Forced Migration

The Experiences of Somali Women Living

In the United Kingdom

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Acknowledgments

'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD,
'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you
hope and a future.'

(Jeremiah 29: verse 11)

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Contents

Glossary

Abti	Uncle
Asylum seeker	A person who has applied for asylum under the 1951 Refugee Convention on the ground that if returned to their country they have a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, political belief or membership of a particular social group.
Dirac	Very thin dress, made of polyester voile or very light cotton
Gabaato	Payment by to grooms family to the family of the bride, signifying his intention of marriage
Gutiino or garays	Full length dresses which exposed the back
Habar yar	Maternal aunt
Iddah	A period of time usually around three months after which time a man cannot revoke the divorce of his wife.
Immigration Officer	Employed by the UKBA and as the remit to ensure immigration legislation
Jibaab	A long flowing dress worn with a veil
Khat	A leafy green shrub which is commonly chewed in the Horn of Africa. Its effects are similar but not quite as powerful as amphetamines. Unlike in the United States and most of Europe khat is legal in the United Kingdom.
Madax shub	Meetings of between 10 – 15 women, linked through friendship
Meher	Bride price
Mukhalis	Agent or smuggler
NASS	National Asylum Support Agency - A section of the UKBA which provides certain types of support for people seeking asylum
Nikah	Marriage ceremony
Qaadi	Sharia ruling judge
Qoxooti	Someone who is suffering, weak, in a state of helplessness
Refugee	An asylum seeker whose application has been successful

Sambuso	Samosa
Sheikh	Religious man
Shifta	Somali bandit
Shir	Open council
Taar	Radio transmitters
UKBA	United Kingdom Border Agency – Border control agency of the United Kingdom
Uunsi	Incense
Walaaya	Procedure where the bride gives power of attorney at the wedding ceremony to a male relative
Wali	Male relative
Yarad	Bride wealth

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

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This research explores the journey of a group of Somali refugee women and presents an account of their experiences before, during and after migration to England. The study also aimed to explore the strategies used by the women in adapting to their new environment, the aim being to make recommendations that might inform policy and service provision. The original impetus for this study came from meeting and tutoring Somali refugee women who had strong views about the acute needs of their fellow women and what needed to be explored.

Somalis have a long established presence in the United Kingdom (UK) with women constituting nearly 50 per cent of the Somali refugee population but they have remained absent from much of the official statistics largely because 'Somali' is rarely recognised as a distinct ethnic category. In order to be included in the Census of 2001, Somalis would have needed to identify themselves as Black African or Black Other. This is problematic, as some Somalis are offended if they are referred to as Black, because their physical features reflect diverse African groups. Some identify with Arab cultures, whilst others relate to the Sudanese community, both of which are predominantly Muslim. 98% of Somalis are Sunni Muslims and Islam shapes many aspects of Somali culture. Somali women constitute one of the largest groups of refugee women in the UK, and whilst there are a few studies which primarily focus on the women's reproductive health (Essen _et al._ 2010; Maternity Alliance 2009; Robertson et al. 2006; Morris 2008; Davies and Bath 2001) in other respects they have remained invisible.

These issues of identity serve to reinforce the invisibility of the Somali population in official statistics. Authorized figures are likely to be a gross under representation of the true total of the Somali community. The official estimate of 108,000 (Office for National Statistics 2010) showed an increase from 82,300 from the 2006 population survey and 42,548 in the 2001 Census. Estimates from other community sources, suggest figures up to 500,000 (Communities and Local Government 2009). Consequently, when decisions are being made in relation to addressing the needs of newly arrived refugees the needs of those who originate from Somalia may be neglected. This can cause problems later on as it is known that the mental and physical health of refugees often deteriorates two

to three years after they arrive in the UK (Carswell *et al.* 2011; Jayaweera and Quigley 2010; Burnett and Fassil 2002) with women being over represented in those who are most susceptible to poor physical and psychological ill health. The reasons for this include loss of identity and status, lack of family and community support, poverty, poor housing, racism and discrimination (Taylor 2009; Tribe 2007; Burnett and Peel 2001). Little is known about the specific needs of Somali refugee women. However, there is some evidence to suggest that the Somali population in the UK faces multiple forms of disadvantage, including considerable poverty, poor housing conditions and significant barriers to training and employment (Communities and Local Government 2009; Harris 2004; Cole and Robinson 2003; Elam *et al.* 2001; Davies and Bath 2001). Somali women are more likely than men to be disadvantaged as traditional cultural norms and the language barrier marginalises them in terms of the wider society (Gardner and El Buhsra 2004; Harris 2004).

This study was framed in medical anthropology as this focuses on the unique differences between people as well as their fundamental similarities. It is linked with a keen interest in the taken for granted, everyday nuances of life, juxtaposing what maybe familiar or shown alongside what is distinct or concealed. This study focused on Somali women living in Birmingham in the West Midlands, UK. Official statistics for Somali refugee women living in Birmingham are not known but it is estimated that in 2006 there were about 35,000 Somalis living in this area, about 50% of them women, with most of this group originating from the Southern region of Somalia (Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees (ICAR) 2006). Little is known about Somali refugee women but contextualising their new life circumstances with their previous experiences can facilitate an understanding of the issues they face and help to explain why the women have experienced resettlement in the ways that they have.

Chapter two presents an overview of the social context of Somalia. The chapter also explores the social structure of Somali society including the position of women and the significance of marriage. The chapter then turns its attention to the issue of forced migration detailing aspects of life in a refugee camp and the challenges faced by the women as they attempted to escape the harshness of refugee life in Africa. The final part of this chapter discusses Somali migration to the UK, highlighting specifically the issues faced by women. Chapter three provides an overview of the literature in relation to forced migration, including discussions around the phenomena of trafficking and smuggling. It then provides an overview of the transnationalism literature outlining the benefits this work can bring to an understanding of migration. The final section of this

chapter reviews the concept of social capital specifically examining the seminal work of (Bourdieu 1986) which in this study made a major contribution to the understanding of the impact of forced migration on Somali women. Chapter four is the methodology chapter and starts with an overview of the basis for the design of the study. This chapter also includes a theoretical debate regarding the concept of positionality and the place of the reflective log in helping me to manage the impact of working with emotional data. The chapter then moves on to the sampling and recruitment strategy employed. This is followed by a discussion of the methods of data generation used, as well as a summary of how the data were analysed using a phenomenological approach and issues related to the methodological rigour of the study. The chapter ends with a consideration of the ethical issues inherent in research of this kind.

Chapter five is the first of the findings chapters. It begins with an overview of the conceptual framework used for this study before moving on to present the first cycle' Living in a war zone'. This first cycle describes the women's experiences as they lived in a conflict zone, where life was extremely difficult because of the civil war that devastated their country. Chapter six is concerned with the second of the cycles 'Running to safety'. This chapter portrays the women's migratory experiences, as they fled their country to seek safety and security across Somalia's borders, mainly in Kenya and Ethiopia. The third cycle 'Moving on', in chapter seven, depicts the women's flight to the West. The strategies used to arrange their travel, as well as the challenges faced during their flight and on arrival are discussed. Chapter eight, 'The Present', is the fourth and final cycle, and focuses on the last element of the downward spiral of loss, moving from the journeys undertaken by the women, to their situation at the time of the study and it is in this final cycle, that a distinct difference between the women begins to emerge. The differences were so apparent that the concepts of 'anomie' and 'recovery' are used to describe them. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications for policy and practice.

In each one of these chapters or cycles, three essences are discussed in relation to the stage of the women's migratory journeys at that particular time. These are 'Safety and Security', 'Family and Intimate Relations' and 'Changing Norms and Values'. Chapter nine is the concluding chapter and therefore draws the thesis to a close, suggesting a number of recommendations for policy and practice.

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

This chapter presents an overview of Somalia as a country, 1880 – 2011, and the Somali way of life. It begins with a brief overview of the events, which preceded the civil war in 1991. The chapter then provides a discussion of Somalia post 1991. The next part of this chapter gives an overview of Somalia society and includes an analysis of the complex clan system on which the society is based and the social position of men and women including issues related to marriage. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of Somali migration, including details of the conditions in the refugee camps in Somalia's neighbouring countries. Finally, an overview is given of the Somali community now living in the UK.

Somalia is a region of 246,200 square miles, curving around the horn of Africa in the shape of a figure seven (see figure one Map of Somalia). The distinctive and unusual shape of the Somali border can be attributed to the partition of the Horn of Africa in the nineteenth century and as such fails to reflect the distribution of its people (Abdullahi 2001). Kenya had claimed Somali territory along the border of Djbouti and Ethiopia. The remaining land was divided between the British who took control of the smaller northern protectorate in 1866, now known as Somaliland, and Italy, who took over the larger central-southern region with its capital Mogadishu in 1905, (Abdullahi 2001).

Northern Somalia gained its independence from the British in June 1960, and then, a few days later, Italy relinquished control of the South. On 1 July 1960, the people joined forces and a United Somali Republic came into being. However, this democratic unity was not to last as the government under successive leaders had become distracted by attempts to regain Kenyan and Ethiopian lands leading to inefficient governance of the country and claims of corruption (Farah 2000). A successful coup in 1969 brought Major General Mohamed Siad Barre to power. Barre declared Somalia a socialist state and introduced a number of positive reforms such as improvements in education, health and women's status (Lewis 2008). In 1972, orthography of the Somali language was devised, followed by a nationwide literacy campaign. However, the regime became increasingly restrictive with a high degree of state control (Abdullahi 2001; Lewis 2008). Drought between 1974 and 1975 escalated into a major famine in the North, resulting in

the deaths of over 20,000 Somalis and forcing between 10% and 20% of the population to flee to refugee camps (Lewis 2008; Hitchcock and Hussein 1987).

Figure One: Map of Somalia

Map by András Bereznay: www.historyonmaps.com
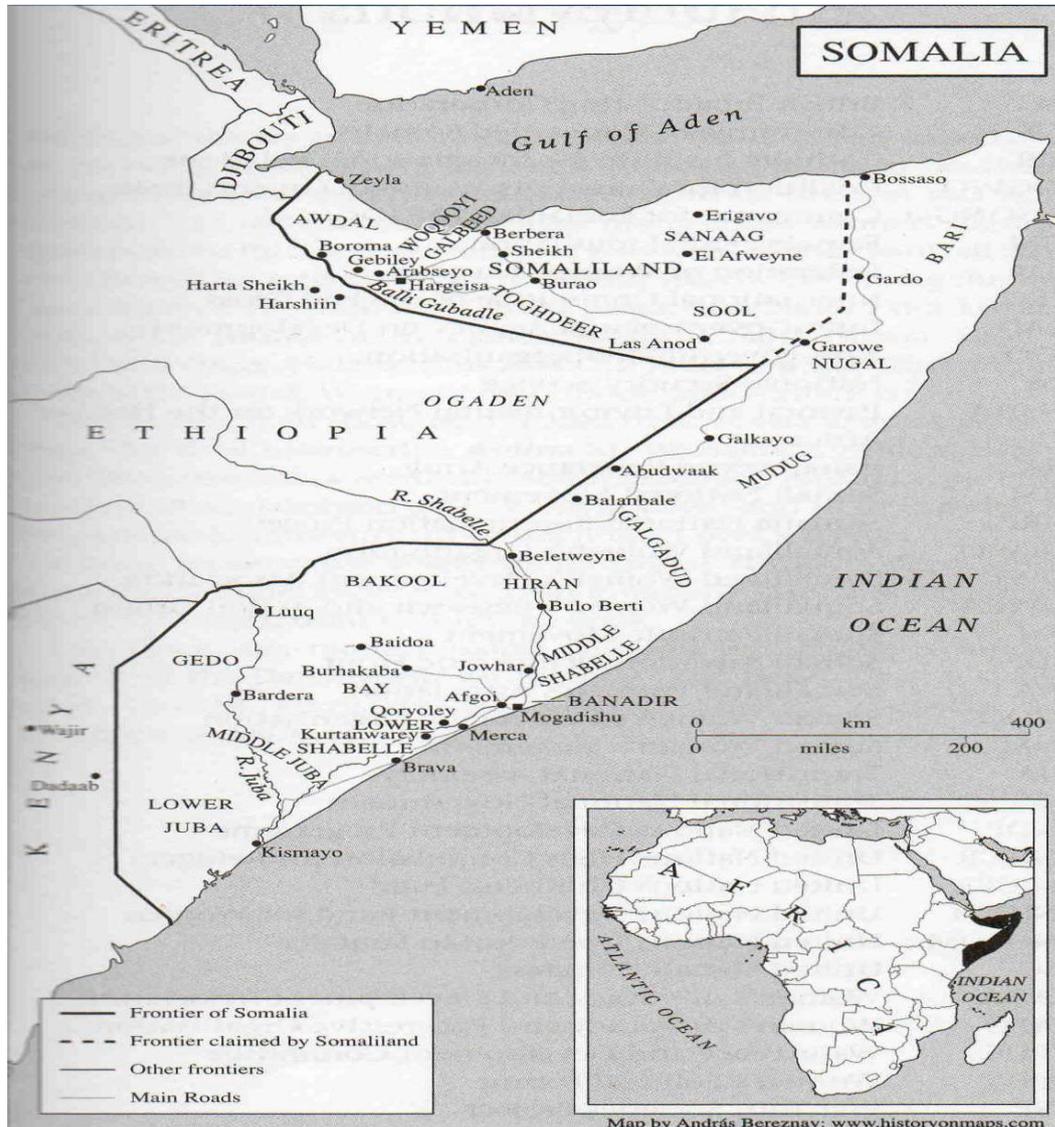
Barre's policies eventually led to economic disaster and the country became indebted to a number of foreign donors. As these debts spiralled out of control, some of these donors including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) withdrew funding and the economy of Somalia collapsed (Ahmed and Green 1999; Lewis 2008). These economic factors played a major part in the downfall of Barre's regime but it was internal military opposition in the shape of the United Somali Congress (USC), three armed opposition

groups who were headed by General Mohamed Farah Aideed, that eventually expelled Barre from Mogadishu in 1991 (Ahmed and Green 1999).

Somalia Post 1991

The collapse of government institutions in the early 1990s resulted in the disintegration of the loose coalition of forces that had ousted Barre from power. The country, fragmented into areas controlled by warlords and their clan based militias, descended into civil war (Abdullahi 2001). The USC divided into two rival factions based on different sub clans. Between December 1990 and March 1992, there was almost continuous fighting in the south as the clans battled for control of resources, especially land and water. No one was safe and widespread violence and the destruction of agricultural lands, water supplies and homes led to the massive displacement of people into other parts of Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen. A substantial amount of foreign aid was poured into the country, however, local leaders prevented its distribution and in 1995 the United Nations pulled out of Somalia leaving the country at the mercy of the various rival militias (Ahmed and Green 1999). With no protection from a central state the people of Somalia continued to suffer the brutality of the warring factions (Lewis 2008).

Despite three changes of prime minister since 2007, Somalia remains a country without effective governance. In 2009 Islamist insurgents including the Al Shabab group who have pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda took control of much of the Southern part of Somalia. At the same time there was international uproar as Somali pirates seized a super oil tanker from Saudi Arabia. Somali pirates remain a major threat to international shipping and in 2009 alone, launched 63 attacks, 21 of which were successful, with 247 crew members being held captive (International Maritime Bureau, 2009). In addition there are growing concerns that Somalia could become a new centre for the proliferation of global terrorism (Hastings, 2009). At the time of writing conditions continue to worsen, with famine particularly in the southern and central regions resulting in tens of thousands of Somali's crossing the borders into neighbouring Kenya and Ethiopia (United Nations 2011a). (See appendix one; Chronological History of Somalia's Significant Events).

Somali Society

Somalis share a common language. About 99% of them are Sunni Muslim, and Islam shapes almost every aspect of Somali life (Lewis 2008; Gardner and El Bushra 2004; Abdullahi 2001). For this reason Somalis are often described as a homogenous group. However, Somalis constitute a number of ethnic groups and cultures which are different from those of the majority of Somalis (Lewis 2008). Every Somali belongs through patrilineal descent to one of the six kin based clan families (Lewis 1994). The population of each clan ranges from 20,000 to 130,000 (Lewis 1994). The principal lineages (groups of clan families linked through male ancestors) are the Dir in the west, the Issaq in the centre and the Darod in the east, which is the clan to which Siad Barre belongs (Ahmed and Green 1999). The Hawiye who were responsible for ousting Barre from power in 1991 are predominately pastoralists and live in central southern Somalia (Farah 2000). The other two major clans are the Digel and Mirifle, who are collectively known as Rahanweyne, and who practise pastoralism in the south (Lewis 1994). These dominant clan families break down into a number of smaller clans, for example the Orgadeni, Marehand, Majeerteen, Dulbahunte and Warsengeli are the main Darod clans (Lewis 1994). Each of these clans subdivide into as many as ten smaller sub clans, which are known by the name of the common ancestor (Lewis 1994).

These sub clans are composed of smaller units known as primary lineage groups and diya paying groups (Lewis 1994). The male population of these groups range from a few hundred to a few thousand (Lewis 1994). The name 'diya paying group' derives from the Arabic *diiya* meaning blood wealth (Lewis 1994). Diya group members are linked through kinship and all boys will be members of their father's diya group. Through an informal contractual agreement, each member of the diya group is obligated to support each other and to receive blood compensation from or make restitution to other diya paying groups. In other words, if a member of an individual's diya group is injured or killed, it is as if the whole group has been wronged and thus every member of the group is obliged to seek justice (Lewis 1994). Justice may take the form of forgiveness, execution or a request for a diya payment. Compensation for a man's life is normally measured in camels and the usual price is about 100 camels, preferably young and female, as they can reproduce (Lewis 1994).

The groups rarely have a single leader, opting instead for a council of elders who have collective responsibilities. There is no hierarchy or political power within the clan system although power is differentiated along gender and age lines with women subjugated to men and young people to older people (Lewis 2008; Gardner and El Bushra 2004). All

men have the right to speak in an open council (*Shir*). Women are excluded from *Shir* (Lewis 2008; Gardner and El Bushra 2004; Warsame 2001). This did not mean that women were not involved in the decision making, however, this was always done privately, in order to ensure the decision making powers of men were not undermined (Gardner and El Bushra 2004; Warsame 2001). Women are not considered members of the diya-paying groups and they are not counted when levels of compensation are being paid out (Lewis 1994).

Mothers consider it important to teach children their clan genealogy from a very young age and most children can recite the names of between twenty and thirty patrilineal ancestors over the generations. The significance of being able to do this is so that two individuals will be able to establish quickly, what if any relationship they may have with one another and thus their obligations or sanctions (Lewis 2008; Ahmed and Green 1999). In times of conflict a man will seek to protect his mother's immediate family but is expected to favour his father's relatives if a choice has to be made (Warsame 2001). Similarly, in terms of clan allegiance he will have a weak relationship with his wife's relatives. Lewis (1961) notes a Somali saying, '*Xayn iyo xiniin*', meaning the cloth (worn by a woman) and the testicles. What is expressed is that paternal relations are essential to men, just like the testicles, whereas links through women are like a cloth and therefore can be discarded without ruining the whole.

Social Position of Women

In Somali society gender is a major factor of differentiation and inequality; women are traditionally assigned a status inferior to men (Lewis 2008; Gardner and El Bushra 2004; Abdullahi 2001). Women's rights, under customary law and the Somali Family Law, which regulates matters such as divorce and succession, are fairly limited as Somali Family law is based principally on Islamic Shari'a Law, which has its roots in the Sunni Muslim tradition (Duale and Luling n.d). In Somalia women usually have larger families than is customary in the West, and great value is afforded to bearing children, especially boys. A woman's main power base is her family, relatives and sub clan, who are responsible for providing financial support and advice in times of trouble (Gardner and El Bushra 2004). Somali society like many others, cultivates certain gender traits and from infancy, girls are socialised to occupy themselves with the things of the home (Kapteijns 1999; Abdullahi 2001).

Marriage in Somali Society

Marriage is encouraged and expected in Somali society and is also invested with a series of symbolic rituals (Musse 2004). Once there is an intention to marry, the groom's family must make a payment called *gabaato*. This payment is considered to be a token of respect to the bride's family and is not counted as bride wealth. It is usually distributed amongst the bride's kinsmen (Musse 2004). The bride wealth (*yarad*) is paid by the groom's family just before the wedding and consists of up to a 100 camels, a good horse and a gun, depending on the wealth of the groom's family, and the position of the bride and her family within the community. The groom must also provide all the bride's clothes and these must be of the best possible quality as they will be inspected by the bride's family (Musse 2004). The marriage ceremony is known as *nikah*. The bride commonly does not attend the *nikah*, instead she gives power of attorney through a procedure called *walaaya* to a male relative (*wali*). The *nikah* must be conducted by a religious man, known as a *sheikh*, in the presence of two adult male witnesses (Gardner and El Bushra 2004). There is no written record of the marriage and the contract of marriage is valid once the *sheikh* has performed the marriage rituals and both the bride and groom have consented to the marriage (Abdullahi 2001).

It is preferable that the marriage is between two individuals, who are not already closely related to each other through clan lineage, the idea being, that young people marry into a group where new relations can be established (Musse 2004). The ideal type of exogamous marriage is that between two cousins, who are the children of a brother and a sister. Such cousins are seen to be from different lineages (the sister's child being a member of the lineage of his or her father, not the mother) (Lewis 1994). Marriage between two such cousins establishes relations between the two lineages or strengthens such relations if they already exist. Marriages between cousins, whose fathers are brothers, are discouraged, because if there was conflict between the woman and her husband, it is normally her father's brothers son, who would intervene and if she marries him, this protection would be lost (Musse 2004). Marriage between cousins whose mothers are sisters is considered taboo as it is believed the cousins are too closely related (Musse 2004).

