2014). What we do. *About CIC: Our mandate*. Retrieved November 19, 2014, from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/what.asp>

- Government of Ethiopia. (2012). Ethiopian Expatriate Affairs Directorate General. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. Retrieved November, 2012, from <http://www.ethiopia.gov.et/English/MOFA/Information/Pages/EthiopianExpatriateAffairs.aspx>
- Green, M. (2013). Evidence, Economics and Exclusion: Super actors, civil society and citizen debate in the post-MDG paradigm *Briefing Paper 39*. Oxford, UK: International NGO Training and Research Centre.
- Groot, M. C., & Gibbons, P. (2007). Diasporas as 'agents of development': transforming brain drain into brain gain? The Dutch example. *Development in Practice*, 17(3), 445-450.
- Habermann, B. (2011). Transforming a Country? A Debate on Reimaginings of Development, Change and Crisis in Ethiopia. *IDS Bulletin*, 42(5), 36-40.
- Hadero, M. (2015). Mekonnen aka Mack aka Huey Freakin' Newton. *Boulevard*, 31(1), n.p.
- Hafkin, N. J. (2015). "Whatsupoch" on the Net: The Role of Information and Communication Technology in the Shaping of Transnational Ethiopian Identity. In K. K. Shelemay & S. Kaplan (Eds.), *Creating the Ethiopian Diaspora: Perspectives from Across the Disciplines* (pp. 29-54). Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles: Tsehai Publishers.
- Hague, E. (2004). Benedict Anderson. In P. Hubbard, G. Valentine & R. Kitchin (Eds.), *Key thinkers on space and place* (1st ed., pp. 16-21). London: SAGE.
- Haile, R. G. (2007). *Held at a Distance: My Rediscovery of Ethiopia*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press.
- Hall, P. (2013). 'Sincerely Ethiopia'" A Documentary Retrieved October 15, 2015, from <http://www.internationalpolicydigest.org/2013/07/10/sincerely-ethiopia-a-documentary/>
- Hall, S. (1990). Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity : community, culture, difference* (pp. 222-237). London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Harrison, E. (2002). 'The Problem with the Locals': Partnership and Participation in Ethiopia. *Development and Change*, 33(4), 587-610.
- Harriss, J. (2005). Great promise, hubris and recovery: a participant's history of development studies. In U. Kothari (Ed.), *A radical history of development studies : individuals, institutions and ideologies* (pp. 17 - 46). Cape Town; London: David Philip; Zed Books.
- Hausmann, C., Jonason, A., & Summers-Effler, E. (2011). Interaction Ritual Theory and Structural Symbolic Interactionism. *Symbolic Interaction*, 34(3), 319-329.

- Herbst, J. (1990). The structural adjustment of politics in Africa. *World Development*, 18(7), 949-958. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X\(90\)90078-C](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(90)90078-C)
- Hernandez-Ramdwar, C. (2006). *'From T.T. to T.O.: Second generation identities in the Caribbean diaspora.* (PhD), University of Toronto.
- Heron, B. (2007). *Desire for development whiteness, gender, and the helping imperative* (pp. x, 191 p.).
- Hudson, S., & Inkson, K. (2006). Volunteer overseas development workers: The hero's adventure and personal transformation. *Career Development International*, 11(4), 304-320.
- Hulme, D. S., A. (2003). Conceptualizing Chronic Poverty. *World Development*, 31(3), 403 - 423.
- Human Rights Watch. (2010). Development without Freedom: How Aid Underwrites Repression in Ethiopia: HRW New York.
- Ionescu, D. (2006). *Engaging diasporas as development partners for home and destination countries : challenges for policymakers.* Geneva: International Organization for Migration.
- Jalata, A. (2008). Being in and out of Africa: The Impact of Duality of Ethiopianism. *Journal of Black Studies*.
- Jefford, E., & Sundin, D. (2013). Post-structural feminist interpretive interactionism. *Nurse Researcher*, 32(1), 14-22.
- Kaplan, S. (2015). The Ethiopian Yellow Pages as a Cultural Document. In K. K. Shelemay & S. Kaplan (Eds.), *Creating the Ethiopian Diaspora: Perspectives from Across the Disciplines* (pp. 55-71). Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles: Tsehai Publishers.
- Kapur, D. (2004). *Remittances: The New Development Mantra?* . Paper presented at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, New York, Geneva.
- Kapur, D. (2007). The Janus Face of Diasporas. In B. J. Merz, L. C. Chen, P. F. Geithner & Harvard University. Global Equity Initiative. (Eds.), *Diasporas and development* (pp. 89-118). Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Global Equity Initiative, Asia Center, Harvard University.
- Kibria, N. (2002). Of Blood, Belonging, and Homeland Trips: Transnationalism and identity among second-generation Chinese and Korean Americans. In P. Levitt & M. C. Waters (Eds.), *The Changing Face of Home: The transnational lives of the second-generation* (pp. 295-311). New York: Russell Sage Publishers.
- Kincheoloe, J. L., & McLaren, P. (2005). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 303-342). Thousand Oaks, Calif. ; London: Sage.