The Family Law of 1975 abolished forced marriage (Musse 2004). In Somalia there is no equivalent notion to 'common law marriage', a couple living together are assumed to be married (Gardner and El Bushra 2004). Somali men under Islamic law can marry up to four wives subject to the man being financially and physically able to care for his wives and that he promises to treat each justly (Lewis 2008). Whilst a husband can divorce his wife, by stating in front of two male witnesses that he repudiates his marriage,

women have no such rights and a man can deny his wife a divorce (Gardner and El Bushra 2004). Once divorced a spouse cannot remarry until after i*ddah*, three menstrual periods, if the woman is of childbearing age or three months for those women who have passed the menopause (Duale and Luling n.d). Having children while legally divorced is prohibited and socially unacceptable as the children will be considered illegitimate. The husband can revoke the statement of repudiation, up to three times if the period of *iddah* has not yet passed, if he announces that he has reason for doing so. The wife has no power to appeal against the revocation (Duale and Luling n.d). Under Islamic Shari'a law, women who have been deserted by their husbands for a long time, though the required period of time is not specified, can refer the matter to the *Qaadi* (Shari'a ruling judge) and ask for a divorce (Abdullahi 2001: Duale and Luling n.d).

Marriage has great significance in Somali society and clans gain political and fighting strength from the addition of new members when a child is born (Lewis 1994). Whilst a boy child will take his father's clan identity and will become a member of the same diya group, a girl, has less value to the clan. The expectation is that, upon marriage, she will bear children for another clan. Although she may well facilitate important alliances for her father through her male off spring they may in reality become the enemy (Warsame 2001).

Unlike her brothers, a woman will have a special relationship with her mother's clan and her maternal relatives. Women can, therefore, be identified with both their maternal or paternal clans thus affording them dual protection and support (Samatar 1994). This dual identity can mean there is a degree of ambivalence when clan loyalty is put to the test (Lewis 1994). A man's loyalty will be to his father's clan, however dual identity for women means that clan loyalty can be questioned. A woman may pledge allegiance to the clan of her mother, father or perhaps husband, as this will be the clan of her sons (Adbdullahi 2001; Warsame 2001; Lewis 1994). Warsame (2001: 161) has recorded that;

> '*Womens multiple and potentially conflicting loyalties has put them at the centre of suffering during and after the inter clan wars that devastated Somalia*'.

As civil war erupted in Somalia, many women had to flee to places of safety, to their own clan groups or abroad to escape clan-fuelled conflict where neighbours, friends or even their own relatives became potential enemies (Gardner and El Bushra 2004: Farah 2000).

Gender Based Violence

The use of gender specific forms of persecution has drawn attention to the fact that women are often the first victims of social, economic and political repression, in part because of the laws and social norms which dictate gender specific behaviour (Lewis 2008; Harris 2004; Gardner and El Bushra 2004; Brittain 2003). The worst atrocities committed against Somali women were in the 'rape camps', particularly in Mogadishu in the early 1990s, where, abducted by militiamen and imprisoned in villas, many women were subjected to repeated rape and other forms of sexual abuse (Gardner and El Bushra 2004; Musse 1993). Such acts of violence not only have serious physical and psychological implications for the women concerned but social ones as well. An unmarried Somali woman who is raped is considered socially dead and is likely to be ostracised from her community (Horst 2006a).

Some women are forced to marry the perpetrator of the rape or are even killed to avoid bringing shame unto the family (Horst 2006a; Musee 2004). In 2008, the world's attention was drawn to the stoning of a thirteen-year-old Somali girl whose family claimed she had been gang raped (Moszynski 2008). It was alleged that the girl had committed adultery and she was stoned to death in accordance with Islamic Shari'a law (Moszynski 2008). Such human right abuses may go some way in explaining why many Somali women do not disclose their rape or other serious sexual abuse when they reach a place of safety.

There remains a great deal of ignorance, in the West, about the wartime rape of thousands of Somali women and girls during the 1990s (Musse 2004). Despite this ignorance, there is little doubt that many thousands of them arrived in their new host countries having suffered the most traumatic human rights abuses as they were violated in the most horrific ways. For many this had been the catalyst for them seeking a place of security outside of Somalia's borders.

Somali Migration

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2011a) reports that Somalis constitute the third largest refugee group under their responsibility with 770,000 persons at the end of 2010. During 2010, 119,000 Somalis fled their country, most of them going to Kenya (73,700), Ethiopia (24,100), Yemen (18,4000), and Djibouti (3,300) (UNHCR 2011a). They caution however that these figures do not account for all Somalis who fled and the figure is believed to be much higher since many live undocumented and are therefore not represented in these statistics. In addition to this, tens of thousands of Somalis are internally displaced (UNHCR 2011a). Because of childcare responsibilities,

women could not flee as quickly as men. They had to plan how they could take their children with them, as fleeing at short notice increased the chance of their children becoming separated from them, in the chaos.

On arrival at Somalia's neighbouring countries, Somali refugees were directed to camps where attempts were made to provide basic assistance and health care (UNHCR 2011a). The degree of camp confinement varies from one country to another, depending on its asylum policies (Moret *et al.* 2006). Camp confinement is, in principle at least, compulsory in Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti but not in Yemen. In 2003 Djibouti forced all refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants, to register at a camp. In Ethiopia and Kenya the vast majority of refugees live in camps with permission for living in the city being granted only to a very small number, usually for medical reasons (Moret *et al.* 2006). However, both Kenya and Ethiopia have a large number of undocumented Somalis living in urban areas (UNHCR 2011a; Abdi 2006; Moret *et al.* 2006).

Somali refugees described living conditions in the camps as uninhabitable and reports of insufficient food and poor health care were common (Horst 2006b; Gardner and El Bushra 2004; Abdullahi 2001; Farah 2000). A particular concern was the non-availability of cooking fuel, which meant women had to collect firewood in the remote areas surrounding the camps (Horst 2006a; Moret *et al.* 2006). This placed them in great danger, at risk of rape or serious sexual abuse (Moret *et al.* 2006; Horst 2006a). Those living outside the refugee camps, also reported poor living conditions, a lack of physical safety and a lack of access to fair asylum procedures which reduced the possibility of building a better life for themselves and their families (Moret *et al.* 2006). These conditions coupled with a lack of opportunities for education and employment were critical factors that led many refugees to seek refuge in the West; namely the USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and Europe (Moret *et al.* 2006; Harris 2004; Farah 2000).

In order to travel to western countries refugees needed money and access to smuggling networks (Moret *et al.* 2006). Agents or smugglers, known locally as *mukhalis*, offered a range of services that varied between simply selling or renting documents to organising the journey and even accompanying the individual or family to their final destination (Moret *et al.* 2006; Farah 2000). Agents typically charged between $3,000 to $10,000 for each individual per journey, and families often had to divert resources from other priorities, such as selling part of their food rations or working illegally to raise the funds (Moret *et al.* 2006: Farah 2000). In these circumstances, refugees were open to fraud

and exploitation. They could be abandoned in a destination different from the one chosen and paid for, there was then little choice than to apply for asylum at the airport of arrival (Moret *et al.* 2006).

In recent years, a significant number of Somali refugees have migrated to the UK as secondary migrants from other European countries (Moret *et al.* 2006; Harris 2004; Nielsen 2004). Explanations put forward to explain why Somalis may leave their previous country of exile, include access to better welfare benefits in the UK, a view espoused by the popular press (Moret *et al.* 2006). However, there is little actual evidence to support this, for in some Scandinavian countries living conditions are of a far higher standard to those in the UK (Moret *et al.* 2006). It is far more likely that the desire to join family members and fellow Somalis is the major driver which encourages Somalis to seek refuge in the UK (Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK (ICAR) 2007; Moret *et al.* 2006; Harris 2004).

In many European countries such as Italy, Sweden and Norway, the Somali population is small, and loose knit, and there are constraints on the place of settlement (Valentine *et al.* 2009; Moret *et al.* 2006). The UK however, hosts the largest Somali population in Europe and has a long history of hosting Somali settlements, due to colonial links between the UK and Somaliland (Lewis 2008; Moret *et al.* 2006). Other factors are that the English language is recognised as an international language, unlike, for example, Dutch or German. The UK also has a reputation for religious tolerance, an important consideration for many Somalis as religion influences almost every aspect of Somali life (Valentine *et al.* 2009; Moret *et al.* 2006; Harris 2004; Neilson 2004). The result is that in the UK, the Somali population is now drawn from the wider diaspora rather than from Somalia itself (Moret *et al.* 2006; ICAR 2007).

Chapter Summary

To conclude, the UK as a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention has a duty to those whom it affords protection so that are able to attain a 'decent quality of life'. However, it is difficult to see how this duty can be materialised if there remains a failure to appreciate the unique situations and needs of specific refugee groups such as Somali women. What is required is a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Somali women's journeys of forced migration and the extent to which these experiences have affected their lifestyle. Chapter three provides a review of the supporting literature in terms of forced migration

CHAPTER THREE: REFUGEES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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This chapter begins by providing an overview of the existing literature on forced migration; including issues around smuggling and trafficking. The next section considers the place of social networks and social capital in relation to migration specifically highlighting the contribution of Bourdieu's (1986) seminal work on social capital and the relevant aspects of his work for this study. This is followed by an overview of the mobilisation of social capital through diasporic and transnational communities. The chapter concludes by identifying the gaps in the literature which this thesis seeks to address.

Migration and Forced Migration

The UK has a long history of accepting in those forced to flee their country because of war or persecution. Following the mass displacement of between seven and nine million people after the Second World War, about two million of whom became refugees, the United Kingdom adopted the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees which states that;

> *'Under the 1951 Convention a 'refugee' is a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality and is unable, or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him or herself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it'.*

(UNHCR 1951: 6)

Whilst some critics have suggested that the document has become outdated and irrelevant (Friedman and Klein 2008), there is no doubt that it has been the bedrock of refugee law worldwide and the basis of human rights legislation for over six decades.

A distinction between voluntary and forced migration can be made by distinguishing between the voluntary decision made by a person to migrate for one or more reasons and that of a person who has been forced to flee in the interest of their personal safety (Crisp 2008). This is especially the case when making a distinction between those who are seeking educational or employment opportunities and those fleeing persecution and violence. As such, a forced migrant, can be characterised as a person who is forced to leave their home because of a real or perceived threat to life or wellbeing. In some areas of study, such as the diaspora literature, the term 'forced migrant' is reserved primarily for those who have had no say in their migration such as the transatlantic slaves. In the discipline of anthropology, forced migrants or refugees are those who have undergone a violent separation from their homeland (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992). Therefore, in this thesis, the term forced migrant and refugee are used interchangeably.

Until, such time as forced migrants are incorporated as full citizens into their host country or are returned to their country of origin, they are in a state of liminality (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992). As Turner (1969: 5) asserts 'liminal entities are neither here or there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial'. They have to deal with the chaos and multiple losses that arise from being forcibly separated from their established ways of lives, their family members and in most cases, their support systems and social networks are destroyed. At the same time, many of them are struggling to cope with unfamiliar social and physical environments where their established codes of practices and values do not work well. It is in this sense that they can be said to be betwixt and between their old and new lives, unsure of what to expect next. As Gold (1992: 18) points out;

> *'While voluntary immigrants have frequently made a conscious decision to accept the indignities of dealing with an alien culture, refugees [as involuntary migrants] often cling to their traditional roles and values and may resist adaptation'*.

Thus, forced migrants have distinctive experiences and distinctive needs (Friedman and Klein 2008; Salt and Stein 2002). However, there is the danger that by emphasising the commonalities between forced migrants they are perceived as a homogenous group (Salt and Stein 2002; Friedman and Klein 2008). As Turton (2003:7) reports 'there is no such thing as 'the refugee experience' and there is therefore no such thing as 'the

refugee voice'; there are only the experiences and the voices of refugees'. Soguk (1999: 4) summarises:

> *… there is no intrinsic paradigmatic refugee figure to be at once recognised and registered regardless of historical contingencies. Instead… there are a thousand multifarious refugee experiences and a thousand refugee figures whose meanings and identities are negotiated in the process of displacement in time and place.*

Another way to conceptualise forced migration is to focus on the number of them worldwide (Turton 2003). It is estimated that there are between 100 and 200 million people globally who could be categorised as forced migrants, depending on various definitions and the assumptions on which they are based (Castles 2003). As Turton (2003: 7) reports the increase in those classed as forced migrants is a result of the social and economic changes or globalisation which appears to be creating an ever widening inequality between those living in the developed and developing world. These inequalities relate to standards of living, human security, access to justice and human rights protection. Globalization therefore appears to have prompted the movement of individuals from one part of the world to another by exacerbating socio-economic differentials between and within states (Crisp 2008). In general, those migrants and asylum seekers who make their way to Europe and other industrialised nations come from cultures and communities that have not benefited immensely from the globalization process.

As Crisp (2003: 9) similarly to (Friedman and Klein 2008) argue, while globalization is predicated on the principle of free movement of goods, services, highly skilled professionals and information this does not transcend into the free movement of the poor, destitute and those who are escaping from persecution and violence. Globalization has however, facilitated the movement of migrants and asylum seekers through the establishment of complex social, technological and cultural networks that link the developing world to industrialised nations (Crisp 2003). Therefore whilst globalization can be conceptualised as both a push and pull factor, it has obstructed the movement for some seeking to migrate to the words prosperous states.

The Concept of Asylum in the UK

The number of refugees arriving in the UK since the late 1980s has gained increasing public and political significance. Although many individuals have a view and are keen to express it, reportage in the tabloid press would indicate that few have any real understanding of the reality of forced migration. This became so apparent that in 2002 the Home Office expressed concern regarding the amount of negative coverage dedicated to refugees and asylum seekers in the tabloid press (Home Office 2002: 22). Nearly ten years later this situation has not changed with refugees and asylum seekers remaining a topic fuelled with controversy.

Successive governments have implemented policies and procedures such as the Asylum and Immigration Act (Great Britain Parliament 2004) which restrict both the right to asylum and the rights of asylum seekers once they enter the UK. Therefore, on both a political and societal level, humanity appears to have given way to distrust and dislike as politicians and the media have questioned the reasons why people come to the UK, rather than looking to the increase in conflict around the world (Hunt 2008).

As Cohen (2002) notes, in many ways asylum seekers and refugees have come to represent a new 'moral panic', meaning that wider society have come to see refugees as a threat, and have taken to blaming them for wider societal problems such as a lack of decent affordable housing, hospital waiting lists and the increase in unemployment rates. Much of this hostility stems from the widely held belief that many of those who seek asylum are in reality 'economic migrants' fleeing from poverty and using the asylum route to gain welfare benefits or access employment, or more recently, posing a threat to national security (Hunt 2008; Sales 2002). This view has met with intense criticism from those concerned that international obligations to provide protection to asylum seekers are not being met (Souter 2011; European Council on Refugees and Exiles 2002; Sales 2002).

In the UK, people who do not qualify for refugee status, but, cannot be returned to their country of origin because of serious risk to life or person are granted humanitarian protection status. If an asylum seeker does not fulfil the criteria for either of these two protection statuses, they may be given discretionary leave to remain, although this is only granted in exceptional circumstances (UKBA 2010). Until 2007 asylum could be granted to applicants coming from countries where they faced considerable danger as a result of war or civil conflict. Somalia came into this grouping. However, more recently every

application is considered on an individual basis and those arriving from areas of conflict may well be sent back if their claim is considered unreliable or unbelievable (Friedman and Klein 2008). The result is that countries, which are still in turmoil, are no longer automatically considered as unsafe places to which to return its nationals.

Estimates of the number of Somalis living in the UK vary widely with the Office for National Statistics (2010) suggesting that 108,000 are currently resident. Whatever the true figure there are sizeable Somali populations in Sheffield, Leicester, Cardiff, Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester; however most live in London (Office for National Statistics 2010). Figures from the Greater London Authority (2005) indicate that of the 33,831 Somalis residing in London, 14,921 (44.1%) were male, 18,910 (55%) were female, and 47% were aged between 16 and 44. 6,697 (29%) of Somalis were economically active compared with a 67.6% average in London. 24% of Somalis were in full time employment compared to the 63.1% average of all Londoners (Communities and Local Government 2009). Barriers to employment included the non-recognition of, or an inability to, produce pre migration qualifications, discrimination by employers, insufficient contacts in the UK and a lack of transferable skills (Philimore and Goodson 2006; Bloch and Atfield 2002). As well as this, many Somalis who are in employment do not occupy the same or similar positions to those they had held in Somalia, with many finding themselves underemployed in unskilled occupations (Philimore and Goodson 2006). As is the case for other refugee populations this has been the source of a great deal of stress and anxiety for highly skilled professional Somalis, who had prior to flight, held positions of considerable responsibility (Thomas and Abedaw 2002; Bloch and Atfield 2002).

In terms of legislation, UK asylum policy has come to be seen, primarily, as a means of controlling entry rather than the settlement of those who have been allowed to stay. In recent years there has been a proliferation of legislation under successive governments each extending and restricting the controls on the legal entry of immigrants to the UK (Tuck 2011). The Asylum and Immigration Act (Great Britain Parliament 2004) which has made a number of significant changes to the process of claiming asylum was noted to have been rushed through Parliament, with an initial consultation period of less than three months (Freidman and Klein 2008). This meant there was very little time available for consultation and analysis and whilst this Act (Great Britain Parliament 2004) was much shorter than previous bills, it has gone much further, than its predecessors, in restricting both the right to asylum and the rights of asylum seekers.

(Table one highlights the key points of the 2004 Act and the response from the Refugee Council who have openly criticised this legislation).

Under this bill (Great Britain Parliament 2004) asylum applicants in the UK have the right to:

- be treated fairly and lawfully regardless of their race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation or any disability;
- practise their own religion, but are expected to show respect for people of other faiths;
- have their application considered fairly and accurately;
- have access to support and accommodation if they meet the requirements for it;
- have access to free health care from the National Health Service (NHS); (see appendix two; Entitlements to NHS Treatments) and;
- have legal representation. Free legal help may be available, depending on their income and the person's individual case.

More recently, the Borders, Immigration and Citizenship Bill (UKBA 2008) proposed a number of changes in relation to customs, nationality, immigration and asylum which has also impacted significantly on newly arrived asylum seekers in the UK. The overall intention of the legislation was to strengthen border controls, by bringing together customs and immigration powers, and to ensure that those newly arriving in the UK earn the right to stay (UKBA 2008). Particularly pertinent to refugees were changes to the process of naturalisation; an extra period of probationary citizenship was introduced during which individuals were required to earn the right to full citizenship. Failure to show a commitment to the UK, demonstrated namely by volunteering, would mean the process of naturalisation would be slowed down and thus the ability to gain full citizenship would be delayed. The impetus behind 'active citizenship', as this policy was named, was the perception that migrant communities were failing to 'put down roots' and so a sense of 'Britishness' must be rethought and reinvigorated (Goldsmith 2008).

It is not only the UK which has introduced laws that have progressively back-tracked from the spirit of the United Nations Convention on Refugees, so has all European Union (EU) member states, with each state having its own national laws (Friedman and Klein 2008). Just as in the UK, all of these states seem to be in a position of trying to control illegal migration whilst at the same time fulfilling their duty to provide assistance and protection for those seeking asylum. It would appear that increasingly the two are being merged as stricter immigration controls are put in place to the detriment of those seeking

and entitled to asylum under international law with many migrants now seeing smuggling

as the only option available to them (European Council on Refugees and Exiles 2002).

Table One: Key points of the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 and Responses
from the Refugee Council (adapted from Freidman and Klein 2008,
pp. 58 –   62)

Asylum and Immigration Act 2004	Response from the Refugee Council
Puts an onus on asylum seekers to conform to behaviour that immigration officers consider credible, including a requirement to answer all questions posed by immigration officers.	The traumatising effects of torture and the residual fear that accompany asylum seekers as they seek safety and security, makes it difficult for them to disclose and discuss their experiences. For women who have been raped or subjected to other forms of sexual violence responding to sensitive questioning is extremely difficult as they may feel intense shame about what has happened to them.
Criminalises people who traffic others in, within or out of the UK in order to exploit them.	While useful the Act does little to protect the women and girls who are the key victims of traffickers. They require specific support and accommodation.
Insists that people claim asylum in the first safe country.	International law does not stipulate this and it is not reasonable to insist people do this. An asylum claim is no less credible if people wait until they arrive in the UK before making it.
Revokes a previous feature of the 1999 Act that allowed people awarded refugee status to receive backdated payment of full income support from the date of the asylum claim.	Refugees should not be penalised in terms of benefit payments as a result of delays in processing their application.
Allows immigration authorities to remove asylum seekers to a safe third country designated by the Secretary of State as conforming to the Refugee Convention and the European Convention on Human Rights, within the European Union as well as outside it. This can be done without in-depth consideration of their asylum claim or right of appeal against being sent to a particular country.	Removal to a safe third country without the right to appeal could infringe fundamental human rights. No country can be assumed to be safe for all people all the time and with no requirement that the country is a signatory to the Refugee Convention, there is no proof that their rights would be respected and upheld. The criteria for designating countries are unclear and could have more to do with political or trade interests than with human rights. The Refugee Women's Resource Project, Safe for Whom? Women's Human Rights in 'Safe List' countries: Albania, Jamaica and Ukraine, 2004 illustrates the degree to which human rights are absent in so called safe countries to which women have been returned.