- King, R., & Christou, A. (2011). Of Counter-Diaspora and Reverse Transnationalism: Return Mobilities to and from the Ancestral Homeland. *Mobilities*, 6(4), 451-466.
- King, R., Christou, A., & Ahrens, J. (2011). 'Diverse Mobilities': Second-Generation Greek-Germans Engage with the Homeland as Children and as Adults. *Mobilities*, 6(4), 483-501.
- Kissi, E. (2000). The Politics of Famine in U.S. Relations With Ethiopia, 1950-1970. *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 33(1), 113-131.
- Kleist, N. (2008). Mobilising 'The Diaspora': Somali Transnational Political Engagement. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 34(2), 307-323.
- Kothari, U. (2005). *A radical history of development studies : individuals, institutions and ideologies*. Cape Town; London: David Philip; Zed Books.
- Kumsa, M. K. (2006). 'No! I'm Not a Refugee!' The Poetics of Be-Longing among Young Oromos in Toronto. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 19(2), 230-255.
- Kuschminder, K. (2010). Diaspora Engagement in Ethiopia: Finding its Footing *Migration Policy Brief* (Vol. 4). Maastricht: Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Laakso, L., & Hautaniemi, P. (Eds.). (2014). *Diasporas, development and peacemaking in the Horn of Africa*. London: Zed Books.
- Lasswell, H. D. (1936). *Politics; who gets what, when, how*. New York, London: Whittlesey house; McGraw-Hill book company, inc.
- Levitt, P. (2009). Roots and Routes: Understanding the Lives of the Second Generation Transnationally. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(7), 1225-1242.
- Levitt, P., & Schiller, N. G. (2004). Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society. *International Migration Review*, 38(3), 1002-1039.
- Levitt, P., & Waters, M. C. (2002). *The changing face of home : the transnational lives of the second generation*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Lewis, D. (2005). Individuals, organizations and public action: trajectories of the 'non-governmental' in development studies. In U. Kothari (Ed.), *A radical history of development studies : individuals, institutions and ideologies* (pp. 200-221). Cape Town; London: David Philip; Zed Books.
- Lundy, G. (2011). Transnationalism in the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake: Reinforcing ties and second-generation identity. *Journal of Black Studies*, 42(2), 203-244.
- Lyons, T. (2007). Conflict-generated diasporas and transnational politics in Ethiopia. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 7(4), 529-549.

- Lyons, T. (2015). Transnational Politics in Ethiopia: Diasporas and the 2005 Elections. In K. K. Shelemay & S. Kaplan (Eds.), *Creating the Ethiopian Diaspora: Perspectives from Across the Disciplines* (pp. 73-92). Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles: Tsehai Publishers.
- Lyons, T., & Mandaville, P. (Eds.). (2013). *Politics from afar: transnational diasporas and networks*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Macefield, R. (2007). Usability Studies and The Hawthorne Effect. *Journal of Usability Studies*, 2(3), 145-154.
- Mahieu, R. (2015). Feeding the Ties to "Home": Diaspora Policies for the Next Generations. *International Migration*, 53(2), 397-408.
- Makki, F., & Geisler, C. (2011). *Development by dispossession: Land grabbing as new enclosures in contemporary Ethiopia*. Paper presented at the International Conference on Global Land Grabbing.
- Marcus, H. G. (1994). *A history of Ethiopia*. Berkeley ; London: University of California Press.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2011). *Designing qualitative research* (5th ed.). London: SAGE.
- McBride, A. M., Lough, B. J., & Sherraden, M. S. (2012). International service and the perceived impacts on volunteers. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 41(6), 969-990.
- McKenzie, B., & Fitzsimmons, P. (2010). Optimising personal and professional reflection in a unique environment: making sense of an overseas professional experience. *Reflective Practice*, 11(1), 45-56.
- McSpadden, L. A. (1987). Ethiopian Refugee Resettlement in the Western United States: Social Context and Psychological Well-Being. *International Migration Review*, 21(3), 796-819.
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self and society*. Chicago University of Chicago Press.
- Mengestu, D. (2007). *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*: Penguin Group.
- Mercer, C., Page, B., & Evans, M. (2008). *Development and the African diaspora : place and the politics of home*. London ; New York: Zed Books.
- Merz, B. J., Chen, L. C., & Geithner, P. F. (2007). *Diasporas and development*. Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Global Equity Initiative, Asia Center, Harvard University.
- Milkias, P. (2011). *Ethiopia*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO.
- Miller, W. L., & Crabtree, B. F. (2004). Depth Interviewing. In S. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy (Eds.), *Approaches to qualitative research : a reader on theory and practice* (pp. 185-202). New York: Oxford University Press.

- Mkandawire, P. T., Olukoshi, A. O., & Codesria. (1995). *Between liberalisation and oppression : the politics of structural adjustment in Africa*. Dakar, Senegal: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa.
- Mohan, G., & Zack-Williams, A. B. (2002). Globalisation from below: Conceptualising the Role of the African Diasporas in Africa's Development. *Review of African Political Economy*, 29(92), 211-236.
- Mohapatra, S., & Ratha, D. (2011). *Remittance markets in Africa*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Mosse, D. (2005). *Cultivating development : an ethnography of aid policy and practice*. London: Pluto Press.
- Moyo, D. (2009). *Dead aid : why aid is not working and how there is a better way for Africa* (1st American ed.). New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Munck, R., & O'Hearn, D. (1999). *Critical development theory : contributions to a new paradigm*. London: Zed Books.
- Mwanakatwe, P., & Barrow, L. (2010). Ethiopia's Economic Growth Performance: Current situation and challenges (C. E. Complex, Trans.) *Economic Brief* (Vol. 1): The African Development Bank Group
- Najam, A. (2007). Diaspora Philanthropy to Asia. In B. J. Merz, L. C. Chen, P. F. Geithner & Harvard University. Global Equity Initiative. (Eds.), *Diasporas and development* (pp. 119-150). Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Global Equity Initiative, Asia Center, Harvard University.
- Nega, B. (2010). No Shortcut to Stability: Democratic accountability and sustainable development in Ethiopian. *Social Research*, 77(4), 1401-1447.
- Nega, B., & Milofsky, C. (2011). Ethiopia's anti-NGO law and its consequences for economic development. *Community Development Journal*, 46(S2), ii33-ii48.
- Newland, K., Terrazas, A., & Munster, R. (2010). *Diaspora philanthropy: private giving and public policy*: Migration Policy Institute Washington, DC.
- Ofcansky, T. P., & Berry, L. B. (2004). *Ethiopia : a country study*. Montana: Kessinger Publishing.
- Ong, A. (1993). On the Edge of Empires: Flexible citizenship among Chinese in diaspora. *Positions*, 1(3), 745-778.
- Ong, A. (1999). *Flexible citizenship : the cultural logics of transnationality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Orefuwa, E., & Chowdhury, R. (2013). Mobilising Resources For Africa: What Role for Young Africans in the Diaspora? London, UK: African Foundation for Development (AFFORD).

- Ornstein, M. (2000). *Ethno-Racial Inequality in the City of Toronto: An Analysis of the 1996 Census*. Toronto: Department of Community and Neighborhood Services.
- Ornstein, M. (2006). *Ethno-Racial Groups in Toronto, 1971-2001: A demographic and socio-economic profile*. In I. f. S. Research (Ed.). Toronto: York University.
- Page, B., & Mercer, C. (2010). *Diaspora and Development*. In K. Knott & S. McLoughlin (Eds.), *Diasporas : concepts, intersections, identities*. London; New York: Zed Books
- Pankhurst, R. (2001). *The Ethiopians : a history*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Pattanaik, B. K., & Sahoo, S. (2014). *Global diasporas and development : socioeconomic, cultural, and policy perspectives*. New Delhi: Springer.
- Peet, R., & Hartwick, E. R. (2009). *Theories of development : contentions, arguments, alternatives* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford.
- Pieterse, J. N. (2010). *Development theory : deconstructions/reconstructions* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, Calif. ; London: SAGE.
- Plummer, K. (2000). *A World in the Making : Symbolic Interactionism in the Twentieth Century*. In B. S. Turner (Ed.), *The Blackwell companion to social theory* (2nd ed., pp. 193-222). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Portes, A. (1996). *The new second generation*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Portes, A., Guarnizo, L., & Landolt, P. (1999). The study of transnationalism: pitfalls and promise of an emergent research field *Ethnic and racial studies*, 22(2), 217-237.
- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2001). *Legacies: the story of the immigrant second generation*. Berkeley ; London; New York: University of California Press ; Russell Sage Foundation.
- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2005). *The second generation in early adulthood*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Poster, A. (2012). The Gentle War: Famine Relief, Politics, and Privatization in Ethiopia, 1983–1986*. *Diplomatic History*, 36(2), 399-425.
- Potter, R. B. (2005). 'Young, gifted and back': second-generation transnationalreturn migrants to the Caribbean. *Progress in Development Studies* 5(3), 213-236.
- Prasad, P. (2005). *Crafting qualitative research : working in the postpositivist traditions*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.
- Pronk, J. (2004). Collateral damage or calculated default? The millennium development goals and the politics of globalization. In M. Spoor (Ed.),

- Globalisation, poverty and conflict : a critical "development" reader* (pp. 9-33). Dordrecht ; London: Kluwer Academic.
- Rahnema, M., & Bawtree, V. (1997). *The post-development reader*. London: Zed.
- Ratha, D., & Plaza, S. (Eds.). (2011). *Diaspora for development in Africa*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- Rodney, W. (1972). *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. London ; Dar es Salaam: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications ; Tanzania Publishing House.
- Rollins, L. (1998). Ethiopia, African Americans, and African-consciousness: The effect of Ethiopia and African-consciousness in twentieth-century America. *Journal of Religious Thought*, 54/55(2/1), 1-17.
- Rostow, W. W. (1960). *The stages of economic growth : a non-communist manifesto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rushdie, S. (1991). *Imaginary homelands : essays and criticism 1981-1991*. London: Granta Books in association with Penguin.
- Sachs, W. (2010). *The development dictionary : a guide to knowledge as power* (2nd ed.). London: Zed.
- Safran, W. (1991). Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 1(1), 83-99.
- Schiller, N. G., Basch, L., & Cristina Szanton, B. (1995). From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration. *Anthropological Quarterly*, 68(1), 48-63.
- Schuetz, A. (1945). The Homecomer. *American Journal of Sociology*, 50(5), 369-376.
- Schwartz-Shea, P. (2006). Judging quality: Evaluative criteria and epistemic communities. In D. Yanow & P. Schwartz-Shea (Eds.), *Interpretation and method : empirical research methods and the interpretive turn* (pp. 89-114). Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Serpe, R. T., & Stryker, S. (2011). The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective and Identity Theory In S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx & V. L. Vignoles (Eds.), *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research* (pp. 225-248). New York: Springer.
- Shelemay, K. K., & Kaplan, S. (Eds.). (2015). *Creating the Ethiopian Diaspora: Perspectives from Across the Disciplines*. Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles: Tsehai Publishers.
- Sidel, M. (2007). Focusing on the State: Government Responses to Diaspora Giving and Implications for Equity. In B. J. Merz, L. C. Chen, P. F. Geithner & Harvard University. Global Equity Initiative. (Eds.),