Smuggling and Trafficking

Every year, an unknown number of people are smuggled or trafficked across international borders (Koser 2008; United Nations 2000a). However, there remains a paucity of literature regarding the characteristics of smuggled or trafficked migrants with the interests of governmental and non-governmental organisations, the media and wider society outstripping academic and theoretical debate (Koser, 2008; Moret et al 2006; Gallagher 2002; Salt 2000; Salt and Stein 2002). Trafficking is defined by the United Nations (2000b) as;

> '… the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident'.

The movement of those who are trafficked is based wholly on deception and coercion and is for the purpose of exploitation with the profits coming from the sale of a trafficked person's labour or sexual services (Koser 2008; Gallagher 2002). In contrast, when considering smuggling, there is no clear definition. Smuggling can, loosely be described as an act where an immigrant is assisted in crossing international borders when that crossing has not been sanctioned by the government of the receiving state (Koser 2008; United Nations 2000b).

As with trafficking, those who are smuggled are moved illegally for profit, but the difference is that however limited their power, they are to some extent, involved in the commercial transaction (Gallagher 2002). If all goes well their relationship with the smuggler ends at the destination country and the only cost that they will recognise is financial. However, they may be exploited and treated inhumanely, for example by being charged extortionate fees for their journey or being taken to a destination different from the one paid for. In addition, their travel documents, money and belongings may be taken by the smuggler and they may become trapped into debt bondage (Koser, 2008; Tribe 2007; Horst 2006; Salt 2000).

It is not known how much money is generated from trafficking or smuggling each year, but there is the suggestion that the tighter immigration restrictions imposed by industrialised countries in recent years has been matched by an increase in this activity, creating an important and lucrative niche for traffickers and smugglers (Koser 2008; Moret et al 2006). Koser (2008) argues that one way of addressing this is to investigate

how smuggling and trafficking are financed. Using a business framework, appropriate policies can be developed which target those organising smuggling networks, transforming this from a 'low risk, high return' operation, into one that carriers a significant level of risk for little return (Koser 2008). However, care must be taken to place any such approach within the broader, social context in which migration occurs. The concern is that a business framework as proposed by Koser (2008) does little to aid the understanding of smuggling as this model pays little attention to the significant role of social networks (Herman 2006). Migration becomes a commodity and the motivations, rights and experiences of migrants may be underestimated. Profits specifically in the case of smuggling are not always linked to finances, especially in the case of refugees, there are recorded instances, where smugglers may have ideological motives (Van-Liempt and Doomernik 2006).

Migrants may deliberately seek out the services of a smuggler and there is evidence to suggest that in some cases migrants leave without this kind of assistance and then make contact with a smuggler on route (Koser 2008). Contact with the smuggler does not always end upon arrival in the destination country as smugglers may arrange accommodation and employment, facilitating access into local labour markets (Moret et al 2006). In many cases, smugglers accompany migrants to the destination country in order to retain control over the documentation used (Moret et al. 2006; Harris 2004). Such documents either forged or genuine, can then be recirculated through the system for further use or resale (Koser 2008; Van-Liempt and Doomernik 2006; Moret et al. 2006). The scale of this is unknown but estimates from 1995 indicate that over 40, 000 passengers arrived in eight European countries without appropriate documentation, with one in five found to be travelling with counterfeit visas or passports (Salt and Stein 2002).

There is a need to look at immigration control as there have been cases where low paid border control officials, usually but not always in countries of origin, have been paid bribes to supplement their incomes (Salt and Stein 2002). Smuggling and/or trafficking therefore presents policy makers with increasing challenges in the management of migration flows across borders. Rather than focusing on the migrants themselves, the focus by immigration control should be directed on the institutions and vested interests involved. As smuggling and trafficking is an international concern there is also a need for policies to be collaborative between states as without international collaboration and a comprehensive set of measures it is unlikely that this practice will be successfully combated (Van-Liempt and Dommernik 2006; Moret et al 2006). Today, the illegal

migration business is highly sophisticated with smugglers and traffickers exploiting weaknesses in the systems to their advantage. As Van-Liempt and Doomernik (2006) and (Koser 2008) maintain there is a desperate need to understand the operational systems of trafficking and smuggling if this global problem is to be effectively combated. Attention also needs to be paid to the way in which transnationalism contributes to the movement of migrants across nation states.

Transnationalism

Transnationalism can be conceptualised as the way in which migrants create and sustain multiple social relations that traverse several national borders (Evergeti and Zontini 2006). The context within which migration takes place has been transformed by massive political, social and technological changes and, since the early 1990s, approaches to migration have developed with an emphasis on the connections 'migrants maintain to families, communities and causes outside the boundaries of the nations-state to which they have migrated' (Vertovec 2001: 574). Transnational communities are bound by their retained collective memories of the country of origin, partial estrangement from the host society and a collective consciousness derived from the relationship with the homeland (Van-Hear 1998: 5). As Vertovec (2009: 78) states,

> *'the degrees to and ways in which today's migrants*
> *maintain identities, activities and connections linking them*
> *to communities outside their places of settlement are*
> *unprecedented'.*

Whereas many transnational communities have arisen from forced migration, others have occurred as a result of the search for economic security, (Vertovec 1999: 453). This is not a new phenomenon but one that has substantially expanded and changed with technological developments (Vertovec 2009; Askoy and Robins 2001). Transnationalism can take many shapes and forms; for example within the Somali community there are many communication and assistance links between those living in the homeland, the country of first asylum and resettlement countries (Horst 2006b). Other diasporic communities also form strong networks which enable transnational flows of people, goods, money and information (Van-Hear 2002). Salih (2001: 52) reporting on a study with Moroccan migrant women working in Italy, summarises that;

> '*transnational practices such as transferring money, buying land and houses or investing in other economic capital in their country of origin has been a constant character of Moroccan migrants'*.

What, she argues has altered, is the degree to which technological advancements in terms of communication, travel and financial services have facilitated the maintenance of transnational relations, reducing the imagined and real distances. Similar changes have been noted amongst refugees (Koser 2008; Horst 2006b; Al-Ali et al. 2001).

Many governments have acknowledged the role of transnational nationals, in terms of foreign exchange (Vertovec 2009). As Adamson (2001: 156) points out, one of the ways in which transnational communities can have an impact on transformation is due to the fact that they mobilise and transfer resources directly to individuals in the country of origin. This can alter the local balance of resources and power. Vertovec (2009: 15) reports that the scale of remittances has resulted in both a 'quantitative and qualitative shift'. He makes the observation that there has been a significant increase in migrant hometown associations. These associations have organised large sums of collective remittances for development, including the construction of infrastructure, (roads, schools) and equipment (medical and educational supplies) for their countries of origin.

In 2009 it was acknowledged that global remittances exceeded $300 billion per year (Vertovec 2009). Countries including Pakistan, Egypt, the Philippines and nearly all of Central America have communities that are reliant on remittances for a significant proportion of their national economy. However, countries which are dependent on remittances may run the risk of economic turmoil as they are particularly sensitive to fluctuations in economic conditions and political developments (Vertovec 2009; Horst 2006b). Rusell (1986) states, that remittances also create dependency by replacing other sources of income and undermining traditional work habits. However, there is some evidence to suggest that they are also used to establish small businesses, one of the more promising employment generating sectors in many migrant sending nations (Diaz-Briquets and Weintraub 1991).

Remittances have also been criticised for contributing to tensions between households, creating inequality between those that do and those that do not receive this source of income (Horst 2006b). Horst (2006b) further argues that remittances can contribute to both conflict and peace, due to the powerful position of transnational communities. This would suggest that the political role of diaspora should not be underestimated and it is

important to note that many migrants have historically played a political role in their homeland and continue to do so from exile (Horst 2006b). For example in the case of Somaliland and Puntland, advances in communication such as the internet, together with the remittances, have contributed significantly to the development of the constitutions of these regions. (Horst 2006b; Moret et al. 2006). Similar processes have been observed in other regions, including Eritrea and Sri Lanka (Van-Hear 2002; Koser 2001).

The process of remittance can be complex involving a transnational network of relatives and friends who are located in multiple countries. Whilst, this is an important means of making and maintaining familial ties, it is not the only way. Sending remittances is also interconnected with other strategies through which families in different countries co-operate and make claims on each other in order to expand their resources and overcome hardship (Van-Hear 1998). Non-monetary strategies include the sharing of caring responsibilities and making collective decisions about the movement of individual relatives from one country to another (Horst 2006b).

Planning and arranging the movement of relatives are central to the management of transnational family life. Decision making is not limited to those relatives who are financing the move, but others, in different nation states may also contribute, based on their parental or caring responsibilities or their access to the knowledge and mechanisms that will facilitate or enable movement (Moret et. al 2006). The types of movement undertaken are diverse including movement from the homeland to neighbouring countries, or further onward from the first host society to a Western Country, or even from one Western country to another (Vertovec 2009). These movements are motived by multiple and complex factors including seeking safety and security, stability, opportunities for social mobility or to join other family members.

It is however important to recognise the full range of transnational activity as where individuals are concerned one must account for their unique opportunity. It is also essential to note that the willingness to participate in transnational exchange may not always be matched by the possibilities available to a person (Smith 1999). Another consideration is that it is only possible for a migrant to be integrated to the degree that the integrationist host society permits (Askoy and Robins 2001: 263). As Sampson (2003) asserts where a migrant is well integrated in terms of language ability and opportunity their transnational priorities will be very different from those of a marginalised immigrant.

Al-Ali et al. (2001) highlight that the transnational way of life is not limited to the binary of diaspora and homeland but is constructed and experienced through highly dispersed but well-connected networks of relatives, resources and family obligations. As Smith and Guarnizo (2003) assert, what are now needed are studies which examine the local realities and daily lives of refugees, migrants, their families and networks in terms of how they are shaped by the transnational practices, relations and processes in which they engage and how far these impact on their ability to adapt and integrate.

The benefits of bringing a transnationalism perspective to research on migration is clear enough. It can provide new insight into international migration through focusing on processes, which although they may not be well developed, have taken new and different forms through their interaction with global processes. Transnationalism refocuses attention on the utilisation, by international migrants, of modes of telecommunication and transport, their pooling of resources and successful exploitation of global markets generated by linkages across diverse national states (Vertovec 2009; Koser 2001). However much of the discussion on transnationalism has been gender blind, which is of great significance as gender is an important factor that might influence the ways in which people are able to negotiate and create their life worlds (Nolin 2006).

Whilst recognising the importance of transnationalism and the ever-growing possible impacts of new technology and cyber-space these did not appear to fully address the impact of forced migration on individuals within a specific community. The gap appeared to be in the area of what Appadurai (1996: 3) calls the 'transnational ruptures' experienced during the process of exiting the country of origin and living in exile.

In theory migrants should be able to lock into established networks of previous migrants and through these reduce the negative effects of traumatic life events. In the case of Somali women little is known about how forced migration affects their ability to access and integrate into such networks. The strategies used by the women in order to overcome past events and adjust to a new lifestyle need to be recognised if service providers are to develop policies and processes to help new arrivals settle and integrate into relevant communities in their new country. Therefore an approach had to be used that focused on the functioning of individuals within family, social and extended networks. One approach that does this is social capital (Bourdieu 1986).

Social Capital

The concept of social capital is closely related to social networks but as Vertovec (2009) highlights it is much more challenging to quantify. In contemporary discourse, *social capital* describes the network of connections, allegiances, investments and mutual obligations that develop among people. It has been shown to be directly related to the ways in which individuals are able to adapt to a new environment (McMichael 2002; Nan 2001). Therefore, in this study, the concept of social capital was seen as the starting point for researching how forced migration impacted on the women and proved to provide a central unifying framework for the presentation of the findings of this study. There is a wealth of literature which builds on the pioneering work of Bourdieu (1986) to offer explanations of how individuals interact with and relate to family, social and community links (Zieersch et al. 2005; Mutaner and Lynch 2002; Nan 2001; Putnam 2000). For example, Ziersch et al. (2005) have extended Bourdieu's work, suggesting that Bourdieu's (1986) approach is invaluable when considering how neighbourhoods impact on those who reside in them. Zeirsch et al. (2005) makes the distinction between *social capital* infrastructure and *social capital* resources. Informal networks, formal networks and values such as trust, reciprocity and safety are used as measurements for *social capital* infrastructure, whilst help, acceptance, civic actions and control are used for the measurement of *social capital* resources. The measurements of values, informal networks, help and control are directly or indirectly positively associated with mental health, however there was no association with physical health or overall well-being (Zeirsch 2005). This is possibly because Bourdieu (1986) did not explicitly measure social capital and therefore its utility for health and social care has only fairly recently been recognized.

Carpiano (2006); Muntaner and Lynch (2002) and Baum (2000) are amongst those who suggest that Bourdieu's (1986) theory would add to the debate on inequalities and socio-economic conditions. Although each of these theorists has contributed much to the discussion, Bourdieu's exemplary work provides their primary source for linking social capital with differing communities, with some suggestion that it has the potential to facilitate understanding of the outcome of societal movement and migration (Vertovec 2009; McMichael 2002; Nan 2001).

Bourdieu (1986) drew on both Marx (1933/2006) and Durkheim (1951/1997), defining *social capital* in terms of social networks and connections. Bourdieu (1986) was concerned with the fundamental causes of social stratification and contended that it is the unequal distribution and accumulation of *capital* that accounts for the production and

reproduction of social structure. He argued that an individual's contacts within networks result in an accumulation of exchanges, obligations and shared identities that in turn provide potential support and access to resources (Bourdieu 1986). Coleman (1988) Putnam (1993, 1995 and 2000) and Nan (2001) each build on his definitions, bringing their own disciplinary perspectives to the concept. To understand these recent developments it is necessary first to review Bourdieu's (1986) main argument. He used three theoretical concepts to explain his position on social capital, *habitus*, *capitals* and *fields* (Bourdieu 1986).   The concept of *habitus* was introduced by Mauss (1934) who defined it as body techniques which are socially learnt and which are accepted as being part of our normal everyday practices, the things that are taken for granted. Bourdieu (1986) extended the scope of *habitus* to include a person's beliefs or dispositions. The individual develops these *dispositions* in response to determining structures such as social class, family, education and external conditions (*fields*). It is neither entirely voluntary nor involuntary but does provide the practical skills and dispositions necessary to navigate within different fields (such as sports, professional life, education, art).   In essence, this concept is a way of explaining how social and cultural messages (both actual and symbolic) shape individuals' thoughts and actions.

The second important concept in Bourdieu's (1986) theory is that of *capitals*. This is subdivided into: *economic*, *cultural*, and *symbolic* categories. *Economic capital* refers to income and other monetary assets. It is the most fluid *capital* in that it may be more easily changed into other *capitals* (Bourdieu 1986). However it is important to acknowledge that *economic capital* on its own is insufficient to buy 'status' or position and is reliant on other forms of capital, for example, *cultural capital*. *Cultural capital* refers to how a person operates for example their use of language and the values and norms they accumulate through education and life-long socialisation. It emerges in three different sub forms, the embodied state, the objectified and the institutionalised (Bourdieu 1986). The embodied state refers to the cultural experience that is the knowledge, skills and values passed on through the family in socialisation. Socialisation involves learned knowledge and behaviours and is strongly linked to *habitus* (Abel 2008). Other forms of *cultural capital* are the objectified (pictures, books, tools, machines) and the institutionalised (educational degrees and professional titles) (Bourdieu 1986). *Symbolic capital* is described in terms of power which comes with status and affords prestige, often engendering a sense of duty and inferiority in others who look up to those who have that power. Education is a key method of transferring this power and leads to the transfer of specific beliefs and behaviours (Bourdieu 1986).

The third and final theme is that of *fields*. Instead of analysing societies in terms of classes, Bourdieu (1986) uses the concept of *field to refer* to a structured social space with its rules, schemes of domination and legitimate opinions. All human actions and interactions take place within *social fields.* The arts, education, politics and law can all be conceptualised as social fields. Each *field* generates its own specific *habitus* but in addition fields interact with each other and are hierarchical (Moi 1991).

In essence, for Bourdieu (1986) *social capital* can be said to be the process by which individuals who belong to the dominant class, by mutual recognition and acknowledgement, reinforce and reproduce a privileged group which holds various capital (economic, cultural and symbolic). Dense or closed *networks* are seen as the means by which social capital can be maintained by individuals and reproduction of the group can be achieved.

Bourdieu (1986: 249) argued that the volume of *social capital* to which an individual has access is dependent on;

> *'the size of the networks of connections the individual can effectively mobilize" and secondly "the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in their own right by each of those to whom the individual is connected'*

Coleman (1988) takes this argument further suggesting that for social capital to be effectively facilitated there needs to be a closed community or at the very least one with fairly strong ethnic boundaries. Communities, which are open, are less able to sanction behaviour as there is a lack of mobilising forces and, less consensus in relation to standards (Coleman 1988). Both Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) argue that closure helps to facilitate group norms and to limit the effect of negative influences, whilst encouraging positive ones. They suggest that closure creates trustworthiness, allowing for the propagation of obligations and expectations.

Coleman (1990: 302) based his arguments on the conceptualisation of *social capital* as functional "*social-structural resources*" derived from structures of social relations. *Social capital* is defined by its function. It is not a single entity rather it is a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common. Coleman (1990: 302) states;

> *'They all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within that structure'*

Coleman (1990) justified such a broad definition of the concept of *social capital* by its usefulness in explaining multiple outcomes and bridging the micro and macro levels. Coleman (1990) suggests that there are six forms of *social capital*. The first of these concerns social obligations and expectations, for example, the giving and receiving of favours. Second is informational potential from social relations; that is the sharing of useful information that may inform some future action. The third form of *social capital* relates to norms and effective sanctions which refers to a community's values and shared standards of behaviour, in particular "*a prescriptive norm that one should forgo self-interests to act in the interests of the collectivity*" (Coleman 1990: 311). The fourth factor concerns authoritative relations. This relates to skilful leadership that informs the actions of others and which can solve common problems. The fifth is appropriable social organisations which benefit their participants. The sixth form of *social capital* refers to intentional organisations, which are those organisations whose resources benefit not only their participants but also the public. He argued that *social capital* rather than being a private property of individual beneficiaries is a property of social structure. *Social capital* therefore acts as a resource for individuals and facilitates collective action for mutual benefit. Coleman (1990) also suggested that like other forms of *capital*, *social capital* is productive, making possible to achieve things that if it were absent would not be attainable. Thus, *social capital* can be depleted if not renewed and he purports that the productive nature of social capital might offset deficiencies in other *capitals,* such as *human capital* (Coleman 1990).

However, whilst Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) consider *social capital* to be an attribute of the individual, Putnam (1993; 1995 and 2000) extends it beyond being a resource, to include people's relationship with their community and the extent to which they are involved in community activities. Like Coleman (1990), Putnam (2000) *equated social capital* with networks, reciprocity, trust and honesty. Thus, for Putnam (2000), the more people work together the more *social capital* will be produced. Any failure to pursue shared objectives will result in a depletion of *social capital.* This argument fits with Portes (1998: 7) who observes that;

> 'Whereas *economic capital* is in people's bank accounts and *human capital* is inside their heads, *social capital* inheres in the structure of their relationships'.

Healy (2001) goes further suggesting that there is a need to devise strategies for its maintenance and renewal, while Putnam (2000: 20) argues that *social capital* is both a "*private good*" and a "*public good*". He recognised, however, that functions of *social*

capital are sometimes negative for those outside a given network, if it is used for antisocial purposes, even while generally positive for those within the network (Putnam 2000). Putnam (2000: 20) further argues that 'bridging social capital' describes more distant connections between people and is characterised by weaker ties. It refers to a more inclusive form, where people from a diverse range of backgrounds join together to participate in mutually beneficial networks. Putnam distinguishes the two subtypes of *social capital*, *bridging and bonding*. He summarises the difference between them by suggesting that;

> *'Bonding social capital' constitutes a type of sociological super glue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD40'.*

(Putnam 2000:19)

Ultimately, both have to work in parallel, with *bonding social capital* bringing groups of people together in a locality or community and *bridging social capital* bringing these groups together on a regional or national basis. *Social capital* is therefore widely recognised as a multi-faceted phenomenon, with dimensions such as relationships, trust, reciprocity, and action for a common purpose.

Some of these dimensions such as relationships can be further divided down. Similarly to Putnam (2000), Woolcock (2000) discusses *bonding social capital as* existing in relationships connecting homogenous individuals and typically refers to the relations among members of families and members of the same ethnic groups, in other words the "insiders". *Bonding social capital* is characterised by strong bonds and works by enhancing reciprocity and solidarity within groups. It is important for establishing and favouring healthy norms, controlling abnormal behaviour, generating mutual aid and protecting the vulnerable (Woolcock 2000). The problem is that these groups can be exclusive and unwilling to admit members who do not share the characteristics of that particular group (Fine 2001). *Linking social capital* is different from *bonding* and *bridging social capital* in that it is concerned with relations between people who are not on an equal footing (Woolcock 2000). An example would be a housing association agency dealing with an individual, for example, a homeless person seeking social housing.

The essence of Woolcock's (2000) and Woolcock and Sweetser (2002) argument is that, without bridging social capital, individuals and communities do not have what is needed to get ahead. This claim is consistent with that of Nan (2001) who, in opposition to

Bourdieu, (1986) Coleman (1988) and Putnam (1995) argue that the requirement for network closure or density is neither necessary nor realistic. Nan (2001) maintains that social capital stems from two sources; structural and networking. Structural sources include an individual's earlier hierarchal role or position, including those that are ascribed, for example race or family origins or those achieved such as socio economic status. The higher the individual's previous social position the greater the access to social capital. Networking refers to resources available from network members to whom individuals have access (Nan 2001: Nan 2008). Nan (2008) highlight that the research related to social networks stresses the importance of bridges, in networks, in facilitating information. Therefore, for the privileged class, concerned with preserving and reproducing resources, a closed network would be preferred. However if the concern is with searching for and obtaining resources not presently owned, such as gaining better employment then accessing and extending bridges is beneficial (Nan 1999).