- Diasporas and development* (pp. 25-54). Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Global Equity Initiative, Asia Center, Harvard University.
- Sincerely Ethiopia. (2013a). Conversation with the Director: Nathan Araya. Toronto, Canada.
- Sincerely Ethiopia. (2013b). Our Story. Retrieved November 5, 2014, from http://www.sincerelyethiopia.com/?page_id=64
- Sökefeld, M. (2006). Mobilizing in transnational space: a social movement approach to the formation of diaspora. *Global networks*, 6(3), 265-284.
- Sorensen, N. N. (2007). *Living across worlds: diaspora, development and transnational engagement*. [Geneva]: IOM, International Organization for Migration.
- Sørensen, N. N. (2007). *Living across worlds: Diaspora, development and transnational engagement*: International Organization for Migration.
- Sorenson, J. (1992). Essence and Contingency in the Construction of Nationhood: Transformations of identity in Ethiopia and its diasporas. *A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 2(2), 201-228.
- Sorenson, J., & Matsuoka, A. (2001). Phantom Wars and Cyberwars: Abyssinian Fundamentalism and Catastrophe in Eritrea. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 26(1), 37-63.
- Stake, R. E. (2005). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 443-466). Thousand Oaks, Calif. ; London: Sage.
- Starr, J. M. (1994). Peace Corps service as a turning point. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 39(2), 137-161.
- State of Israel. (2012). *Press Release: The Ethiopian Community in Israel*. Jerusalem: Retrieved from http://www.cbs.gov.il/reader/newhodaot/hodaa_template_eng.html?hodaa=201211307.
- Stryker, S. (1980). *Symbolic interactionism : a social structural version*. Menlo Park, Calif.: Benjamin/Cummings Pub. Co.
- Stryker, S. (2008). From Mead to a Structural Symbolic Interactionism and Beyond. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 34, 15-31. Available at: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1142067>
- Stryker, S., Serpe, R. T., & Hunt, M. O. (2005). Making good on a promise: The impact of larger social structures on commitments. In S. R. Thye & E. J. Lawler (Eds.), *Social Identification in Groups (Advances in Group Processes)* (Vol. 22, pp. 93 - 123). New York: Elsevier.
- Suárez-Orozco, C., & Suárez-Orozco, M. (2001). *Children of immigrants*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard.

- Tarrow, S. G. (2011). *Power in movement : social movements and contentious politics* (Rev.and updated 3rd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Terrazas, A. M. (2007). Beyond Regional Circularity: The Emergence of an Ethiopian Diaspora. Retrieved from Migration Information Source website:
<http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=604>
- Teshome-Bahiru, W., & Záhorký, J. (2008). Federalism in Africa: The case of ethnic-based federalism in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Human Sciences*, 5(2), 1-39.
- The World Bank. (2008). Mobilizing African Diaspora for Development. *Feature Stories*. Retrieved October, 2012, from
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/0,,contentMDK:21944681~menuPK:258659~pagePK:2865106~piPK:2865128~theSitePK:258644,00.html>
- The World Bank. (2011). About the ADP. *African Diaspora Program*. Retrieved December, 2011, from
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDIASPORA/Resources/African_Diaspora_Program-About_the_program.pdf
- The World Bank. (2012a). African Diaspora Program (ADP). Retrieved July 20, 2012, from
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/EXTDIASPORA/0,,contentMDK:21496629~pagePK:64168427~piPK:64168435~theSitePK:4246098,00.html>
- The World Bank. (2012b). Action Points. *World Bank African Diaspora Program*. Retrieved September, 2012, from
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDIASPORA/Resources/African_Diaspora_Program-Action_Points.pdf
- Thomas, A. (2000). Development as practice in a liberal capitalist world. *Journal of International Development*, 12(6), 773-787.
- Tölölyan, K. (1991). 'Preface'. *Diaspora*, 1(1), 3-7
- Tölölyan, K. (2007). The Contemporary Discourse of Diaspora Studies. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 27(3), 647 - 655.
- Tomei, G. (2011). *Cultural and symbolic dimensions of the migration-development nexus: the salience of community*. IMI Working Papers Series, No. 30. Department of International Development. University of Oxford.
- Tulgan, B., & Martin, C. A. (2001). *Managing Generation Y: Global Citizens Born in the Late Seventies and Early Eighties*. Amherst, Massachusetts: HRD Press.

- UNDP. (2011). Ethiopia: Explanatory note on 2011 HDR composite indices *Human Development Report 2011*, 1-5.
<http://hdrstats.undp.org/images/explanations/ETH.pdf>
- UNHCR. (2015, June 18). Worldwide displacement hits all-time high as war and persecution increase. *News Stories*. Retrieved from
<http://www.unhcr.org/558193896.html>
- Van Hear, N. (2010). Theories of Migration and Social Change. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36(10), 1531-1536.
- Van Hear, N., & Cohen, R. (2015). *Diasporas and conflict*. University of Oxford. Oxford.
- Vertovec, S. (1999). Three meanings of "diaspora", exemplified by South Asian religions *Diaspora*, 6(3), (277-300).
- Vestal, T. (2012). Meles Zenawi (1955-2012). *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, 6(1/2), 195-199.
- Weems, L. (2006). Unsettling Politics, Locating Ethics. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(5), 994-1011.
- Weinar, A. (2010). Instrumentalising diasporas for development: International and European policy discourses. In R. Bauböck & T. Faist (Eds.), *Diaspora and transnationalism : concepts, theories and methods* (pp. 73-89). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Wessendorf, S. (2007a). *The double-tie : ethnicity and interests among transnational second-generation Italians in Switzerland*. (D Phil), University of Oxford.
- Wessendorf, S. (2007b). 'Roots Migrants': Transnationalism and 'Return' among Second-Generation Italians in Switzerland. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 33(7), 1083-1102.
- Wessendorf, S. (2008). *Local attachments and transnational everyday lives : second generation Italians in Switzerland*. Oxford: Centre on Migration, Policy and Society.
- Wessendorf, S. (2013). *Second-generation transnationalism and roots migration : cross-border lives*. Farnham, Surrey ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub.
- Wimmer, A., & Glick Schiller, N. (2002). Methodological nationalism and beyond: nation-state building, migration and the social sciences. *Global networks*, 2(4), 301-334.
- Wolf, D. L. (2002). There's No Place Like "Home": Emotional transnationalism and the struggles of second generation Filipinos. . In P. Levitt & M. C. Waters (Eds.), *The Changing Face of Home : The transnational lives of the second generation* (pp. 255-294). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Yanow, D. (2006). Thinking interpretively: Philosophical presuppositions and the human sciences. In D. Yanow & P. Schwartz-Shea (Eds.),

Interpretation and method : empirical research methods and the interpretive turn (pp. 5-26). Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.