For both Bourdieu (1986) and Nan (2001) networks are preconditions of social capital, whilst Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000), working from a functionalist perspective, highlight the benefits of social capital as a collective asset or public good. However, *social capital* can also be further divided into *cognitive* and *structural* components (see figure two: Forms and Dimensions of Social Capital with Operationalisation of the Notion in Empirical Studies; Islam *et al.* 2006).

Cognitive social capital, includes shared norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs that produce cooperative behaviour (Krishna and Uphoff 1999). *Structural components* refer to roles, rules, precedents behaviours, networks and institutions that help individuals in groups to feel conneceted to each other (McKenzie 2008). C*ognitive social capital* is predominately captured at the micro level and is believed to shape behavioural norms, whilst structural social capital at the macro level, is shaped by institutions, policies and culture (Cullen and Whiteford 2001). However, both cognitive and structural forms of social capital are commonly connected and mutually reinforcing (Uphoff 2000).

Figure Two: Forms and Dimensions of Social Capital with Operationalisation of the Notion in Empirical Studies (Islam *et al.* 2006).
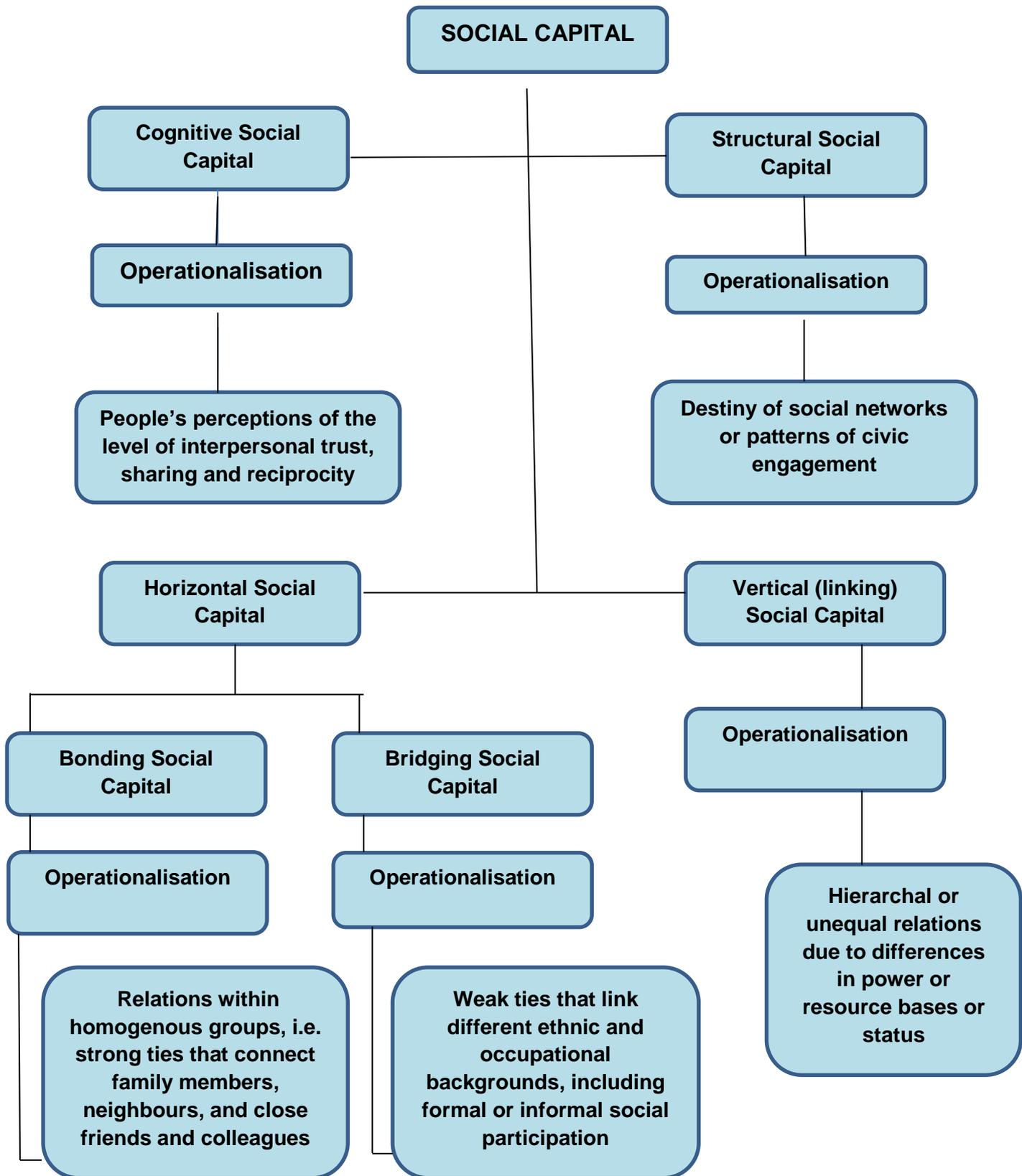
The concept of *social capital* has opened the way to developing what is now an escalating multidisciplinary body of literature, with Bourdieu (1986), Putnam (1993, 1995 and 2000), Coleman (1988), Portes (2001) and Nan (2001) receiving most attention. Although each of these theorists has contributed much to the discussion, it is still Bourdieu's exemplary work which is most commonly linked to the theoretical debate.

Chapter Summary

In summary, social capital (Bourdieu 1986) does not contradict the transnational literature (Vertovec 2009). As shown previously, a transnational perspective (Vertovec 2009) can provide valuable insight on the strategies used by migrants to move from one place to another. It highlights the ways in which they are able to exploit the advances in telecommunication and modes of transportation to develop and sustain networks across international borders. However, this study focused on a group of vulnerable women who were forced into exile and were often unable to access or sustain the connections that the transnational literature describes. Social capital (Bourdieu 1986) did enable me to focus on the women in their changing world, as it supports the re-examination of the taken for granted through examining the qualities of their experiences. It therefore has the potential to facilitate understanding of the outcome of societal movement and migration.

This study was designed to highlight the difficulties faced by Somali women in adapting and integrating into the UK by focusing on their lived experiences of forced migration and how this has impacted on their sense of self. It therefore aimed to address the gap in previous literature which has tended to view all Somali refugee women as a homogenous group, failing to appreciate the differences between them and the way in which the process of forced migration has impacted on them as individuals. This gap in the literature has real implications for policy makers and practitioners, as to continue with policy and practice, that endorses the 'one size fits all approach' will mean that many Somali women will remain trapped in a spiral of loss and trauma, unable to adapt to their changed life circumstances.

The next chapter presents the methodological approach for the study including the basis for its design, the methodological framework chosen and how this was applied when seeking to address the aims of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

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Research design should be based on the notion of fitness for purpose (Silverman 2011; Bryman 2008; Cohen *et al.* 2003). This notion of fitness for purpose has directed the methodological framework for this study, which aimed to explore the migration experiences of Somali women living in a large city in England, the strategies they used to adapt to their changed environment and create new lives for themselves and their families. This chapter begins by explaining the epistemological basis and theoretical assumptions which guided the methodological approach used for the design of the study. It then moves on to discuss the application of the phenomenological method in this study. Following on from this is an overview of the sampling frame, including the recruitment strategy. The next part of this chapter discusses the methods of data generation and analysis. Attention is then given to the strategies used by the researcher to maximise methodological rigour in the study. The chapter concludes by considering the ethical issues inherent in studies of this kind.

Study Design

This study was designed to make explicit the experiences of Somali women, the factors that led to their forced migration, their migration journeys and their lives in the UK. The methodology was influenced by the aims of the study and therefore needed to be flexible enough to allow the participant's agenda to predominate, so that it was the women's voices that were heard, whilst at the same time allowing them to probe each other's reasons for holding a particular view. The design for the study was also influenced by the lack of previous research in this field, which meant that limited baseline information was available. The exception was studies which focused primarily on the problems associated with the tradition of female genital mutilation (FGM) practised by the majority of Somali women (Morris 2008; Momoh *et al.* 2001). Such research, although useful in helping health professionals gain an understanding of the medical and to a lesser degree psychological complications associated with the practice of FGM, were not concerned with wider issues which might compromise the women's health and well-being during and after forced migration. What was privileged was the voice of the healthcare

professionals with the research available tending to be located in the dominant positivist paradigm (Rouzi *et al.* 2001; Powell *et al.* 2004). This paradigm is derived from empiricism with positivists taking the position that the social world of human beings can be examined and understood by applying the rules which are used for the examination of the natural world (Bryman 2008). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) challenge the assumption that objective inference can be made without reference to the underlying meaning or context of the situation. They argue that it is often unrealistic to transfer the rigour of the laboratory into social settings, since real life situations are never as neat and orderly as laboratory experiments. Such failure to take into account the concerns of individual participants may mean that other important dimensions are omitted or rejected (Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

Consequently, what is required for studies concerned with human experiences, such as those represented here, is an approach which emphasises processes and meanings and is concerned with the empathetic understanding of how individuals experience the world. An interpretivist approach emphasises the social construction of reality, the close, relationship between the researcher and the participant(s), and the flexibility offered to researchers to secure rich descriptions of the phenomena of interest through the study of meanings and processes (Denzin and Lincoln 2011; Silverman 2011; Morse *et al.* 2001). It therefore, offers an appropriate methodological framework for understanding experiences and is well suited to studies that are concerned with discovering the participants' perspectives of their worlds.

When considering the overall aims of this study, narrative enquiry, grounded theory and phenomenology were all potentially suitable with these three approaches sharing many similarities, particularly in terms of the position of the researcher and the methods of data collection (Cohen *et al.* 2003). All three approaches offer the opportunity to provide valuable insights into the ways in which individuals experience and make sense of the world and as Goodson (2001) suggests they have the potential to make a far-reaching contribution to the problem of understanding the links between personal troubles and public issues. However as this research is concerned with Somali refugee women life experiences descriptive phenomenology was deemed to be most appropriate as it explores the lived experience, seeking to retain the context in which the phenomena took place.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology derives from complex and different philosophical traditions including transcendental/descriptive (Husserl 1900 and 1931) and interpretative/hermeneutic, existential variations (Heidegger 1962; Merleau-Ponty 1945). These variations make different assumptions about issues such as the role of language and interpretation within the research process, resulting in a far from unified approach (Norlyk and Harder 2010; Olessen 2000). A number of researchers have embraced the phenomenological movement including Giorgi (1970; 1975; 2006) and Van-Manen (2002: 1) who has suggested that phenomenology has great merit, as it is '*a profoundly reflective inquiry into human meaning*'. Whilst Denzin and Lincoln (2011) recommend that it has much to offer as rather than being rigid and restrictive it provides a framework which may guide the approach taken within interpretive research.

Husserl (1900) was strongly opposed to the argument that empirical science is the only way to understand the world. Instead he insisted on the primacy of lived experience – the "*Lebenswelt*", or "life world" as the real foundation of science. Phenomenology in Husserlian terms aims to:

> '*Get back to the things themselves, as they appear to us as perceivers and reveal the object or phenomena to which meaning is being attached*'.

> (Husserl 1900: p xxii)

'*Back to the things themselves*' meant finding out how things appear directly to us. This meant looking beyond the details of everyday life to the essences underlying them. The significant characteristic of Husserl's (1900) philosophy is what he refers to as the phenomenological reduction or epochè, a procedure which is associated with the metaphor of *bracketing*. Koch (1995: 832) reports:

> '*Husserl insisted on an initial 'suspension of belief' in the 'outer world', either as it is naively seen by an individual in everyday life, or as it is interpreted by philosophers or scientists. The 'reality' of this outer world is neither confirmed or denied; rather, it is bracketed' in an act of phenomenological reduction*'.

It was Husserl's (1931) contention that this reduction or *bracketing* was necessary in order for extraneous features to be disregarded so that the 'eidos' or 'essence', by which he meant the essentials of the phenomena, would be revealed. Ideal bracketing, as advocated by Husserl, (1931) is characterised by the exclusion of all internal and external beliefs so that, the phenomenon can be revealed in its 'true' form. Esbensen *et al.* (2008), Karlsson *et al.* 2006, Paley (1997) amongst others have commented on the difficulties of undertaking such a suspension of belief arguing that it is impossible for individuals to do this as they simply cannot step outside the world as they experience it. Others have introduced ideas about *bracketing* that are very different from those espoused by Husserl (1931). Karlsson *et al.* (2006: 165), described bracketing as '*avoiding influence'* whilst Baker *et al.* (1992), states that preconceptions about a phenomena being examined are bracketed, by being recognised and set aside. Jasper (1994: 311) suggests that;

> *'bracketing, involves deliberately seeing the other side of*
> *arguments, allowing thoughts to wander, to be confused*
> *and uncertain, and seeking the opinions of other's.*

Elsewhere, it is asserted that bracketing or reduction requires one to look at the experience naively, without any preconceptions (Cohen and Omery 1994). However, it is Heidegger (1962) who is most openly critical of Husserl's (1931) notion of bracketing, claiming that it is impossible to bracket one's own private experience, nor can we step outside the world.

As a student of Husserl, Heidegger (1962) shared some of Husserl's philosophical stance, but he was critical, of Husserl's (1931) emphasis on description rather than understanding. Heidegger's (1962) philosophical stance was ontological and, therefore, concerned with the nature of consciousness and existence, whilst Husserl's (1900) focus was on the nature of knowledge (epistemological). According to Heidegger (1962) rather than studying our experiences by bracketing the world, we actually interpret them and the meaning things have for us by looking to how we relate to things in the world. The concern of Heidegger's (1962) hermeneutics is to uncover hidden meaning, using the everyday, banal to help us ascertain meanings that have not, at least explicitly, been given.

There was little doubt that both schools of phenomenology had much to offer when carrying out studies such as this one. This study was concerned with giving voice to a

group of women who had little opportunity to make their voices heard. It was therefore imperative that the research methodology allowed the participant's own subjective accounts to be heard. The goal of transcendental or descriptive phenomenology is description of the meaning of an experience from the perspective of those who have had that experience (Husserl 1931). Therefore, I needed a methodology that is open and would not limit the scope of the responses a participant may wish to give. It needed to allow the women as free reign as possible whilst at the same time facilitating me to conduct the focus groups and interviews in a way that was unobtrusive, accepting and non-judgemental. I considered it crucial to the aims of the research that the methodology chosen would, as far as I was able, help me to reflect the complex nature of the women's experiences, mirroring as much as possible, the world(s) of the woman or the women's description of experiences.

Whilst I recognised that descriptive phenomenology offered the opportunity to gain rich insight into the complexities and contradictions of lives that were undoubtedly very different from my own, there were some reservations. The approach to phenomenology derived from Husserl's (1931) tradition, calls for researchers to suspend all prior knowledge of the phenomena being investigated in order to prevent any judgement from distorting the data. In this study, I acknowledged that, although I share the common experience of belonging to a minority ethnic group living in England, I am ethnically and culturally dissimilar to the women that I was studying. I could not enter the research process from a neutral and objective standpoint by leaving my experiences as a black, academic woman outside of that process. I recognised the impossibility of fully suspending, even temporarily, preconceived knowledge about the women's experiences of migration. Giorgi (1970) has explained that although it is impossible to make explicit all of the characteristics of the researcher's approach, it is useful to make explicit whatever one can. The importance of such a stance relates to the fact that researchers each bring to the research process, their own attitudes or orientations, which will influence the way the study is carried out.

Application of Elements of the Phenomenological Inquiry

The fundamental principle of phenomenological research is that the researcher must remain true to the facts and how they reveal themselves (Husserl 1931). However, the lack of structure inherent in the phenomenological approach has caused concern to some researchers (Le Vasseur 2003; Colaizzi 1978). As a result, of this, a number of

frameworks have been devised the intent being that they will add rigour to a study. These frameworks have also been criticised with some researchers claiming that if such tools are employed the essence of the phenomenological approach is lost, with phenomenology being reduced to a method rather than a philosophical approach (Hallett 1995; Omery 1983). However, as a novice researcher I felt a structured approach would provide a framework for guiding the research and thus add rigour to the work.

Following critical reading of a number of approaches Giorgi (1970), Colaizzi (1978) and Van-Manen (1990), Giorgi's (1970; 1975; 1992) ideas were considered the most appropriate for a number of reasons. Firstly, Giorgi (1992: 121) focuses on description of experiences rather than interpretation, stating that;

> *'one describes what presents exactly, precisely as it presents itself, neither adding nor subtracting from it'.*

This is a key consideration for this work, which aimed to describe in close detail, the migration experiences of Somali women and provide a rich picture of their lives as perceived by the women themselves. Secondly, the method is flexible, not requiring adherence to certain fixed criteria. Van-Kaam (1966), for example, advocates that a large sample is used. Giorgi's (1992) emphasis is on the quality of data rather than quantity, another key consideration in this particular study. Giorgi's (1992) approach also discourages reviewing of the analysed data by participants arguing that it is incumbent on the researcher, not the participants to carry out the phenomenological analysis. This latter point appears to be inconsistent with the descriptive Husserlian (1913/1960) method as descriptions during the first visit are no longer pre-reflective at a second visit, as having reflected on their answers, participants may change their minds about what was said. The popularity of the method has been endorsed by a number of researchers who have used it with success including Ericksen and Henderson (1992), Ashworth and Hagan (1993) and more recently Bufton (2003).

Another key consideration was that Giorgi (1970) has already analysed and developed Husserl's (1900/2001) phenomenological approach and its suitability for the study of human phenomena. Giorgi (1975) identified a number of important factors. Firstly, that phenomenon can only be known through their manifestations as revealed by people, rather than through repetition of observation or experiments. Secondly, the participant is a fellow human being of equal status from whom co-operation is sought and that explication is used to reveal the phenomena under investigation. This method of explication requires that the transcripts are studied continually to see what is common or

typical about the context that would allow the facts to appear (Giorgi 1975). Finally, Giorgi's (1975) approach includes a data analysis process, an important consideration as few phenomenological studies provide any meaningful details of this. The novice researcher therefore has little guidance on how to approach what is often the most challenging part of any qualitative study. Giorgi's (1975) approach clearly emanates from Hussel's (1900/2001) tradition, providing a framework that highlights the importance of being true to the original source and was entirely appropriate for this study. Taking all of this into consideration I chose to use a modified version of Husserl's (1931) descriptive phenomenology as it seemed to be the most appropriate methodological framework to guide this study but I followed Giorgi's (1975) notion of bracketing, which he defines as the deliberate examination of the researcher's own beliefs. This was carried out prior to the collection of any data and was continued throughout the entire course of the study. A reflective diary was maintained throughout. This enabled me to acknowledge my particular views, attitudes and opinions and how these may have influenced the way in which I conducted the study. For example, my own perceptions of Somali women as submissive, detached and unwilling to assert their views was challenged by some of the women in this study whose characters did not fit my preconceived ideas of this group.

Positionality

The term positionality was developed to formalise recognition of the impact of the researcher on the research process and research outcomes (Hopkins 2007). In positivist research an assumption is made that the researcher is objective and outside the research (Bryman 2008). However, the inductive research used in interpretivist research means that by definition the researcher is involved in the processes used to collect and analyse data. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) point out the aim of qualitative research is to explore specific social phenomena in depth, part of this includes reflecting on how the interactions between researcher and participants developed and impacted on the study as a whole. However until relatively recently there was no formal process to acknowledge or describe the direct or indirect influence of researcher(s) on the phenomena being studied, or of the impact of the research on the researcher(s) (Vanderback 2005). By gathering together the different debates on subjectivity and objectivity it has been possible to develop a perspective, referred to as positionality, that researchers can use to help them identify the positives and negatives that arise from their interaction in the research process (Hopkins 2007). In the light of this, qualitative researchers, especially those working with marginalised groups are increasingly called

on to acknowledge and reflect critically upon their positionality in the research in which they are involved (Hopkins 2007). Feminists, in particular, have engaged in debates on, positionality reflexivity, difference and representation over the last few decades and have made the call for a need to make explicit the ways in which the different identities of the researcher may influence research encounters, processes and outcomes (Vanderback 2005; Valentine 2002; hooks 1987 and Collins 1986). A critical reflexive stance, which paid close attention to my own positionality, was therefore a crucial aspect of this study, which aimed to explore the lived experiences of a group of women who have undergone forced migration.

These women were considered to be vulnerable based on a range of demographic, social or economic circumstances which rendered them subject to discrimination and marginalisation.   However, the subjective nature of individuality is such that, as (Silverman 2011) points out, no two will have exactly the same experiences. Van Manen (1990) suggests that the challenge is to develop an understanding of the lived experience that is based, not only, on systematic observations and rigorously collected data, but includes expressive insight. Whilst Mander (2010) argues that descriptions inevitably include improvisation, change, contradiction, ambiguity and hidden or overt vulnerability, Nearly two decades earlier, Ellis and Flaherty (1992:6) argued that subjectivity can be described as a 'personal' response to a particular setting, that it is not possible to reduce experience into 'more basic' factors such as interpersonal dynamics. Chaitin (2003) supports this perspective suggesting that critical to experience is the context in which it occurs. An integral part of this being the environment in which the individual exists. This being so, it is important to recognise the impact of culture, and the political climate in which the individual lives. It is these, that can dictate whether incidents, actions or activities (or their results) are acceptable or unacceptable, and hence the place that they have within an individuals' overall experience.