- Yeshanew, S. A. (2012). CSO law in Ethiopia: Considering its constraints and consequences. *Journal of Civil Society*, 8(4), 369-384.
- Yin, R. K. (1984). *Case study research : design and methods*. Beverly Hills, Calif. ; London: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research : design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Calif. ; London: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research : design and methods* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, Calif. ; London: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2012). *Applications of case study research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks ; London: SAGE.
- Yin, R. K. (2013). *Case study research : design and methods* (Fifth edition. ed.). Los Angeles, California: SAGE.
- Yiu, J. (2009). *Second-generation transnationalism: Practice versus Process*. Paper presented at the American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA.
[http:// citation.allacademic.com/meta/p309957_index.html](http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p309957_index.html)
- Zenawi, M. (2012). Remarks by H.E. Ato Meles Zenawi Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia at the Inaguration of the New African Union Commission Conference Center and Office Complex. Retrieved October 7, 2015, from [http:// au.int/en/sites/default/files/Remarks by H.E.Ato Meles Zenawi1.pdf](http://au.int/en/sites/default/files/Remarks_by_H.E.Ato_Meles_Zenawi1.pdf)
- Zewde, B., Yntiso, G., & Berhanu, K. (2014). The Ethiopian diaspora and the Tigray Development Association. In L. Laakso & P. Hautaniemi (Eds.), *Diasporas, development and peacemaking in the Horn of Africa* (pp. 122-161). London: Zed Books.

Appendix I – General Consent Form

Alpha Abebe
D.Phil. candidate International Development
Department of International Development
University of Oxford



3 Mansfield Road
Oxford OX1 3TB, United Kingdom
alpha.abebe@geh.ox.ac.uk
Phone: 000 000 000

Doctoral Research Project

Intersections of diasporas and development: Young Ethiopian diasporans from the West and their relationships to development in Ethiopia

Statement of Consent

Purpose of the Study

I understand that I am being asked to participate as an interviewee in a doctoral research project titled *Intersections of diasporas and development: Young Ethiopian diasporans from the West and their relationships to development in Ethiopia*. The research is conducted by Alpha Abebe, who is currently a DPhil student at Oxford University. The purpose of this study is to understand how and why people of Ethiopian descent born and/or raised in Canada and the U.S. engage with Ethiopian development initiatives, and how this relates to or impacts their identities.

Your Participation

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate and withdraw myself from the study without giving any reason, and without any penalty or consequence. I can request that my information and responses be stricken from the record. I can also skip or choose not to answer any question that I am uncomfortable with. I also understand that my participation in this study will be audio recorded.

Study Procedures

I understand that if I choose to participate in the study it will take place on one day, for approximately one to two hours. I may be asked to participate in a follow up interview, which will also be voluntary. During the interview, I will be asked a series of questions about my personal background, my family's migration experience, my participation in Ethiopian community and development initiatives, and how these all relate to my sense of identity. The researcher will have some prepared questions, but may also ask questions based on my personal experiences or to gain clarity on previous responses.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits for me, but the findings from this project will help to expand existing knowledge on the Ethiopian community.

Confidentiality

No individually identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others, except if necessary to protect my rights or welfare; or if required by law. I have been assured that all the information collected through this

project will be kept in a secure place at the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford. Only the person conducting this research and her supervisor will have access to this information.

After participation, the researcher will code my results to make sure that my name and responses cannot be directly linked. After data analysis is complete, the researcher will keep the recordings but will destroy the key that connects my identity and results.

Risks or Discomforts

There is no foreseeable risk or discomfort to me associated with participating in this research study. Should I become uncomfortable during any stage of the interview, I have the right to terminate my participation.

Authorization

I have read this form and decided that I (*name of interviewee*), _____ will participate in research project described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement and possible hazards and inconveniences have been explained to my satisfaction. My signature also indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature of participant:

Place and Date:

Names of Researcher: Alpha Abebe

Signature of Researcher:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research. Should you have questions, concerns or complaints at any stage before, during or after the interview please feel free to contact me at the address/email/phone above and I will be sure to respond to your query as soon as possible.

-- Alpha Abebe

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Oxford.

Appendix II – Under 18 Consent Form

Alpha Abebe
D.Phil. candidate International Development
Department of International Development
University of Oxford



3 Mansfield Road
Oxford OX1 3TB, United Kingdom
alpha.abeb@qeh.ox.ac.uk
Phone: 000 000 000

University Research Project

Title: *Intersections of diasporas and development: Young Ethiopian diasporans from the West and their relationships to development in Ethiopia*

Information about Research and Permission Form

About Me and My Research

My name is Alpha Abebe and I am a student at Oxford University. I am doing research about young people who have an Ethiopian background and live in North America, like you. I am really interested in the ways that people like you get involved in projects to help Ethiopia develop as a country. I also want to learn about why you get involved in these activities and what it means to you personally.

Your Participation in My Research

I think there is a lot that I can learn from you and your experiences so I would really appreciate it if you would agree to get involved in my research. This means that you would speak with me for about 1 hour about your background, your involvement in Ethiopia related activities, and your thoughts about things like your cultural identity.

There are some things that I need to make sure you understand and agree to before I can interview you:

- Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. That means that you can say **no** to being interviewed, or say no at any point during the interview. Also, if there are some questions that you don't want to answer you can just tell me and there won't be any problems at all.
- If you tell me anything and then decide you don't want me to include it in my research, you can just let me know and I promise not to include it.
- I would like to tape record the interview just so I make sure I don't miss some details.
- I can't offer you anything for participating, like gifts or money.
- Very personal information will be kept confidential. That means that I will not use your real name or other details that reveal who you are when I write or talk about your experiences – unless I have to because of the law.

- If you or your parents/guardians would like to contact me after the interview you can call or email me using the information on this sheet.

Giving me Permission to Interview You

Please read the first page and make sure that you understand it. If there is anything that you don't understand or don't like, please speak to me about it. Once you feel comfortable with everything, please circle **YES** or **NO** to the questions below then sign your name if you give me permission to interview you.

I agree to answer questions about what it is like for me to have an Ethiopian background and the ways I get involved in activities to help Ethiopia develop.	Yes	No
I agree to let Alpha Abebe tape record this interview to help her with her notes.	Yes	No
I agree to my answers being used for a report that Alpha Abebe writes for her university research.	Yes	No
I understand that my name will not be used in the report and that my answers will only be used for this record.	Yes	No
I fully understand everything on this information sheet and agree to being interviewed for this research.	Yes	No
My name is: This is my signature: Date: Place:		

Names of Researcher: Alpha Abebe

Signature of Researcher:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Oxford.

Appendix III – Interview Guide

Overarching Research Questions:

1. What is the qualitative nature of young Ethiopian diaspora-led activity intended to promote the social, political or economic development of Ethiopia? How and why do they engage in these activities?
2. What impacts do these practices have in defining and/or strengthening diasporic identities?
3. Which norms, structures and institutions mediate and are mediated by these interactions?

IDENTITY
Topics to be covered
a. Biographical information, background, occupation/education, interests, languages, goals b. Family/personal migration & settlement story – Ethiopia to U.S./Canada c. Personal connections and relationships to Ethiopia & U.S./Canada as countries/cultures d. Defining experiences and encounters/turning points, identity as an evolving process e. How one identifies in different spaces (i.e. as Ethiopian, Canadian/American, black, etc.) f. Role of family, peers, elders, educators, media, Ethiopians ← in defining identities g. Hybrid/ambiguous/conflicting/cosmopolitan identities ← as resources, as barriers, etc.
Potential Interview Questions
• Can you tell me about your self? What is your current occupation? Do you have a part-time job? How old are you? What did/are you study(ing)? What are your personal/career aspirations? • Where were you born (country & city)? / How old were you when you came to Canada/U.S? What are your memories of migrating/settling? • Can you tell me a little bit about your family's migration history? Who came here first? How long ago did they come? What was their settlement experience like? • Who did you grow up with? How big is your family in Canada/U.S.? Do you have many family gatherings throughout the year?

• How much of your family is still in Ethiopia? Have you met them? How often do you keep in contact with them? How? • Do you have many Ethiopian friends? Where are they? Where did you meet them? Are they your closest friends? Why/why not? What kinds of things do you do with them? • Do you speak/understand/read any Ethiopian languages? How fluent/comfortable are you in the language? What language(s) is/are spoken at home? • Do you consume Ethiopian media (music, movies, websites, etc.)? Why not, what kind, how often...? • Have you ever travelled to Ethiopia? How many times and for how long / Why not? What was the main purpose of your travel? Who did you travel with? How old were you? Can you describe your experience(s) in Ethiopia to me? Would you describe them as positive/negative? What are some things that stand out for you about those trips? • If you were to describe your identity in 3 words what would they be? Why are these the most important? How has this changed at different points in your life? • When someone asks you where you are from or about your national/cultural identity how do you respond? Does this change depending on who is asking/where you are? Are you familiar with the term 'diaspora'? Do you identify as part of the Ethiopian diaspora? Why/why not? • Do you find yourself reflecting on your cultural identity often? Do you ever feel like your identities conflict? Please expand on this. How do you deal with this? • Can you think of any particular experience that really shaped your identity one way or another?
COMMUNITY
Topics to be covered
a. Involvement in Ethiopian community events/organisations/gatherings b. Negotiating belonging in different spaces, boundary making and breaking c. Key people and groups influential in decision-making and shaping perspectives d. Trust, reliance, & perceptions of 'Ethiopian community/diaspora'← how this is defined e. Experiences of exclusion, alienation from Ethiopian spaces as young diasporan

- f. Non-Ethiopian communities and their social functions and influence on identity/practice
- g. Social locations (i.e. gender, race, class, age) and how they play out in different group settings

Potential interview questions

- How would you describe your connection to Ethiopia (country, identity, community)? What does being Ethiopian mean to you – whether or not you identify with it? Do you consider yourself Ethiopian? Why/why not?
- When you think about ‘the Ethiopian community’, whom are the people that come to mind first? What do you think being Ethiopian means to others in the Ethiopian community? Who is excluded in your mind?
- What are some of the main gathering places/hubs/events for the community? Do you frequent these places/events? Why/why not?
- How would you describe your involvement in the Ethiopian community? Are there particular groups within the community you are more engaged with? What are some motivating factors and some barriers to your involvement?
- Do you always feel welcome in the Ethiopian community? Why/why not? Do you think that other people have a similar experience to you?
- Do you and/or your family identify with a particular faith / practice a religion? Do you regularly attend a place of worship? Is it primarily Ethiopian?
- Are there other non-Ethiopian communities that you belong to / that are important to you? What are they / how are you involved in them? How have they impacted your identity?
- Are there some Ethiopian people/leaders that you look up to in the Ethiopian community? What do you admire about them? How have they influenced you?
- Do you believe there are certain expectations set out within the Ethiopian community? What things receive praise, what things get looked down upon? Who sets these expectations (in the community, for you)? How have these expectations influenced you / those around you? Do you think the expectations are the same for everyone? Are they different for men and women / young and old / particular groups?
- When you find yourself needing help, direction or support with something, do you find yourself reaching out to other Ethiopians? Like who? Why / Why not? For what sorts of things?
- Do you belong to any Ethiopian online communities? Which ones? How have they impacted you / your identity? Does your online