Maynard and Purvis (1994) assert that gender definitions are used to position individuals within any group, and that the concept of position is an essential part of understanding experience. A view endorsed by Johnson-Bailey (2004) who believes that even when individuals try not to position each other in terms of sex, varying attitudes and values mean that it is virtually impossible to ignore gender differences. Johnson-Bailey (2004) suggests that a collectivity of women with shared experiences and emotions is possible because the same metaphors, sets of images and story lines influence their development. Central to this approach is the place of 'self' in constructing experience, people become who they are as a result of discourses participated in from childhood

through adult life. These vary through different situations and expected social constructs. 'I am' varies from speaker to speaker and place to place. Probyn (1997) argues these differing projections are ways of self-expression. Over time these repeated patterns of discourse become part of the subjectivity of the individual and ultimately of the self. Therefore the individual becomes not what is often referred to as the 'true self', but the product of multiple and possibly contradictory, discourses, with an element of re-invention every time discourse occurs (Davies 1989). The use of any approach is therefore dependent on the stance of the researcher and the aim of the study.

Jaggar (1997) suggests that the nurturing role that women have traditionally undertaken from the gender activities assigned to them has led to the development of a 'special acuity' in using codes, recognising hidden emotions and understanding their origins. However, she argues the problem with this is that until recently modern science venerated reason, reducing emotional issues to being of no intrinsic value. Logical deductions had to be without emotional bias, without human preferences and attitudes. Emotions were referred to as 'passions' with the assumption that they were something 'suffered from' rather than an integral and important part of life. Therefore women who were 'allowed' by their gender devised position to show emotion, were by definition also viewed as being more subjective and of less use and value. The move to recognise the different criteria by which men and women view their worlds redresses this issue, it creates a dialogue between the relations of the sexes that leads to expansion of the overall understanding of human development, and the acceptance of gender specific developmental processes (Mander 2010).

When asking women to vocalise issues they may never have mentioned, and to try to bring to life traumatic and sensitive details of their lives, recognition of their approach to emotion becomes a definite benefit. Probyn (1997:127) describes how women can use these emotions to provide active articulation of 'the discursive and the lived experience'. She points out that while experience is not necessarily emotion, discussion of emotion can facilitate understanding of experience. In addition, spoken interviews are much more than the words used, they provide insight into meaning through voice, gesture, eye contact and silence (Silverman 2011). In this study, recognition of these unspoken codes helped me in terms of my own reflexivity as I strove to understand the meanings the women gave to their experiences. Mohammad (2001) suggests that researchers may avoid such recognition because the unexpected elements of subjectivity can appear threatening to established theories and/or the researcher's own perceptions. As Hubbard et al. (2001) point out conventionally unexpected, or apparently inappropriate emotions

may precede conscious recognition. Accepted explanations and justifications may be concealing as much as they are revealing, and to explore the essence of a phenomena through close observation is essential. It is only by seeing and using the signs given that the real essence, the most irreducible and unchanging element can be uncovered (Giorgi 1985).

The emphasis on finding the essence of the experiences described was central to identifying both the commonalities and differences that the women exhibit. Hubbard et al. (2001) argue that the complex and contradictory nature of emotion may initially change perceptions when experiences are repeated as a result of being spoken or discussed. However, through reflexivity it is possible to enable participants to reach a consistent perception of the experience as they see it (at the time of interview), a meaning that is dependent on previous experience (Wilson and Neville 2009). In consequence, the impact of an experience such as forced migration can be explored within the context of the women's lives.

Mander's (2010) main concern is that through filtering and interpretation, what the researcher sees as important may be superimposed over what the respondent perceived as reality. The process of bracketing (Giorgi 1975) (see page 38) was specifically designed to minimise the likelihood of this occurring. Transforming or inaccurately reflecting the experiences of the women would mean we lose sight of the unique 'biography of vulnerability' that each woman constructs, based on potential loss, actual loss, loss of self itself and loss of social potential. As Wilson and Neville (2009) suggest the extent to which this vulnerability is marginalised or central depends on a multiplicity of factors including self-reflection, biography as well as anticipated interactions and experiences.

It is important to consider also the vulnerability of researchers working with emotionally challenging research topics (Johnson and Clarke 2003) such as war, forced migration and gender abuse (Chaitin 2003). Undertaking this study was difficult, not just from an academic perspective but also from an emotional one. The women participating were recounting extremely sensitive issues relating their descriptions of massive social trauma that included experiences of rape, difficult immigration processes and deep personal losses. In this study participants distress was evident as they talked about their loss and trauma. Interviews were characterised by manifestations of gratitude, sadness, anger, regret, hopelessness, frustration, fear and hostility. A memo from my field notes

illustrates the impact this had on me following an interview where a participant for the first time had revealed her experiences of rape.

> *I felt deep sadness for xxx, as well as feelings of powerlessness and helplessness. I couldn't resolver her distress or prevent her nightmares. It was clear that she was stuck in her experience of multiple rape. xxx refused all offers of help to access counselling services, but clearly needed to talk, she spoke for about 2 hours always returning to her experiences of rape in the refugee camp. I left the interview mentally exhausted and drained. I questioned whether I should be facilitating the reliving of such painful and traumatic experiences, wondering how I could encourage xxx to get the help she desperately needs. She had promised to return but I wasn't sure that she would, perhaps it was all too painful for her and seeing me again might be more than she could cope with. I'm really concerned, she has shared so much, how can I possibly accurately describe the extent of her multiple losses and trauma.*

I had anticipated that the stories the women told would be deeply traumatic and hard for them to tell and for me to hear. Following guidance by Nordentoft (2008) I had prepared myself, as best as I could, for the interviews, so that I would not display discomfort on my part. In order to create and maintain a sense of comfort for the participants I made every effort to present myself as a professional and on all but two occasions, I limited myself to undertaking only one interview per day. I also met regularly with my supervisors and so was able to talk through any feelings of anxiety I was experiencing.

Dickson-Swift et al. (2008); Johnson and Clarke (2003); Tilley and Powick (2002) highlight the risks associated with qualitative methods of inquiry. Whereas these scholars document the need for researchers to monitor their emotional well-being when investigating sensitive or emotional topics, and specifically discuss the risks related to undertaking interviews, there is a paucity of literature of the risks and negative emotions associated with the process of data analysis (Li and Seale 2007). It would appear that reading a transcript or listening to a disembodied voice, which has been recorded, is not generally perceived to be as emotionally demanding as undertaking interviews. My own experience during the data analysis process testifies to the fallacy of this. The process of data analysis for descriptive phenomenological studies involves the researcher searching for all possible meanings, requiring numerous readings of the original text and re-listening of the audio recordings in order to facilitate the phenomenological reduction and epochè (Giorgi 1975). Listening to the recordings of the women talking about the traumas they had experienced and continuous immersion in the transcribed data constituted an on-going connection with them. Although I had conducted the interviews this did not reduce the intensity of the experience or moderate the stress of the data analysis process.

I became stuck in the data and despite my best efforts, I was unable to move beyond the emotional accounts of the women's experiences. As a researcher, who has previously investigated sensitive research topics this was unanticipated. I began to doubt if would ever complete the study and felt deep guilt at my failure to move on and transform the participants' accounts into meaning units. I felt I had taken something extremely precious from the women and now was unable to do anything meaningful with it. As pointed out by Hochschild (1993) and reiterated by Woodby et al. (p. 830, 2012) the impact of such emotional work and the strategies used to sustain the researchers own 'emotional equilibrium' are rarely openly discussed. The way forward was through detailed debriefing and sharing of experiences with my supervisors one of whom had worked in some of the poorest parts of Kenya and had also worked with refugee women in London. My other supervisor has experience of working with minority groups and in a wide variety of settings. These have included people with mental health problems and adults with a history of sexual abuse. Having done this, although I still found the women's experiences traumatic, I was able to move on and work with the data, holding in my mind that by doing so I would be acting as a medium to give voice to their experiences. However, this experience has brought home to me the importance of researchers having the relevant background to work with this data and having access to expert debriefing and support. Reflecting on the process the importance of the reflective journal became clear. It was used in debriefing sessions and for reflection between sessions. Without it would have been difficult to systematically review and resolve the issues that were causing me the most problems.

Sampling and Recruitment Strategy

Phenomenological research, because of its concern with the lived experience of individuals, lends itself to non-probability or purposive sampling. This means that participants are invited to take part in the study based on their typicality in satisfying the criteria for the study. A characteristic of this approach is that the researcher identifies a small number of individuals who have the characteristics in which he or she is interested (Patton 2002). These individuals then act as key informants referring the researcher on to other possible participants who in turn identify yet others. This is commonly referred to as the snowball technique (Denzin and Lincoln 2011).

This study sought to gather rich descriptive accounts of the migration experiences of Somali women living in a large city in central England. Somali women are fairly recent migrants to the United Kingdom and are known to be one of the less accessible social groups for a variety of reasons, including distrust of authoritative figures and cultural

factors such as remaining at home (Horst 2006a). It was therefore very difficult to locate them. In order to gain access to the women it was necessary to identify individuals who could advise about access. This required a great deal of effort in building a relationship of trust with the facilitator of a Somali women's group and another Somali woman who, because of her English language skills, acted as an interpreter for other Somali women. These relationships of trust and acceptance were initiated about eighteen months prior to starting the study and were seen as crucial. Without the introduction and verification of my status and the aims of the project, it is difficult to see how access to the Somali women could have been gained.   As Silverman (2011) maintains those acting in a gatekeeper's role, can make or break the study as they use their positions to reveal or protect what an outsider may see of themselves, their colleagues or their organisation.

The snowball technique has been used successfully in a range of studies where the research may be perceived as threat, where the topic of interest is particularly sensitive, or emotional, or where the study is concerned with hidden, deviant or elusive populations (Abrams 2011; Morris 2008; Chapple 2001).   However the technique has also been criticised on a number of counts including issues pertaining to bias, as invitations are extended to contacts who may be giving similar information (Silverman 2011). Sadler et al. (2010) suggests that samples obtained by this process will by default only include those members of a particular network. Abrams (2011) caution that, whilst this method of accessing participants can be useful, referrals could be inhibited in some areas and, therefore, results may be produced that lack credibility and transferability. These limitations were fully acknowledged at the start of this study and it was felt that they were balanced by the benefits of providing contacts that otherwise I would not have been able to access.

The labour intensive nature of using the snowball technique is emphasised by Tuckett (2004).   In this study access to the sample was found to be frustratingly slow. Appointments were cancelled at short notice, telephone numbers and addresses were changed without new contact details being passed on which meant I spent many hours trying to trace individuals. The women's time seemed to be in constant demand due to other more pressing commitments including travel abroad and family crises and undoubtedly this impacted on the data gathering process. Despite these frustrations the snowball technique did prove useful in facilitating access to what is still largely a hidden population of women.

Sample size

The research protocol placed no constraints on sample size for as Patton (2002) highlights there are no fixed rules about numbers in qualitative studies. However, sampling in qualitative work usually relies on small numbers as what is important is depth and detail about the phenomena being studied (Denzin and Lincoln 2011; Silverman 2011). Three focus groups took place, although originally six were planned (see pg. 53). The focus groups were complemented by nineteen individual interviews and this proved to be enough to provide sufficient data. In the absence of guidance by Giorgi (1970) recruitment was curtailed when no new categories emerged. I made the decision that saturation had been reached by constant comparison of all data sets, including my field notes and reflective logs, as this strategy allowed for comparison of experiences, by juxtaposing data from each person, against each other (Cutcliffe and McKenna 2002). I had considered providing a full biography of each participant, as this would present the reader with a rich description of each of the women's unique situation. However, after careful consideration it was decided not to do so, as this might compromise the anonymity of the women (see appendix three; Biographical Details of Interviewed Participants). Pseudonyms are used to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

Inclusion criteria

Women were eligible if they had left Somalia following the outbreak of the civil war in the late 1980s, were aged between 16 and 49, and had reached England in the 21st century meaning that their experiences were fairly recent. Data collection took place between 2006 and 2008.

Data Generation

Different research questions elicit the need to find the most appropriate form of questioning (Bryman 2008). Central to the data collection process within the phenomenological approach is the generation of data, which portrays descriptions of lived experiences from the participants (Giorgi 2000). It was proposed that there would be two distinctive stages of data collection, the first comprising of a series of focus groups followed by in-depth interviews to elucidate themes raised in the focus groups. This methodological triangulation, which involves using different collection methods within the same paradigm, has been used successfully in a number of studies (Williamson 2005; Papadopoulos and Lees 2003; Davies and Bath 2001). Mixed qualitative methods have a number of advantages, for an in-depth study of this kind, not

only enabling a wider range of descriptions to be gathered, but also addressing issues of power differentials in research studies (Denzin and Lincoln 2011; Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1997).

Focus Groups

Focus groups are a way of collecting data, which, engages a small group of people in discussing a topic and there is a plethora of evidence highlighting their usefulness (Seale et al. 2004; Madriz 2001; Kitzinger 1995). A particular strength of this method is that rather than being individualistic, focus groups privilege the multiplicity of participants' beliefs, attitudes, opinions and experiences (Madriz 2001). Focus groups also allow the participants' agenda to predominate rather than that of the researcher and have the benefit of enabling those participating to probe each other's reasons for holding a particular view (*Seale et al.* 2004; Pollack 2003). This often results in an increase in interaction between the individual participants and a decrease in the amount of input from the researcher, enabling participants to ask questions of each other and re-evaluate their own understanding of a particular experience (Freeman 2006).

Feminist researchers in particular, disenchanted with the aloofness of positivistic methods of data collection, have embraced the integrative and experiential approach that focus groups offer in researching the everyday experiences of women (Wilkinson 1998; Maynard and Purvis 1994). Black feminists such as Collins (1986) and hooks (1987) have pointed out that black women suffer a triple burden of suppression based on their class, race and colour. They remind researchers that special care must be taken in deciding which methods to use to interview black women, who may feel apprehensive about discussing their lives with an interviewer. Reluctance appears to be especially strong amongst those women who are not fluent in English, those involved in activities that do not fit Western cultural norms and those of the lowest socio economic status (Madriz 2001). Furthermore, focus groups encourage researchers to listen to the voices of those who have traditionally been silenced (Tuhiwai-Smith 1999). They also have the benefit of representing a methodology that is consistent with the everyday experiences of women who have always gathered together to talk about issues of importance to them (Madriz 2001).

Although focus groups have many advantages, they can prove extremely difficult to organise, and representativeness may be compromised as certain individuals may be discouraged from participating. For example, those who are not very articulate at communicating their ideas (Freeman 2006; Madriz 2001; Kitzinger 1995). Focus groups

are not fully confidential or anonymous and, therefore, some people may shy away from discussing sensitive or personal issues. The articulation of group norms may silence individual voices of dissent (Krueger and Cassey 2009; Freeman 2006). Finally, the data generated can be cumbersome and complex and audio recording may be compromised as individuals speak over each other (Madriz 2001). Despite these limitations, focus groups have been found to be invaluable for understanding collective experiences of marginalisation and challenging taken for granted assumptions about race, gender, sexuality and class (Krueger and Cassey 2009; Madriz 2001; Kitzinger 1995; Wilkinson 1998). For this reason, they have been advocated as a particularly appropriate methodology for researching those areas where experiences and opinions are often constructed through the lens of dominant knowledge (Pollack 2003).

Conduct of the Focus Groups

I originally intended to conduct a maximum of six focus groups, evaluating after the first three groups, to see if new information was forthcoming. If new insights were provided then I would continue data collection. Krueger and Cassey (2009) and Madriz (2001) suggest that this is a useful approach in determining the number of focus groups to conduct. They recommend that the groups comprise between six and 10 people and usually last between one and two hours. In this study, focus groups comprised between four and seven women and were held in the women's homes or another suitable location of their choice, usually a community centre where the women met at other times. Whilst the literature reports that a maximum of nine participants is acceptable (Edmunds 2000), every effort was made to limit the number attending to no more than seven women. Larger numbers might mean that those most fluent in English dominated the discussion because some of the women had limited English skills and relied on others to interpret. It was also acknowledged that some women might lack the confidence to take part because of feelings of powerlessness or anxieties, or because the topic of investigation may evoke deep and painful memories. I felt that smaller groups could facilitate the development of relationships of trust and empathic understanding, between the participants and myself, and go some way to minimise the social distance between all those involved. I hoped that such an approach would encourage the most disempowered women to voice their experiences in what, I trusted, would be an environment of mutual respect, and, where every woman felt that her views were valued.

I began each focus group by briefly outlining the background to the study and explaining the aims of the research. The issues of confidentiality and anonymity were explained and the women were asked to give their consent to participate in the study. Permission was

also requested to use a tape recorder. Participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the discussion at any time without giving a reason and that, if they became upset or anxious, that the discussion could be paused or stopped. Any data collected could be withdrawn. The participants were warned that discussions during the focus groups may evoke memories that they would rather forget, and details of a support agency was made available in written form in English, as well as on audio tape in Somali and English as some women did not read their mother tongue. One of the women acting in an advisory capacity to the project was always present and acted as interpreter when necessary.

In the focus groups, I asked questions about the women's lives before coming to the United Kingdom and about their journeys of migration (see appendix four; Focus Group Topic Guide). I specifically asked them to describe what their lives were like now and to talk about their general concerns and needs. This approach yielded detailed and rich data, with those women who had a good command of English translating for those who needed help with the language. There was much probing, and correcting of each other's stories, and a real sense that the women trusted and respected one another as they revealed personal and sensitive accounts of their experiences.

I had envisaged that all focus groups would be completed before moving on to the second stage of data collection, which involved individual semi-structured interviews. However, after conducting the first two focus groups, future groups proved very difficult to arrange. The reasons for this were related to accessing the women. The women were not available during the school summer break, Ramadan, Eid and then the Christmas holidays because of other commitments. Despite follow up telephone calls and, in some cases, brief notes being posted, weeks passed without any groups being convened. It became apparent that one of the facilitators, who had originally participated in the study, now had far more pressing concerns. Whilst there was little doubt that she had valued the aims of the project, and had expressed her gratitude that her own particular story had been heard she simply seemed not to have the time, to help to organise further focus groups. This led me to question when I should recognise that the facilitators were unwilling or unable to continue to take part in the research and cease trying to contact them.

Those participating in the focus group meetings were fully briefed about the purposes and aims of the study as well as how their contributions would be used. Ethical issues (which are addressed in more depth later) were a major consideration with a particular

issue being the handling of sensitive material and the need to encourage participants to keep confidential what they may hear during the meeting. The women were also reminded that their contributions would be shared with others in the group and therefore they should be mindful of sharing sensitive or deeply personal information. The women seemed to embrace this advice, as it became apparent in the follow up interviews, that there were some topics that could not be discussed when others were present.

It also became clear that I had to find other ways of accessing possible participants and therefore several local community and voluntary Somali organisations were approached, resulting in more women agreeing to take part, and so another focus group was organised. At the same time that this was happening there were a small number of women who were willing to take part but did not want to participate in a focus group. Madriz (2001) and Edmunds (2000) caution that one limitation of focus groups is that the presence of other participants may compromise confidentiality. It may well be that these women were concerned that their privacy could not be maintained. This was a serious consideration for the study, given the legacy of the civil war in Somalia where decisions regarding whether one was killed or helped, depended on which clan an individual was associated with (Farah 2000). I therefore made the decision to interview this small number of women individually, rather than to risk losing them from the research.

Interviews

As the literature has revealed little baseline data regarding the migration experiences of Somali women in England and whilst the focus groups were extremely useful in gaining an overview of the collective experiences of the women, individual interviews offered the opportunity to explore and probe the issues raised in more detail. In addition, interviews are the traditional method used in phenomenological studies (Van-Manen 1990) and therefore they were the key method of data collection used. However, as a research technique they pose both theoretical and practical dilemmas, the difficulties of trying to capture 'real' thought and feelings are well documented (Silverman 2011). The level of 'truth' accessible to the researcher is, as Johnson and Clarke (2003) point out, is affected by many factors including the interviewer's relationship with the respondent, and the research setting. The phenomenological paradigm mitigates against trying to control these factors, accepting that such interactions are inevitable. Oakley (1981) supports this, arguing that the traditional interviewing approach where the interviewer is relatively neutral is biased, based on the male model of 'objectivity'. She suggests that if interviewing is to be effective, there needs to be a change from the hierarchical setting

where one questions and the other answers to a non-hierarchical session based on mutual trust and joint participation. An approach that is seen as appropriate for this study and clearly in accord with descriptive phenomenology.

Stacey (1988) recognises the importance of Oakley's (1981) views, but stresses the dilemmas that may arise when respondents are given shared control over results and reports. Johnson-Bailey (2004) acknowledges this but argues that as in all qualitative research it is the interaction between researcher and respondent that creates the data, to a greater or lesser extent participants are always part of the research process. She suggests that feminist inquiry is dialectical, with different standpoints being synthesised together to produce new ideas and conceptual frameworks which then form the basis for future work. Although a phenomenological study, which does not according to Maynard and Purvis (1994) fulfil all the requirements for feminist research, and cannot therefore, be deemed a feminist study, it is gender based, and the tenets and strategies governing feminist inquiry (Wilkinson 1998; hooks 1987) are relevant to this study. Maynard and Purvis (1994) argue that the techniques used by feminist researchers (when conducting interviews), can be used within other approaches to enhance data collection, whilst at the same time, supporting participants. In this study where support of participants is seen as crucial, strategies of facilitation, reciprocation, reflection and sharing (Maynard and Purvis 1994) was used in all contacts with participants.