involvement impact your involvement with the community offline? How so?
ACTION
Topics to be covered
a. Visions of progress or change for Ethiopia, definitions of development and growth, characterisation of ‘the problem’/challenges/deficits b. Thick descriptions of Ethiopian development related activities engaged in, including mechanisms, target beneficiaries, partners, successes/failures, access to resources, etc. c. Inspiration/motivations to get involved, level of personal commitment to activities d. Understanding of role of diaspora, Ethiopian government, Western government, local Ethiopians, (I)NGOs, and themselves personally – in Ethiopia’s development/future
Potential Interview Questions
• When you describe Ethiopia to others, what are some of the things you talk about? How do other Ethiopians talk about Ethiopia? How do young diasporans talk about Ethiopia? How do non-Ethiopians talk about Ethiopia? • What do you think are the main strengths/assets of Ethiopia as a country? What are some of the weaknesses / main challenges being faced? • When you think about a country’s development what comes to mind? What does growth mean to you? What do you see as the main barriers to growth/development? • How would you describe the current state of Ethiopia’s development? What do you think are the main positive/negative contributing factors? Who do you believe should be mainly responsible for different aspects of Ethiopia’s development? • Do you believe the Ethiopian diaspora has a role to play in Ethiopian development? Why/why not? Who/what has influenced your opinion about this? • If yes, what are some of the main ways you think the diaspora can/should contribute? Do you know of any past or current initiatives that look like this? Can you describe them? • Have you ever been involved in initiatives / projects / activities / campaigns that were aimed at supporting Ethiopian development? Can you please describe some of them to me? What were the main goals? Where did they take place? Who were the main/intended beneficiaries of these initiatives?

- Do any of these stand out as particularly successful / unsuccessful to you? Why? Are there any diaspora/development initiatives you avoid? Why?
- How did you get involved? What was your initial motivation for getting involved?
- Did you work alone, through an organisation, group, etc.? Can you describe the other people involved? Their age / gender / generation / location, etc.? Were there any local Ethiopian individuals/organisations involved? How so? Were there any non-Ethiopian individuals/organisations involved? Who funded/resourced these initiatives?
- Did you get out of the experiences what you hoped for? Can you remember any moments that were very emotional/personal/meaningful to you? Has it impacted/increased/decreased your involvement with the Ethiopian diaspora community?
- Where does supporting Ethiopian development fit in your list of day-to-day priorities or long-term goals and aspirations? Do you wish you could get more involved in the future? Why and how so? What would help you to do this? What (if anything) is standing in the way?
- What have you learned about yourself through being involved in these initiatives? What have you learned about the Ethiopian diaspora community? About Ethiopia? Has it changed the way you identify with Ethiopia / Ethiopian-ness? Have you benefitted in any other ways? Do you feel like you have been able to create change? How so?

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

Questions to probe deeper, solicit more information, move the interview along, personalise or generalise, or clarify my interpretation of a response:

- Why is that important to you?
- What does/did that mean to you?
- Can you tell me more about that experience?
- Could you describe that in more detail please?
- Why do you think you felt / acted / responded that way?
- Does that happen often? Is that a typical experience for you?
- What kind of impact did that have on you / your family / friends?
- That is really interesting. Do you have any other examples of this?
- Have you ever experienced this yourself?
- Do you think other people feel the same way about that?
- What I heard was [...] is that what you were trying to say? Is it fair to say that [...]?
- Earlier you mentioned that... could you tell me more about that?

- Do you think there is any connection between [*this*] and [*that*]?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about that experience?
- There is no right answer, I just want to know what your opinion is.
- That's ok, we can come back to this later.
- I would like to switch gears now / talk about a new topic / move on to [...]

Appendix IV – Respondent Profile

Respondent Pseudonym		Gender	Age	Interview Location	Primary Development Initiative(s)
1	Meskerem	Female	Early 20s	Toronto	Studies International Development and spent a year interning at an economic empowerment organisation in Addis Ababa.
2	Faiven	Female	Early 20s	Toronto	Studies International Development with intention to work in/for Ethiopian development in future.
3	Elsa	Female	Mid 20s	Toronto	Went on a short-term trip to Ethiopia organised by her school to volunteer with various organisations.
4	Kidus	Male	Early 20s	Toronto	Went on a short-term missions trip to Ethiopia organised by a church to volunteer with various organisations.
5	Aster	Female	Early 30s	Toronto	Sends money to an impoverished woman she met in Ethiopia to put her through school and support her living expenses.
6	Samson	Male	Early 20s	Toronto	Participates in various Ethiopian community initiatives based in Toronto.
7	Eleni	Female	Mid Teens	Toronto	Started an NGO that collects school supplies in Canada and ships them to rural Ethiopia.
8	Ruth	Female	Late 20s	Toronto	Joined family-run NGO that raises money to build schools in rural Ethiopia, and travelled to visit the project.
9	Netsanet	Female	Late 20s	Toronto	Ran a yearly fashion show in Toronto that raised money for water projects in Ethiopia.
10	Aida	Female	Early 30s	Toronto	Participates in various Ethiopian community initiatives based in Toronto.
11	Teodros	Male	Mid 20s	Toronto	Temporarily moved to Ethiopia to find a way to give back, developing a film to raise awareness about prostitution, and is considering the launch of a youth empowerment initiative in Ethiopia.
12	Sihin	Female	Early 20s	Toronto	Went on a short-term missions trip to Ethiopia organised by a church to volunteer with various organisations.

13	Selam	Female	Late 30s	Toronto	Worked for an UN agency. After gaining financial success in private sector, moved to Ethiopia to launch an investment firm to seed local businesses.
14	Fikir	Female	Mid 20s	Toronto	Studies International Development, and also volunteered at an orphanage in Ethiopia for several weeks during a vacation with a friend.
15	Meron	Female	Mid 20s	Toronto	Travelled to Ethiopia on her own for several months to volunteer with a local women and girls empowerment organisation.
16	Emnet	Female	Late 20s	Washington D.C.	Studies International Education, and volunteers with NGO in D.C. that raises funds for AIDS orphans in Ethiopia.
17	Winta	Female	Mid 30s	Washington D.C.	Involved in US-based advocacy initiatives to improve governance in Ethiopia.
18	Sewit	Female	Late 20s	Washington D.C.	Sends regular remittances to family in Ethiopia, and organises events in D.C. that raise awareness and funds for Ethiopian development.
19	Sirak	Male	Mid 30s	New York City	Interested in social enterprises in Ethiopia, and participates in various Ethiopian community initiatives based in New York.
20	Amina	Female	Late 20s	Washington D.C.	Studies International Development, and also volunteered at an orphanage in Ethiopia for several months during a vacation with a friend.
21	Tarik	Male	Late 30s	New York City	Took a sabbatical year to volunteer as a medical doctor at a rural hospital in Ethiopia.
22	Nardos	Female	Early 30s	Washington D.C.	Organised events in D.C. to raise awareness and funds for drought affected region in Ethiopia.
23	Loza	Female	Mid 30s	Washington D.C.	Regularly sends money to an orphanage in Ethiopia.
24	Bisrat	Male	Mid 30s	Washington D.C.	Participates in various Ethiopian community initiatives based in D.C.
25	Zelalem	Male	Late 20s	Washington D.C.	Collected books and funds to donate to Ethiopia through Ethiopian students association at university.
26	Yacob	Male	Early 30s	Washington D.C.	Travelled to Ethiopia to provide volunteer legal advice at a local

					human rights organisation.
27	Lelisa	Female	Early 30s	New York City	Worked for an UN department based in Ethiopia for a year.
28	Birtukan	Female	Mid 40s	Washington D.C.	Works in a high level economic development organisation based in the U.S. that works across Africa.
29	Freweini	Female	Late 20s	Washington D.C.	Developed a web-based platform to mobilise and support African diaspora organisations and businesses with social missions.
30	Bewnet	Male	Early 20s	Washington D.C.	Founded a D.C. based NGO raising awareness and funds for children in Ethiopia.
31	Zufan	Female	Early 30s	Washington D.C.	Participates in various Ethiopian community initiatives based in D.C.
32	Danny	Male	Late 20s	Washington D.C.	Volunteers with U.S. based NGO that raises funds for AIDS orphanage in Ethiopia.
33	Tigist	Female	Late 30s	Washington D.C.	Participates in various Ethiopian community initiatives based in D.C., and sends money to cousins in Ethiopia to put them through school.
34	Elbethel	Female	Late 20s	Skype / Washington D.C.	Developed a web-based platform to mobilise African diaspora, and participates in various Ethiopian community and student group initiatives.
35	Abrehet	Female	Late 20s	Skype / Los Angeles	Launched an NGO that sends young Ethiopians in the diaspora to Ethiopia to volunteer in local organisations and participate in cultural exchange.
36	Netsanet	Female	Late 20s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia to work with an INGO working on education development.
37	Eyob	Male	Mid 30s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia for a few years to provide capacity building support to an Ethiopian government department.
38	Samuel	Male	Late 20s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia to work on public health initiatives through INGOs.
39	Genet	Female	Early 30s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia to work in private sector and interested in driving economic development through business.
40	Nakfot	Female	Late 20s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia to work in the public health sector, through local NGOs then U.S.-led

					development offices.
41	Helen	Female	Mid 30s	Addis Ababa	Did a series of internships based in Ethiopia, then moved to Ethiopia and took a job in the corporate social responsibility unit of a local corporation.
42	Gideon	Male	Late 20s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia to work on the local operations for an international consulting firm.
43	Meaza	Female	Mid 30s	Addis Ababa	Launched a NGO and home for orphaned children in Ethiopia, travels between U.S. and Ethiopia to run the organisation.
44	Dereje	Male	Early 30s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia to launch an education-focused NGO.
45	Russom	Male	Mid 30s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia to work with a local refugee humanitarian organisation.
46	Kiros	Male	Early 40s	Addis Ababa	Works in the country office of a large INGO, and founded a student education and leadership initiative in Ethiopia.
47	Dagim	Male	Mid 30s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia then worked on a number of development projects with various international organisations.
48	Haile	Male	Late 20s	Addis Ababa	Conducted graduate research project on public health in Ethiopia and then moved to Ethiopia to launch a technology-focused health initiative.
49	Esayas	Male	Late 20s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia to work on social enterprise initiatives.
50	Lealem	Male	Early 30s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia to work on social enterprise initiatives.
51	Aaron	Male	Mid 40s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia and works on arts and culture development initiatives.
52	Lissan	Male	Late 20s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia to work on a number of youth development initiatives through various INGOs and UN projects.
53	Habte	Male	Mid 30s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia to work on early childhood education initiatives and education reform.
54	Endrias	Male	Early 30s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia to explore opportunities to give back, particularly through the arts.
55	Fitsum	Male	Early 30s	Addis Ababa	Moved to Ethiopia to work in private sector and interested in driving economic development through business.