Kvale and Brinkman (2009) point out that care must be taken to ensure that any language used is appropriate, and that the researcher is acceptable to the respondent, a particularly important point for this study as some of the issues explored were sensitive and emotive. Olessen (2000) further argues that the 'complexities and problems of women's lives, whatever the context' means that multiple techniques are necessary but that all approaches require great reflexivity from the researcher. Recognition of the role of differing strategies is supported by Denzin and Lincoln (2011) who suggests that triangulation will increase the reliability and rigour of the qualitative research.

In this study, the interviews were semi-structured in that I approached the interviews with a list of topics that I wished to explore (see appendix five; Interview Questions). Participants were asked open-ended questions aimed at encouraging in-depth discussion and allowing new concepts to emerge. For example, the question: 'You have been living in the United Kingdom for quite a while now, can you describe in as much detail as you can, how life is for you now?', could (depending on the participants answer)

be followed by: 'Can you describe what have been the main challenges for you'? Followed by 'Can you describe in as much detail as you can, how you cope with these challenges'? This approach enhanced the quality of the data generated as respondents were able to answer more on their own terms in comparison to more standardised interviews and the approach provided a greater structure for comparability over unstructured informal interviews. As in the focus groups, participants gave informed consent to be interviewed and, were fully aware of the aims of the research. Permission was sought to tape record the interviews, which lasted between one to two hours, fifteen minutes, and data were transcribed as soon as possible afterwards.

The use of descriptive phenomenological analysis rather than hermeneutic interpretation can help prevent unintentional errors in explanation as the emphasis is placed on illustration and illumination through accurate description of the experience (Giorgi 1997). The aim is to provide knowledge and information that can be used, but the descriptions are constant, no preconceived issues or ideals should radically alter the perception of reality as provided by participants (Giorgi 1994). Faithful representation of the women's reported experiences was essential if the information is to be presented in a format that contributes to the knowledge and understanding of the experiences being studied.

Qualitative Data Analysis Utilising a Phenomenological Approach

This study generated large amounts of rich detailed data and coding of the data required a significant amount of the researcher's time. Consideration was given to the use of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) to code the text. However, on examination it was decided to manually code and analyse for, as highlighted by Banner and Albarran (2009), CAQDAS may encourage researchers to focus on quantification rather than on depth and meaning. Furthermore CAQDAS is not very suitable for focus group data as the process of coding and retrieving the data fails to capture the dynamics of the communication between participants (Cattrall and Maclaran 1997). Instead Giorgi's (1975 and 1985) four stages of phenomenological data analysis were applied rigorously to all the data sets to minimise the risk of compromising the quality of the study and are discussed in relation to how they were applied in this study.

Process of Analysis of the Data

The original text was kept in close proximity and was re-read numerous times in order to facilitate the phenomenological reduction and epochè. I carried out this activity in order

to check that the end description had allegiance to the original text, a process advocated by Giorgi (1975, 1985 and 1992) who stresses the importance of minimising error in the reduction by remaining descriptively close to the original experience. My desire was to describe only what was given, in the way that it was given. A further point to note is that the process of reduction removes all hierarchy as no position was taken by me and all aspects of the women's experiences were treated as equal.

Stage One: Gaining a Sense of the Whole

Giorgi (1975) advocates familiarisation with the data by reading the entire transcript and listening to the audio tapes numerous times in order to get a sense of the experience. This immersion in the data allows the researcher to familiarise him or herself with the data before moving to the second stage which involves identification of the natural meaning units, which are distinct segments. This stage of data was straight forward, as I was simply required to read the data as described above.   I had initially intended to transcribe all the data myself in order to become fully immersed in it. However, after transcribing the three focus groups and nine out of 19 individual interviews, I sought some assistance by paying an administrative assistant who has many years of experience transcribing sensitive data, to transcribe the remaining tapes. I then read the transcripts several times, whilst simultaneously listening to the tape recordings, as advocated by (Giorgi 1975). This was extremely helpful in assisting me in immersing myself in the data, as well as allowing me to correct any inconsistencies in the transcriptions. This process also helped me to identify changes in tone of voice, pauses and silences, which often conferred meaning on the statements of the women. Once a comprehensive understanding of the data had been gained, I then turned my attention to identifying the individual meaning units.

Stage Two: Discrimination of Meaning Units

As this study was interested in investigating the meanings that participants placed on their experiences of forced migration and life now that they are living in England, each transcript was studied for descriptions and explorations of meaning which related to these experiences. After reading the transcript numerous times, I marked on the transcript by using a slash (/) whenever I became aware of "a change of meaning" of the situation for the participant (Giorgi 1985 p. 11). The meaning units had been identified by being open-minded and aware of when there had been a change in the meaning in relation to the phenomena of forced migration. I then applied phenomenological reduction, which involved me searching for all possible meanings in the specific

statements whilst setting aside my own assumptions and experiences, to identify the essential themes of the phenomena.

Stage Three: Summarising of Meaning Units

Once I had isolated the meanings, a simple clear indication was given of the theme which dominated each particular unit of the data, with the initial unit meanings being re-proved and re-described to clarify the experience or feeling being described. Giorgi (1992) suggests that this re-description is an essential element of data analysis as this process facilitates comparison between participants, identifying core issues as well as idiosyncratic and individual variations. This stage allowed me to describe what was said, exactly as it was said, before I made any attempt to transform the meaning of the experience by considering it from different aspects though the process of 'imaginative variation' (Giorgi 1985 p. 17).

In addition to the interview data, I revisited field notes and diary entries, which often included a brief summary of the distinctive elements of an interview and any reflections on the interview. As with the bracketing conducted prior to the interview, I grouped together these personal perceptions according to how they might affect the study. These not only recorded my perception of the interview, but also included direct observation of posture, body language and actions as well as activities that occurred during the interview or focus group. These personal reviews formed part of the contextual check that the findings had not been led by my own perspective but had emerged from the data.

Stage Four: Transformation and Synthesis of Meaning Units

In stage four the transformed meaning units are synthesised into descriptive statements of the participants' experiences, which reveal the essential essences of the phenomena (Giorgi 1975). In this stage I strove to identify and consider all possible meanings without simply accepting the first meaning that emerged from the data. Van-Manen (1990: 107) describes this process as a concern to;

> 'discover aspects of or qualities that make a phenomenon what it
> is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is'.

In order to do this I re-read each meaning unit several times, reflected on the possible meanings and then synthesised the transformed meaning units into consistent statements and descriptions. Using these processes it became apparent to me that the essences emerging from this study were not linear but were multiple and interlinked. It

was immediately evident that there had been a major catastrophe in the women's lives, and when looking at this it was clear that there were a series of changes which compounded this. The challenge for me was to present the women's experiences so that the meanings of the descriptions remained true to those given by them. This presented a dilemma for me as to present the data thematically meant that the progressive and compounding nature of the women's experiences were lost and so I had to find another way which avoided de-contextualising and fragmenting the data. As Munhall (2010) cautions researchers must stay true to the subject and content of their investigation, and avoid structuring the participant's story in a manner which loses the meaning of these experiences. Patton (2002) has called for researchers to use whatever means they have available to them to accurately communicate the meaning of the data presented, a view echoed by Colley (2010) who asserts that the methods used by qualitative researchers should not be so rigid as to restrict them, but should instead, act as a guide. It is incumbent upon the researcher to find the most appropriate way of making sense of the data.

Methodological Rigour

The controversies surrounding the issue of rigour in phenomenological research have been highlighted in the literature (Caelli 2000; Le Vasseur 2003). The positivistic concepts of reliability and validity are not appropriate for judging qualitative work as these criteria presuppose that there is one single true account of social reality. Silverman (2011), amongst other qualitative researchers (Morse et. al, 2001), argue, however, that there can be several accounts of social reality. Seminal work (Lincoln and Guba 1985), and more recently Tobin and Begley (2004), recommend that the alternative criteria of trustworthiness be used when establishing the quality of a qualitative study.

Trustworthiness comprises five criteria. The first is credibility which parallels the notion of reliability in quantitative research that is the information presented correctly represents the experiences of the participants. The second is transferability, which is analogous to external validity, and relates to whether conclusions are limited to the present context or could be applied to other similar groups. Dependability, akin to reliability, is the third criteria. This means showing that the findings are consistent, traceable and could be repeated. Confirmability is criteria four and corresponds to objectivity. It involves others corroborating the findings following scrutiny of the data collection and analysis procedures. A critical reflexive analysis of how the research was conducted can also be

a useful tool to demonstrate confirmability (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The final criterion, authenticity (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Tobin and Begley 2004), refers to notion of fairness, which is the degree to which the researcher has faithfully presented the participants experiences. The application of these criterions are presented in table five.

Table Five: The Application of Methodological Rigour.

Criterion	Defining Characteristics	Thesis
Credibility	Ensuring that the research is carried out according to the principles of good practice and that the information presented correctly represents the experiences of the participants.	Discussions with supervisors. Bracketing was consistently carried out and a reflective journal was kept to help the researcher reflect on her own assumptions.
Transferability	Participants reflect the group of which they are members. The findings from the research fit the data and could be applied to other similar groups. Members of the group studied recognise the relevance of the findings to their own situation.	Rich accounts of the participant's descriptions are included in the thesis.
Dependability	Adapting an auditing approach by ensuring that a full set of records are kept for all stages of the research including field notes, interview transcripts and recordings as well as reflective logs.	Giorgi's (1975: 1997) approach to analysis involved rigorous bracketing and keeping of a reflective journal, to provide an audit trial. This process also involved constant scrutinising of the interview transcripts and cross checking against the tapes and checks by the supervisors.
Confirmability	All the above criteria fulfilled.	Bracketing and keeping a reflective log, to provide an audit trial, helped to ensure that the researchers own personal values or theoretical inclinations did not influence the conduct of the research or the findings derived from it.
Authenticity	Truthfully and impartially describing the participant's experiences.	Thick description provided of participants experiences from, verbatim transcripts of audio recordings. Use of field notes and reflective log to aid accurate presentation of participant's experiences.

Ethical Considerations

All research projects include some ethical issues and dilemmas and there is now a considerable literature on the ethics of research which includes specific reference to vulnerable populations (Zion *et al.* 2010; De Haene *et al.* 2010; Manson and O'Neill 2007). Jacobsen and Landau (2003) suggest that the question of whether the research is needed is too infrequently asked, which can seriously undermine the ethical position of a study. The impetus for this study arose from the researchers contacts with Somali refugee women, who were becoming increasingly concerned about the suffering they saw amongst their friends. Thus, the research was a response to an expressed need from the group who were the focus of the study. The sensitive nature of this study meant that the ethical implications of the research were an important consideration. Approval was obtained from the Faculty of Health Research Ethics Committee (see appendix six; Ethics Committee Approval Letter).

Although designed for clinical studies, the ethical principles as outlined by Beauchamp and Childress (2009) proved helpful, as did work by Seedhouse (2009) and Mauthner *et al.* (2002). Together these provided useful frameworks for checking ethical issues and identifying possible dilemmas. Every effort was made to address the principles of respect for autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, justice and fidelity (Beauchamp and Childress 2009).

The principle of respect for autonomy, in research terms, refers to the rights of individuals to make an informed choice, free from coercion or undue pressure. This principle requires researchers to disclose all the information necessary for autonomous decision making (Beauchamp and Childress 2009; Mauthener *et al.* 2002). In this study I spent many hours with the facilitators to the study explaining the aims of the study and what participating in the research would involve. I carefully probed to try and ensure that the facilitators, who were often the first contact for possible participants, clearly understood the importance of providing honest information about the project, in a way that allowed potential participants to make up their own minds. The participants information was made available to all potential participants on audio tape in English or Somali as well as in writing, again in both languages (see appendix seven; Participant Information Letter English and Somali).

The principle of respect for autonomy also requires researchers to think carefully about the issue of informed consent (Beauchamp and Childress 2009; Seedhouse 2009; Miller

and Bell 2002). Although in this instance informed consent related to the participants' understanding of the processes involved in data collection and analysis rather than a clinical procedure, nevertheless, the checklist given by Beauchamp and Childress (2009) included key areas for consideration. In this study informed consent was regarded as an on-going process, which did not end with the signing of the consent form (see appendix eight; Consent Form English and Somali). The notion of written consent had to be carefully handled as Somalis are an oral society, and asking for signed consent can be seen as intimidating and offensive in cultures where the spoken word is valued as a binding contract (Hennings and Williams 1996). The issue for researchers is that, research ethics committees, often require a signed consent form because it is considered permanent and can be stored separately to any data. To minimise the risk of offending participants, the reasons for gaining signed consent were carefully explained to potential participants. The consent form was written using straightforward language, in both Somali and in English and was also audio-recorded in both languages. I considered this, to be, essential in helping the women to decide whether, or not, they wished to participate as many Somalis do not read their native language and information is often passed by word of mouth. Prior to any data collection, I gave potential participants a full explanation of the procedures to be followed, and the reasons for them and they were made fully aware that they could withdraw at any stage of the research without giving any reasons and without penalty.

Non-maleficence refers to the avoidance of harm (Beauchamp and Childress 2009). Whilst research projects such as this one, are not seen as being physically invasive in the same way as clinical trials and experiments, there is recognition that the psychological effects from intrusive or emotive questioning can be very damaging (Mauthner et. al,. 2002). I was mindful that the sensitive and personal nature of the research topic might cause the participants to confront areas of personal trauma that they would rather not revisit and that this might have had a negative impact on them. This called for a need to be sensitive during the collection of data and I was therefore fully prepared to discontinue any interview where it would not be in the interests of the participant to continue. In addition, all the women were provided with details of appropriate counselling services in a format that was accessible to them, written in both English and Somali and audio recorded in both languages. I was also mindful that because the stories told were at times particularly distressing, my own emotional well-being could be threatened. For this reason, provision was made to facilitate access to a counsellor based at my place of work for myself, the advisors to the study and the transcriber. I also had regular meetings with the supervisors to the study, these were,

also considered essential in providing me with a safe area to debrief from what were often traumatic accounts of the participants' experiences.

I managed all data in accordance with the Data Protection Act (Information Commisioner's Office 1998) a requirement being that data collected were used solely for the purpose of the study as outlined in the aims of the research. The data were only accessible by me and were stored securely during the period of investigation. Data will be kept locked away for five years from completion of the study, in line with Birmingham City University's Faculty of Health Ethics Committee's requirements. After this date the data will be destroyed. Finally in order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, each participant was given a code and a pseudonym so that identifying factors and personal details were not revealed during the process of data analysis.

The principle of beneficence refers to the obligation to act for the good of others (Beauchamp and Childress 2009). This obligation may include defending the rights of others (Seedhouse 2009; Greenfield and Jensen 2010). This was a key consideration in this study which aimed to give voice to a group of marginalised refugee women, who have traditionally had little opportunity to make their voices heard. In doing this I hoped to make known their unique perspective of forced migration and thereby try to improve knowledge and understanding of their life experiences.

The principle of justice relates closely to beneficence and is concerned with treating people equitably so that benefits and burdens are fairly distributed (Greenfield and Jensen 2010). In clinical research this would relate to access to health care (Beauchamp and Childress 2009). In this study the principle of justice involved treating all potential and actual participants fairly. One way in which I did this was by minimising any language barrier that might have prevented participation in the research. For this reason, the participants' information was provided in both English and Somali, and audio recorded, in both languages. In addition interpreters were used for women who were unable to speak English or who preferred to express their feelings in their native language. Each participant was treated equitably, by giving each woman, the time needed to tell her story at her own pace, and in a place of her choosing. I took extreme care to reassure each woman that her story was valuable and that I was fully committed to hearing all that she had to say. Once the thesis is fully completed all participants will be invited to a presentation of the findings of the study and given a summary of the research.

In adding the principle of fidelity I was fully cognizant of my obligation to avoid harm (Beauchamp and Childress 2009). I took care to carry out the interviews and focus groups only as outlined in the participant's information letter and following the plan approved by the ethics committee. I had also worked extremely hard to develop relationships of trust with the women and had carefully explained issues regarding respect for privacy and confidentiality. This was a prime consideration for some women who were anxious about being the focus of gossip. I was acutely aware that issues may be disclosed during data collection that could have required me to breach confidentiality. For this reason I was careful to establish clear boundaries between myself and the participants regarding action that would be taken if sensitive situations arose which might cause me to have to breach confidentiality. This was made explicit to all the women participating in this study prior to any data being collected. By doing this I aimed to develop relationships of trust with the women, whilst at the same time outlining the course of action that would be followed if I was required to breach confidentiality.

Chapter Summary

This study followed the principles of descriptive phenomenology and whilst learning to analyse qualitative data proved challenging, and the processes by Giorgi (1975, 1985 and 1992) provided a framework within which to work, it was also evident that there was a major gap in the methodological literature found. Much is written about the processes and steps such as bracketing but there is far less information available to help the novice researcher deal with the impact of the rich and detailed data gathered. Although some researchers, particularly feminist researchers, do mention the implications of emotive research on the researcher this in no way prepared me for the reality. Arguments by writers such as Oakley (1981) that the researcher needs to form a relationship with the participants are very true. However, there was nothing to tell me what to do when through that relationship I began to internalise the women's problems. The section on positionality brings together for the first time writing from a range of different sources all of whom give elements of the problem but none of whom give the whole picture. It is my belief that this aspect of research methodology needs to be more fully recognised and included in descriptions of qualitative research processes. The problems I encountered are not unique. To give just two examples they can apply equally to those using the hermeneutic cycle when the repeated re-immersion in the data can in-print emotive issues on the researcher's consciousness. Similarly, in grounded theory the iteration means the researcher must face again and again the lived experiences presented (Corbin and Strauss 2008).

Prior to starting this study the reflective journal had been seen as just one more aid to the research that could be used to enhance methodological rigour as this, was how reflective journals were mainly reported in research texts. In reality, it was the corner stone for the debriefing, it enabled me to reflect on both the individual elements and the totality of the emotional journey I had undertaken. Without it, it would have been much more difficult to explore and except the impact that the study had had on me. The few minutes it took me to write my reflections bore no relation to their value. At the start of a study such as this, a novice researcher cannot know what they will encounter. The compilation of a resource that both explained views and feelings was essential for the debriefing sessions used later in the study and this aspect of the journal should be emphasised in research guidance.

The following chapter 'Cycle One' begins with a brief outline explaining the frameworks of cycles for presenting the findings before moving on to present the findings of this first cycle.

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CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK CYCLE ONE


Framework for Presentation of Findings

Developing a theoretical approach entailed studying the essence(s) to ascertain how they linked together to illustrate and reveal the migratory journey of each woman and yet fitted within the philosophical tradition chosen. Given the complex and multiple essences which emerged from the data it was not appropriate to present these essences thematically because this stripped out the integration and interaction between the essences, and, therefore, the context would be lost. Furthermore, forced migration is an on-going process and each essence cannot give the entire picture of how the various elements link together.

Drawing on the cyclical nature of human behaviour and the anthropological discourse of so*cial capital* theory (Bourdieu 1986), a framework began to emerge which could take account of the multifarious and compounding nature of the impact of migration on the women. A key assumption underpinning *social capital* is that individuals gain access to resources through their participation in particular sets of social relationships (Putnam 2000; Coleman 1988; Bourdieu 1986). For all the women in this study, depleted stocks of *capitals* (Bourdieu (1986) was an outcome of their migratory experiences. Thus, theorising the experiences of the women, through the concept of social capital, offered a way to develop an understanding of the mechanisms that could both obstruct and facilitate their ability to adapt to their changed life circumstances. It was not sufficient to, merely, identify how social capital could explain the essence(s); a way had to be found to weave them into the anthropological understanding of the context in which they occurred. A model emerged illustrated in figure three, (Downwards Spiral of Loss) that demonstrates how the series of cycles move downwards. This new concept developed uses the constructs inherent within the overarching principles of anthropology (Good *et al.* 2010; Singer and Baer 2007; Bourdieu 1986) together with the descriptive phenomenological analysis of the women's stories.

The women in this study were faced with change after change all happening within a period of less than a decade and often within a much shorter length of time. There was

therefore no opportunity for the women to recover for as soon as they had experienced one change, there was another compounding the impact of the former. Consequently, the term *cycle* has been used in this study. In each cycle the same essences were detected but the women experienced them differently. The first cycle "Living in a war zone", encapsulates the struggle for survival, which had become part of the everyday norm for the women whilst they were living in Somalia during the war. Cycle two, "Running to safety" tells of the women's experiences as they were forced to flee their country and the difficulties they encountered as they fled to a 'perceived' place of safety across the borders. Cycle three "Moving on" documents the women's experiences of leaving the first country of asylum to seek safety and security elsewhere. Cycle four "The present" discusses life for the women in England, including the opportunities and barriers they faced as they tried to rebuild their lives.

Figure Three: Diagrammatic Representation of Downwards Spiral of Loss

Cycle 1:
Living in a
war zone

Cycle 2:
Running   to
safety

Cycle 3:
Moving on
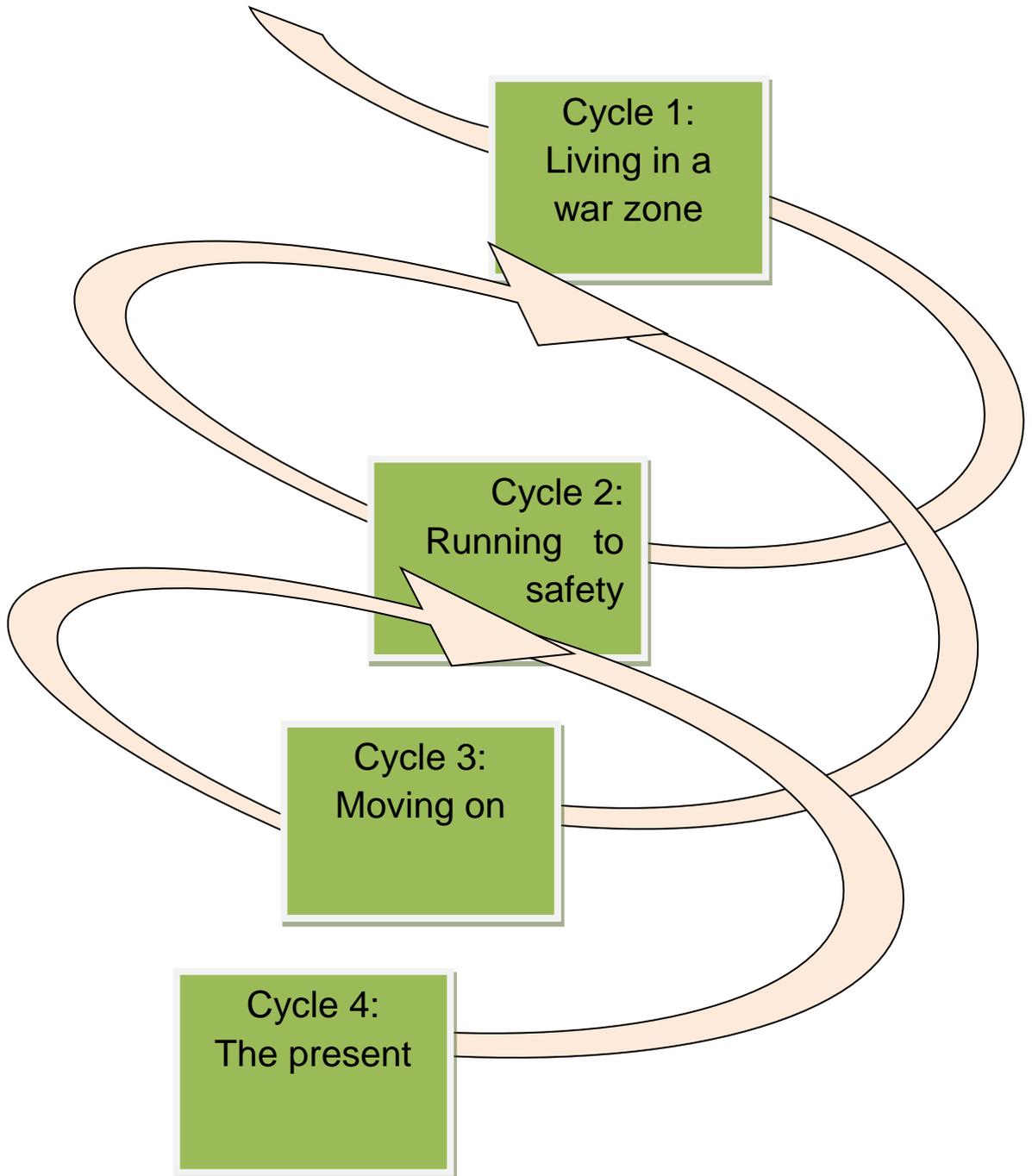
Cycle 4:
The present

CYCLE ONE: LIVING IN A WAR ZONE

This chapter begins the presentation of the four cycles outlined in figure three. This first cycle is principally concerned with the experiences of the women before they left Somalia. Their experiences are presented in the three essences: Safety and Security, Family and Intimate Relations and Changing Norms and Values.

Safety and security

The first essence of cycle one provides a discussion of the immense pressures faced by the women as they struggled to maintain their safety in a society where law, order and moral obligation had completely broken down. For many of the women the memories were so painful that they had spent the years since migration trying to forget, preferring to remain silent as indicated by a shake of the head or a statement such as "*I cannot talk about that*". For some, the experiences were almost impossible to voice, because not only are the memories so awful to relive, but, as Gardner and El Bushra (2004) suggest, cultural beliefs meant that to voice them might bring shame. Other women chose to start their stories at the point of leaving their country, stating that their preference was to concentrate on the present rather than what had happened in the past. However, this still left a group of women with a strong desire to talk about the conflict in Somalia, as they believed it was essential that their experiences of the war be never forgotten.

Acceptance of all these different perspectives fits well within phenomenological techniques, which privilege the subjective experience of the participant, and coupled with an anthropological approach offered the freedom in this study to start the interviews at whatever point the women chose. Whilst accepting that not all the women discussed living in a war zone, the information given by those able to describe their experiences is relevant to the majority of Somali women, as all of them would have had to make difficult choices. At the time of writing, Somalia continues to exist without a legitimate central government. The political crisis that led to the downfall of the Somali Democratic Republic in 1991 has impacted, tremendously, on the lives of Somali women. A recurring feature heard in the accounts of the women was the fear of direct, life-threatening violence. They talked of their experiences of living through years of insecurity and unpredictable violence. Sirat explained;

> *It was in the 1990s … things were getting worse. The roads blocked by militia people, you couldn't get through unless you*

> *could pay a bribe. … Bandits ambushing on the roads taking cars, leaving people on the roadside after taking all their valuables, the ladies gold. They took everything.*

Sirat's livelihood and thus her ability to meet the basic subsistence needs of her family was severely constrained as she was unable to trade at the large Bakara market in the city. Her narrative provides some indication of how the banditry and looting that had become established in Mogadishu during the late 1980s and early 1990s impacted upon the lives of ordinary women who feared that if they left their homes they would be robbed of their possessions or harmed. When the fighting first started, the women said they felt that if they stayed at home they would be safe. Shakri explained how the situation quickly deteriorated so that no one felt safe anywhere.

> *They [the militia] … they are looting, … You will hear shouting, screaming and the bullets. We were very worried and thought we would all die.*

Aswaaq was horrified to witness the beating of one of her neighbours who had tried to protect her granddaughter from the attention of the militia. Fearing that the girl would be taken away, or raped, the woman told the soldiers that her granddaughter was now staying with an aunt in another district. Nevertheless, the house was searched and the girl was found hiding in a bedroom. Aswaaq described what she had witnessed;

> *It was our neighbour I could not believe, three soldiers beating her with their rifles, when they left her … dead.*

Aswaaq said the memories of the disintegration of Somali society were still fresh in her mind and was something she could never forget, not for even one day. She explained what had happened in her neighbourhood when Siad Barre's soldiers and the opposition (the United Somali Congress) (USC) started fighting close to the city centre.

> *Everyone had guns in their hands, they started shelling the town, killing and injuring people. Throughout the night we heard screams and people crying. Our neighbours told us that the USC were attacking the women.*

During the war, nearly every Somali man possessed at least one automatic rifle and many had even heavier weapons (Gardner and El Bushra 2004; Lewis 2008). Such an arsenal of weapons had dire and far-reaching consequences for women, as personal arms fell into the hands of the large groups of traumatised, disenchanted young men (Gardner and El Bushra 2004).

Participants spoke of how Mogadishu was divided into clan territories with sporadic fighting between the different factions.

> *At times, I was worried and wanted to go visit my sisters and could not go because there were warlords everywhere.*

(Participant, focus group two)

All the women agreed that they had felt extremely vulnerable

> *I could not sleep, eat, think. Every day I was worried and praying that Allah would let no harm come to us.*

(Nadiya)

The vulnerability of women in the Somali civil war is reflected in other wars over the last 20 years, primarily because of the higher rate of civilian causalities than in earlier wars. For example, in World War One only 15% of casualties were reported to be civilians, mainly women and children. This increased to 65% in World War Two and over the past two decades the figure has leapt to 90% (Waldman 2005; Okazawa-Rey 2002; United Nations Population Fund 2002). In Somalia it is reported that about nine out of every 10 people injured or killed were civilians (Pedersen 2002). Women were not simply caught in the cross fire but increasingly became victims, as a direct result of violence that was targeted towards them (Gardner and El Bushra 2004).

In the Somali war anyone who tried to stand up to the militia or who opposed the regime ran the risk of being specifically targeted. Whilst the search was usually for men, as it was they who were the combatants. If they could not be found other members of the family, including the women, were arrested instead. Mariam said;

> *My father he had argument with them [the government] they went to arrest him but he escaped out of the country, they arrested my mum instead, so my mum …* [was] *in prison for seven years. She was tortured.*

All the women described how awful life had become during the war and witnessing horrific sights. Ladaan explained;

> *You see a lot of people die in front of you… bodies blown apart, bits missing in the street.*

Warring between different military factions meant innocent bystanders were often caught up in the violence, including children and their mothers. Salima reported her distress at

the way in which the innocent suffered as the war unfolded. She described a particular incident when a large number of people stampeded as they had tried to escape intense, sporadic fighting. Everyone ran in the same direction as they tried to get onto boats or ships that were heading for Kenya. For her neighbour the consequences of a large group of people suddenly descending into the neighbourhood was devastating. Salima recalled;

> *… in our country we don't have playgrounds, they [children] play in front of the house. … you can imagine six, four kids, then a whole people [crowd] run and they step on the guy [trampled her neighbours young son to death]. It is really terrible.*

For women with children, the fighting made life almost impossible as they struggled to provide even the most basic necessities for them. Nasra described the desperation of her own situation. She reported that the burden of providing for their eight children was hers alone, as, although her husband was still alive and living with her, his untreated diabetes had meant that he was too ill to help her care for the children. She reported that she could not bear to see her children weak from hunger and had tried to find food for them. She reported her shock when, following a few days of heavy fighting, she went out into the city:

> *… travelling to the market, I saw destitute women and children … homes, buildings, everything bombed.*

Nasra, along with several other women, spoke in depth about how they had feared being harassed or attacked as they went in search of food. They had often been forced to pay bribes so that they could cross the many check points that had sprung up in the city. One woman described how she had been stopped at a check point in Mogadishu and weighed. She claimed that the price of the bribe increased in accordance with the women's weight. She said;

> *The soldiers would weigh us right there on the road and then say you are very fat although we were not, they would demand money and if we could not pay they would beat us and say we do not want to see you out here again. stay at home. Some women were taken … [and raped]*

(Participant, focus group two)

Her story was supported by several other women in the group, who, although they had not had the experience directly themselves, had heard from others who had been

subjected to it. They said that women who the soldiers considered to be thin and therefore presumably severely underweight as they could not afford to buy food, were slapped and told not to come along that road again, as the soldiers knew they would not be able to extract anything of much value from them. Women were, therefore, placed in an almost impossible situation. To stay at home meant that their families could not eat but going into the city was extremely dangerous as they were likely to be harassed to pay bribes, receive unsolicited sexual advances and other types of abuse or ran the risk of being caught up in the fighting, which could be sporadic and intense.

Shakri, agreeing with Nasra, reported that as the fighting intensified many women found that they were alone with the children as the men had disappeared:

> *We women we are the only one [s] who were suffering and*
> *children … men go away … with their friends you don't see them*
> *to help you.*

(Shakri)

The absence of men meant that women were particularly vulnerable and many suffered from violence, including rape. Safia's story was one repeated many times during the interviews. She described how desperate it had become and how every woman, no matter her age or clan, was a potential target for the rapists.

> *It was terrible, young girls, old women raped… and nobody to do*
> *anything to help.*

All but one of the participants said that they knew at least one person who had been raped and two participants spoke about their own experience of rape, one of them was raped on more than one occasion. Amnesty International (2010) amongst others (United Nations Development Fund for Women 2007; Musse 2004) have drawn attention to the widespread and systematic rape of Somali women in Somalia during the war. As Salima said;

> *You can imagine, before they were coming to steal and then they*
> *are raping, two or three men trying to rape the mother plus the*
> *daughters.*

Women said they did what they could to keep safe, but their caring responsibilities meant that had to take chances, even if this meant putting themselves at risk of unwanted sexual advances or other forms of violence.

Safia recalling her situation said;

> *What could I do… the militia would …, they would brush up against your breasts and even rape you, … I was terrified but I had to go [out to find food]*

As they talked about living in a war zone, it was clear that the fear of rape had been a key concern for many of the participants and there was talk of girls and women being taken away and never seen again. A large number of rape camps were set up in Mogadishu during the early 1990s where women and young girls were held and raped systematically by the militia. As Shakri reported;

> *… men did not stay at home [during the war]. They were raping, young girls, virgins and it is shameful.*

The difficult conditions associated with living in a conflict situation meant that women were faced with a host of severe and complex challenges as they struggled to keep safe. Whilst they said the fear of rape had never been far from their minds, the women said they had also been extremely worried about other issues. One of those most spoken about was the escalating cost of even the most basic food stuffs, for, as the fighting intensified, it became more and more difficult for food to reach the markets. Some women said that during the worst of the fighting they would go for two days or more without eating anything, as they were afraid to leave their homes and in any case could not afford to buy what was needed.

> *… there were several of us women we went together [to the market] with a man accompanying us. But prices were very high and I could only buy a little charcoal, oil and flour. Someone told me that food aid was being distributed but when we went to the place she said … I saw that the donated food had been looted and was being sold. So it was very difficult.*

(Nasra)

The disruption of economic activities, trade and transportation networks had caused hyperinflation of food prices and during the 1990s it was reported that food prices increased by between 200% and 700% within just a few months (United Nations Develoment Fund for Women 2007). Whilst men had been primarily responsible for providing financially for their families, Somali women had always enjoyed a degree of financial independence, whether this came from the sale of produce they had grown or made or by saving some of the household budget (Lewis 2008; Gardner and El Bushra 2004). In urban regions like Mogadishu, which is the area where most of the women who participated in this study came from, women headed up approximately 50% of small businesses and thus prior to the war had some financial assets of their own (Gardner

and El Bushra 2004). However the war meant that women could no longer trade and even those who had considered themselves to be reasonably well off quickly became destitute. Safia, whose husband had been employed by the government, and who had enjoyed a high standard of living, prior to the outbreak of the conflict said;

> *We could not do our business and the little money we had [had at home] finished.   We could not get any of our money [out of the bank]*

The critical shortage of food, the collapse of almost all public amenities and public sector services such as electricity and sanitation services had a devastating effect on women and their children. The challenge of finding water for cooking, cleaning and washing was an additional heavy burden many of the women faced, as water supplies were destroyed during the fighting. Nasra said;

> *The soldiers had blown up the water supplies, we had to purchase [water] … it was so expensive, we could not afford [to buy] all we needed.*

Under these circumstances, women had to use water sparingly, making domestic tasks much more difficult for them.   During the 1990s less than one in four homes was reported to have safe drinking water and one in two sanitation facilities (World Health Organisation (WHO) 2004). Insufficient or polluted water resulted in illness for many women and their families and it is therefore not surprising that cholera had been endemic in Somalia since 1994 (WHO 2004).

Women not only had the burden of accessing food, water and other necessities for day to day living, they also had to shoulder the responsibility for looking after those too sick to care for themselves. These caring duties added substantially to their workload. By this time some of the women were extremely malnourished or suffering from chronic diseases such as hypertension, asthma, diabetes or gynaecological problems. The health care system, which was already fragile prior to the outbreak of the war, was rapidly overwhelmed during the violence and associated displacement as people tried to escape the fighting (Samatar 1994: Chu *et al*. 2010). In such situations, populations become even more vulnerable to threats such as poor hygiene, malnutrition, infectious diseases and poor antenatal care (Chu *et al*. 2010). Women, as mothers, are at increased risk as obstetric emergencies in particular contribute to substantial mortality in war zones (Chu *et al*. 2010).   The lack of medical facilities was a key concern for many of the participants. Sara who had a child with asthma reported;

> *… hospitals, clinics they were gone* [destroyed by shelling and looters] *there was nowhere to get medical assistance, all the doctors, nurse gone …*

The collapse of a country's infrastructure affects women in very different ways to men, as women often lack the resources to flee conflict situations quickly (Chu *et al.* 2010: United Nations Development Fund for Women 2007). In addition, as mothers, their caring responsibilities often mean that they cannot flee quickly, as plans need to be made for the children (Gardner and El Bushra 2004).

The women in this study who had children living with them during the war spoke about their fear of what would happen to the children, if they themselves were harmed or even killed. They said that all travel had to be carefully planned, and that they had dared to venture out with the children only when the fighting had quietened down and it was essential to do so. As one participant in focus group two said;

> *It was really terrible, you can imagine, no one knows what will happen next …. the children who would care for them [if anything happened to her]… I had to be careful …*

The unpredictable and volatile nature of life created a constant state of fear in which people could disappear without warning and were never seen again and all of the women had experienced the personal tragedy associated with losing members of their families. Without kinship support networks, women can become even more vulnerable to the abusive practices associated with living in a conflict situation (Chu *et al.* 2010). In this study all of the women lamented the absence of family members, especially men, who could support and protect them, as well as negotiate with other clan members on their behalf. The loss of a male protector severely compromised not only personal relations, but also women's safety and security. Such losses had a massive impact on the lives of the women, for, as Lewis (2008) reports, family and close clan connections are the bedrock on which Somali society is founded. The next essence of cycle one, family and intimate relations discusses these relations in the context of life in a war zone.

Family and Intimate Relations

Essence two provides some indication of the way in which family life was severely disrupted and in most cases changed forever by the war. All of the women had

experienced the personal tragedy associated with losing members of their close family. One woman explained;

> *… We are missing every week people from our community…*
> *ladies from this family … they were taken.*

(Participant, focus group one)

Nine women had either witnessed their relatives being killed in front of them or had actually seen the dead bodies of their family members on the streets where they had been killed, as Safia recounted;

> *My mom was always telling them* [my brothers] *don't interfere, go*
> *and hide … when they leave the house you cannot know what is*
> *to happen. They shot him in the stomach, .. , he lived only one*
> *day … … my uncle my mother's brother, father and my brother all*
> *of them killed by gunfire in the street and yet nobody can say*
> *[what happened].*

Some women reported that they had seen bodies decomposing in the hot sun but to try and recover the body of their loved ones meant that they, and those trying to help, might be shot at and killed. Amnesty International (2010) has reported collecting dozens of testimonies from individuals, who recounted how bodies were left lying in pools of blood in the streets because it was not safe for relatives to try to retrieve them. Whilst some women could see the bodies of their family members it was just too dangerous for them to try to claim them and so they had the anguish of mourning without being able to carry out traditional death rites.

Some groups of women believed they had suffered more than others because they were not members of the major clan families which are: Digil, Mirifle (Rahanweyn), Dir, Darood, Hawiye and Isaaq. Tracing their genealogy back to a common ancestor, Somalis divide into the main patrilineal clan-families, which are again subdivided in clans, sub-clans and so on (Lewis 2008). Although the clan organisation underwent substantive changes during the colonial and post-colonial period, when the state was being built, prior to the outbreak of the war it remained a powerful framework, guiding the everyday lives of Somalis and defining a person's standing in society as well as his/her relations to others (Lewis 2008: Abdullahi 2001: Gardner and El Bushra 2004).

Although a married woman will neither change her name nor lose her original clan-identity, she will be regarded as affiliated to her husband's clan and gain his clan's protection, though she will never be fully incorporated into it. Which clan a woman feels

stronger attachment to depends on several variables. These include the length of her marriage, the status of her father/family in her birth clan compared to the status of her husband in his and her individual status in the clan of her husband (Farah 2000).

The major clans now dominate the political culture in Somalia and, despite speaking Somali, practising Islam and sharing Somalia's cultural values, those not allied to the numerically and politically dominant clans are not accepted and are regarded as being different, not 'proper' Somalis (Lewis 2008). These smaller groups had no traditional military organisation and were thus easy targets for armed groups (Lewis 2008). Women from these minority groups described how armed militia of various persuasions had victimized them. As Ladaan summarised;

> I know everyone suffering but we were suffering more, they are
> [were] raping, shooting, beating … we do not take sides, but
> always they are saying you are backing other side …

Without the arms available to the dominant clans, members of the minority clans had no means of protecting themselves or their families. Safia reported:

> … we had no protection … many people were killed.

In many cases those belonging to minority clans had, prior to the war, been successful in business, but financial security offered them little protection during the conflict (Lewis 2008: Farah 2000).   As Aswaaq explained;

> We had guards… who were supposed to protect our house about
> 20 of them. They talk to the militia and then our house was
> missiled… I just grabbed my baby and ran for my life.

She ran into the jungle and hid there for three days. As In Aswaaq's case, few minorities had established networks elsewhere, therefore a loss of their assets or homes would result in them having nowhere to turn for security or support (Kassim 1995: Lewis 2008). This relates to Bourdieu's (1986) notion of the interdependence between social and other forms of capital, for, as Aswaaq's narrative illustrates, despite affluence and privilege, without the protection offered by the dominant clans, minority groups were frequently seen as an easy target. Thus, economic capital by itself could not afford her the protection needed.

However, clan identity, or lack of it, not only brought misery to minority groups. The power of life and death was also dependent on which particular clan was in control at

any one time and allegiance to a dominant clan did not necessarily bring protection and security. This was a particular concern for those women that had married outside of their own clan family, as they were sometimes forced to leave their husband's families, in order to seek refuge in their own clan territories. As this participant related;

> *I told my husband it is better I go, he is Darod and I was frightened they come after us, because I am not from that clan.*

(Participant, focus group one)

The conflict between clans meant that eight women were forced to parts of the country in which they had no experience, but where they thought they could be safe. For a few of the women (three) such a move meant they had some protection.

> It *was difficult to leave but it was safer to be with my own people … they would protect us.*

(Participant, focus group one)

Other women returning to their father's clan found that only the elderly, women and children were left. All the men had gone, husbands, fathers, brothers, uncles had been killed or were missing, had joined the militia or had gone to seek work elsewhere. There was an overwhelming sense of shock.

> *I could not believe …, all the men gone, only children and women left.*

(Participant, focus group one)

Similarly, Waris expecting to see her father and brothers found only her elderly mother, sister in law and the children remained.

> *My father and brothers they were gone [missing].*

The economic responsibilities of women increased. In many families, the traditional role of men as head of the households and main breadwinner broke down (Gardner and El Bushra 2004). Women found themselves facing the double workload of being the caretaker of the families and at the same time the main or only earner. They were not prepared for these new roles, and often lacked the skills and access to prerequisite economic resources. The absence of men, therefore had far reaching and devastating implications for the women, for, as well as being without protection, they were often in

the position where they could not sustain themselves and their families. As this woman narrated:

> *We were from the coast and did not have money … when we ran, I was left alone with the kids, everyone missing. One lady she used to give us food when she had enough. Life was very difficult*

(Participant, focus group three)

Whilst many of the women had lost men as a direct result of the conflict, four women stated that the men went to look for work and simply did not return. Safia recounted;

> *My husband he went to look for work … so I waited for him for seven months, he didn't come back… What could I do,… we would all die of hunger, I had to find a way* [to access the resources necessary to sustain the family]

The stories of the women revealed tremendous loss and deep loneliness as the war had not only taken their homes, livelihoods and security, but also their fathers, husbands and brothers. Therefore for most of the women, life in a war zone, meant life without men. The implications of this change from the women's cultural norms is explored in essence three 'changing social norms and values'.

Changing Social Norms and Values

Essence three *changing social norms* and values reflects how living in a war zone impacted on the ways in which Somali society had traditionally been organised. The rules that governed Somali culture and the women's lives were disregarded during the conflict, to the extent that their ways of being were changed forever.

Prior to the outbreak of war in Somalia, inter-clan conventions, known as *bir-ma-geydo* (spared from the spear), on protection and security meant that women, children, the sick and elderly as well as religious leaders were immune from attack during disputes between clans
(Abdullahi 2001). However, as the accounts of the women in this study indicated, these conventions were largely disregarded as war devastated Somalia. The lack of government, together with continuing sectarian conflict, resulted in the forced displacement of large groups of people and affected Somali women in numerous ways.

Rape in Somalia is highly stigmatising (Farah 2000). Prior to the breakout of civil war, women's virginity was highly valued and therefore violating a woman's honour was considered scandalous (Abdi 2007, Gardner and El Bushra 2004). The war resulted in a complete breakdown of law and order, and group relations and societal norms were turned upside down (Farah 2000; Lewis 2008). Normally, rape and other types of violence directed at women would invoke the revenge of their sub clans. Vengeance was not only reserved for the perpetrator but would also be directed against his entire sub clan (Gardner and El Bushra 2004). This meant that it was not only his own life that he put at risk, but also those of his family and wider network of paternal relatives. If the attack was a serious one, both clans would have to go to war (Musse 2004). It has been claimed that the civil war reduced all women to representatives of their clans' honour and that violating their integrity through extreme acts of violence including rape and torture became a key weapon of the war (Abdi 2007).

Some women said that they had heard stories of women being raped on top of the bodies of their murdered husbands and fathers. They explained that even if the lives of the men were spared, husbands and fathers suffered deep humiliation, as they were forced to witness the rape of their women. Men, they said, were powerless to intervene whilst the rapes took place, as to do so would certainly have resulted in their own deaths. Salima recounting her own experiences during the worst of the atrocities said;

> *…, they are really scared* [the men] *they can do nothing because these guys* [the ones raping] *they have guns.*

Musse (2004) suggests that this practice is carried out to bring further humiliation to women and their husbands and fathers, who were already powerless to protest against the actions of heavily armed, khat frenzied militia. Similar reports have been made by the UNHCR (2007).

All but two of the participants acknowledged that rapes had been commonplace in Somalia during the war and two women spoke about their own rape. To speak about a personal experience of rape required a great deal of courage for in Somali society an admission of rape is seen as an admission of guilt (Wandera 1995). Under Sharia law, a woman who accuses a man of rape and fails to produce four male witnesses could be stoned to death for adultery (Ali 2004). It is not difficult to see why Somali women may be reluctant to report rape although there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that many

of them experienced this (Amnesty International 2010; United Nations Development Fund for Women 2007; Gardner and El Bushra 2004; Musse 2004).

The violation of women in this way seriously affected their sense of self and women spoke about their changed perceptions of themselves. As Shakri said;

> *Nobody will marry you .. you are spoiled … your family they will*
> *not speak to you … you bring shame on the family.*

Married women who were raped fared no better than those women who were virgins when attacked, as they were also likely to suffer a social death, rejected by their families and husbands. Men will often divorce their wives rather than live with the shame. Thus as Sideris (2003: 721) would suggest;

> *the threat of rejection contained in values, combines with actual*
> *rejection, to leave women fearing condemnation for the rape and*
> *the social chaos it can produce*

Nadiya explained how women were rejected by their own families, who would not acknowledge what had happened to the women.

> *It was very difficult for … our lives disappeared … we women*
> *were defiled and everyone despises you … only Allah is merciful*

As Sideris (2003) maintains, the trauma of rape is tied both to the '*body-self*' and the violation of the social body. The fear of rejection in rape survivors can be explained by gender relations where practices such as *meher* (bride price) relegate women to objects which can be purchased by men and therefore men are accorded the power to reject damaged goods (Sideris 2003).

The fear of rape along with what Abdi (2007: 189) has called 'insidious and new religious practices' that had not previously been a part of Somali women's cultural and traditional repertoire, were accepted, and became constructed as the natural way of things. One way in which this happened in Somalia was with the obsession with women's bodies, and their sexuality (Moghissi 2000). The women spoke about the Quoranic madrasses which had sprung up everywhere in Mogadishu and which propagated changes in the ways in which women dressed. Prior to the eruption of the war, women's dress was very light, consisting of a long piece of material, knotted over one shoulder. Women's chests were covered but their arms and part of their back was bare. These full length dresses known

as *gutiino* or *garays* were made of simple red or white cloth, but urban woman later adapted them, using expensive and elaborate coloured materials (Abdi 2007). Some women wore a very thin dress, known as a *dirac* which was made of polyester voile or very light cotton. The *dirac* was worn over a full length half-slip and a bra (Gardner and El Bushra 2001). Breasts were not perceived as sexual, and women breastfeeding their children in the markets were a common sight (Abdi 2007). Most married women also wore scarves to cover their hair. These were knotted at the back of the neck, leaving the face, neck and shoulders uncovered. As Abdi (2007) highlights, this dress was regarded as normal and women were not condemned, or accused of showing too much flesh.

However, as pointed out by Aswaaq and referred to by several women, the war meant that women were forced to change the way they dressed.

> *Ladies like to dress in nice clothes … when the war came it was not permissible and we had to be [dress] like conservative [cover the body and wear a veil].*

(Aswaaq)

Ahmed (1999) argues that this change in Somali women's dress was directly linked to censorship of women's behaviour as extreme versions of Islamic interpretation became widespread in Somalia. This came about, in opposition to the dictatorship set up by Siad Barre, through a rebel movement, known as the Muslim Brethern (Al-ikhwan al-muslimum), which promoted Islamic values (Ahmed 1999) This movement penetrated Somali towns during the late 1970s and early 1980s and resulted in a new conservatism, which challenged freedom of movement, association and dress (Ahmed 1999). Abdi (2007) has argued that Islamic reinterpretations by religious clerics are based on their desire for a common Islamic ideology. She suggests that more conservative Islamic interpretations legitimise patriarchal gender roles and relations which become entrenched, indoctrinating the up-coming generations resulting in the normalisation of these new practices.

Abdi (2007) claims that to legitimise the new Islamic movement, some Somalis argue that the root of their problems can be attributed to the fact that Allah's anger was directed at Somalia because of the people's move away from true Islam. She suggests that, as in other regions, where all adversity is attributed to women's divergence from the rules, a Somali proverb states "*wixii xunba Xaawaa leh*" (all evil originates from Hawa [Eve]). Accordingly, to redress the misfortune that has befallen the nation, atonement for this deviation must also begin with the women (Abdi 2007). The strict controlling of women's

sexuality and position in society is, therefore legitimised as necessary restitution for the souls of the entire community, thereby, providing justification for the practice of covering for all women.   As Abdi (2007) notes, the requirement that all Somali women demonstrate their 'M*uslimness'* by replacing their traditional *dirac* or *gutiino,* with veiling becomes compelling in this context

Those who dared to protest against or defy this prescription became targets of both verbal and physical abuse (Abdi 2007; De Voe 2002). Some of the women in this study reported that the changes in their dress during the war were related to their discovery of religious education. Ladaan reported that she had started to wear the *jilbaab* (a long flowing dress, worn with a veil):

> *Before the war I was not very religious like, but then I saw what had happened to my mother [her mother was imprisoned and tortured] and so I became more religious and changed my dress.*

Aswaaq stated that many women did not have the autonomy to choose their style of dress, like Ladaan professes she did. Abdi (2007) argued that the increase in religiosity could not be fully attributed to the free will of women in accepting what had become a prominent and specific interpretation of Islam. She argues that this new and militant brand of Islam severely restricted Somali gender relations, which, prior to the war, had allowed women greater autonomy and freedom of movement. For example, before the war women had been actively encouraged to enrol in educational establishments and many took up professional careers such as nursing, banking or senior administrative posts in the government (Gardner and El Bushra 2004). Abdi (2007) asserts that many women embraced religion to help them cope with the unarticulated physical and psychological violence to which they were exposed, but it may also have provided a way for the women to gain status.

In this study some women said that they started to wear the *jilbaab* because by covering they could at least leave their homes during the periods when the worst of the fighting had subsided. It was felt that veiling demonstrated their modesty and therefore their acceptance of Islamic norms and values. As Nadiya reported, if women did not wear the *jilbaab* it would be interpreted by the Muslim clerics as the women choosing not to give respect to Islam. They would then be deemed unworthy of any form of protection. She explained;

> *Ladies wear the veil … if you know you did not want people to*
> *say you were a bad woman or a bad Muslim… that was the life…,*
> *we had to be covered.*

However, this could not be relied upon as the community connectedness, which had been a dominant feature of Somali life and which had offered protection to women, disappeared. In addition, the Somali government turned even more repressive, as the religious right grew increasingly active.

There was much discussion in focus groups two and three about how the government became increasingly brutal. The women explained that fear was part of their everyday lives just like eating and praying. They said they were careful never to speak about political matters in case they were betrayed as nobody could be trusted:

> *You could trust not even your closest neighbour… the ladies who*
> *you drink tea with in your house…, no you had to be careful and*
> *not say anything.*

(Participant, focus group three)

For some women this was particularly distressing and they spoke of times, prior to the outbreak of the conflict, when Somalia had been peaceful, as Zeinab described;

> *The best thing I remember is …. The traditional way at lunchtime*
> *is that everyone comes home and drinks tea together outside*
> *their houses… we didn't worry about anybody hurting us…. We*
> *were all together, that was a good life …*

.
Women had traditionally found alternative forms of association, based on solidarity and reciprocity, beyond that of the family and kinship groups (Gardner and El Bushra 2004). Some women met regularly on Thursday afternoons, coinciding with the beginning of the weekend, as Friday is the holy day in Muslim societies, whilst other groups met irregularly, usually for a celebration such as a marriage. These meetings known as *madax shub* typically consisted of 10–15 women linked through friendship (Bryden and Steiner 1998). Meetings were usually held in the home of one of the women, and were highly ritualised. Women would use perfumed oils on their heads and smoke their hair with *uunsi* (incense). These meetings offered the women the opportunity to associate with their friends outside of the family group, and were a place where the women exchanged news, sought advice and discussed matters of mutual interest (Bryden and Steiner 1998). Everyday life was characterised by close affective ties of kinship and by expectations of support, hospitality and sharing but the war brought suspicion and fear.

No one could be trusted. Idil, who had experienced the murder of several members of her close family reported;

> *… my elderly aunt, … she warned us, we couldn't trust anyone …*
> It was terrible … no one to talk to about the sadness of life.

These changes in the social norms of Somali society, impacted significantly on women's sense of self and identity, eroding for many of the women what it meant to be a Somali woman.

A Somali woman's identity is closely linked with her role as wife and mother. An old Somali adage states, "*A mother's purpose is to be a cook, laundry woman, nurturer and wife to her husband*" (Tilikainen 2003).   As one participant said;

> *A woman has to know what is the meaning to be a 'woman'*
> *she is prepared from a very young age for that role.*

(Participant, focus group two)

In Somali culture, the family is highly valued, as is family honour (Duale and Luling n.d.). Any attack on the structure and social norms of the family would have led to unprecedented insecurity for Somali women as they found themselves struggling to survive in the most perilous situations. Women spoke about how their roles as wives and others changed significantly during the war. For Safia, amongst others there was an overwhelming sense of despair in relation to her role as nurturer and protector for her young children. She said:

> *As a mother you are supposed to protect your kids, that is right*
> *but during the war it was impossible and many children were*
> *missing, killed or abused by the militia. My cousin's son ... we do*
> *not know what has happened to him he was outside and then*
> *gone.*

Women who had never travelled outside of their villages had to assume new identities and flee to new communities in order to protect themselves. When the women spoke of identity, they spoke about 'proper' Somali women's behaviour and the customs and heritage passed on to them by their mothers and grandmothers. To lose this they said was to lose their identity.

Aswaaq explained;

We did lose a community, it was very close, and people were scattered. I felt so alone and like detached.

As is the case in most contemporary conflicts, Somali women bore the brunt of the war. Their lives were characterised by fear about whether or not they would survive the intense and sporadic fighting that had become a part of their everyday lives. They described their days as being filled with worry about accessing food and other resources, keeping safe and caring for their children as they struggled to survive under the strict Islamic laws which permeated Somali society. As a result of the war the women found themselves cast into roles that they had little experience of and they struggled to embrace the position of decision maker, single carer and bread winner. The scale and the scope of the violence had broken virtually every Somali norm. Indiscriminate rape, slaughter and pillage were widespread and although some clans had transgressed more than others, the women reported that none could claim complete innocence. All of the women claimed that they had been deeply affected by their experiences. The process of migration started for some of the women within their country, before a decision was finally taken to leave Somalia altogether. Some women said they had left Mogadishu and travelled to Kismayo, thinking that they would be safe there. However when the fighting spilled out to the south of Somalia the decision was made to cross the border into Kenya. As this participant from focus group two explained.

… the war broke in the night therefore we went out from the city … to my brothers place [but] in Kismayo it became difficult so we had to leave … we walked many miles and crossed the border into Kenya.

Chapter Summary

To conclude, from the testimonies of the women, it can be seen that the experience violence had become part of daily life, and without any effective governance, to protect citizens and make sure that there was some kind of law enforcement, the women were in a desperate situation. At the beginning of the war the women had tried to use whatever strategies they could to keep safe. But as the war intensified and the fighting became more widespread they lost close family members and eventually had to make the agonising decision to leave their country. A major aspect of this, which appeared in many of the women's testimonies, was the lack of hope that there would be an end to the violence. What became paramount for them was leaving a country that had become a war zone and finding a place of safety and security, as quickly as possible. The next cycle "Running to Safety" provides a description of the women's journeys as they fled

their country to find a place where their lives would not be threatened and where they believed their security could be maintained.

CHAPTER SIX: CYCLE TWO
RUNNING TO SAFETY

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Most of the women spent several years in transit before their final migration to England. This chapter focuses on this second stage of the spiral of loss and trauma and describes the women's experiences as they fled their country to seek security elsewhere. It outlines the conditions to which they were exposed as they tried to survive as refugees. Many of the women were required to live in camps and were often treated with hostility and suspicion. For 21 of the women the initial place of safety was Kenya, primarily because of its proximity to Mogadishu, which is where most of the women had come from, and secondly because its borders could be crossed on foot. At least 14 of them left Somalia either in the months following the fall of Siad Barre's regime or during the full eruption of the conflict during the early 1990s. These women had contacts in the countries surrounding Somalia or in other parts of the world and so believed that they had some means of assistance outside of their country. Nine women reported leaving later, between 2000 and 2005. All of this latter group, had found themselves displaced within their own country and their situation would have been far more precarious than those who had left earlier, as violent factional fighting continued to escalate throughout the country post 1991. However, irrespective of the time of fleeing, careful reviewing and refining of the data revealed that the reasons they all fled their country was directly attributable to the war, and the realization that it was unlikely that Somalia would be safe in the foreseeable future.

The prospect of leaving their country was terrifying for all the women. This was emphasised by the emotion conveyed by them as they expressed their feelings of having to leave Somalia. Some women visibly shook, whilst others tried to control their tears as they recalled how traumatic this experience had been for them. None of the women, prior to the war, said they had ever envisaged living anywhere else but Somalia; only one of them, had experience of living in another country. The women found it difficult to convey just how painful life was to leave their home country, but all of them said that staying in Somalia had not been an option. Despite the difficulties involved and the logistical problems of travelling without the protection of men, and with the children, the decision to leave was made.

Following the processes for analysis previously described in chapter four it was evident that the data contained limited information regarding the initial experiences of the women who did not go to Kenya. Review, reduction and refining of the data (Giorgi 1994;1997) revealed however that these women found the journey initially less traumatic than the majority who went to Kenya. Five women went to Ethiopia and, although there is limited data regarding their experiences, what does exist provides accounts of experiences very similar to those women who fled to Kenyan refugee camps. As there is no data regarding life in Ethiopia outside of a refugee camp, the limited data regarding these women's experiences are included in the presentation of 'life in a refugee camp'. Two women fled directly to the West, and for them the trauma came later as the realisation of all they had lost gradually emerged. Their stories are therefore described separately.

Safety and Security

Arrival in Kenya

The women reported that at the time of their leaving Somalia their biggest concern was safety. Crossing the border into Kenya signified to them an opportunity to await the end of the war in a peaceful environment where they would be safe. They spoke about their sense of relief when, at last, they had left the bombing, shooting and fighting behind them:

> *we just thanked God … that you know we're away from all the*
> *fighting … from all the troubles …*

> (Zeinab)

The women had high hopes for a peaceful life although they had also recognised that their lives would be different as they were now living in a country that was not their own. They reported that they had expected to be able to start to rebuild their lives once the more immediate needs of shelter, food and in some cases medical care had been resolved. At that time they believed that Kenyan Somalis would help them until they were able to contact their own close relatives who were established in Kenya.

The women hoped to provide for themselves, perhaps by keeping house for their clan people or by child minding, a culturally acceptable form of reciprocity for help offered. As Sara explained;

Somalis are very close and always will help each other … no one likes to see someone from their country suffer, especially if they are from the same clan …

They had been shocked to find out that the movement of any migrants in Kenya was severely restricted and that, in effect, life in Kenya meant living in a refugee camp. This was a very different experience from the safe haven they had imagined awaited them as they crossed the border. Life in the camps left them no access to those of their own culture or clan who could help them re-form and rebuild their lives.

In 1993, the UNHCR restricted the free movement of refugees in response to the Kenyan government's increasing anxiety about the large number of migrants entering the country, and the subsequent drain on the country's limited resources (Abdi 2006). At the same time UNHCR prohibited refugees from working and any refugees living outside the camps were likely to be detained and prosecuted by the police if they were found (Horst 2006a; Moret *et al.* 2006).

Despite Kenya's containment policy, five women who went to Kenya avoided long stays in refugee camps and were able to join family or clan members who were established in the country. For four of them (Yasmin, Zeinab, Aswaaq and Safia) this was possible because they had managed to cross the Kenyan border without detection. This meant hiding for days in the bush, waiting until they could cross without being seen by the soldiers who patrolled the borders. Not only did they have to try to avoid detection by the Kenyan authorities but, once across the border, they also had to try and establish where their own clan people were located and find ways of travelling to them. The fifth woman, Sara, experienced a short stay in a camp but the payment of a large bribe to one of the camp authorities had secured her release.

The women described life as being very difficult during those early days in Kenya. Yet a recurrent theme in the transcripts was their gratitude as they spoke about the kindness and generosity extended to them by ethnic Kenyan Somalis. Although strangers, they provided the women with food and shelter as well as small amounts of money until help could be given by the women's own clan people. This is not surprising as notwithstanding the war in Somalia, Sharia law and cultural responsibilities meant that fellow Somalis had a duty to provide social assistance to each other, especially to fellow clan members, although they might not be closely related (Lewis 2008). As Farah (2000) and Lewis (2008) highlighted, a person's security depended not only on their own social and financial circumstances but also on the strength and goodwill of their clan members. Sara explained:

> *…they [Kenyan Somalis] helped us enormously [during the first few days of her arrival into the country] … until my abti [maternal uncle], he send information that I heard you are there [hiding in town] and can you come. I didn't have papers … but he send me money and I came by bus [to where her uncle was living in Nairobi]*

Although all five women were able to make contact with their clan or sub clan members, they recalled how it often took several days or weeks to locate relatives. Without access to mobile phones or even the telephone numbers of their relatives, communication was usually by word of mouth from one clan family to another or by the *taar* (radio transmitters) and this took time. The importance of knowing one's genealogy, so one could confidently answer the question 'whom are you from' (Lewis 2008) was, therefore, a key factor in helping the women to locate relatives with whom they had not previously had any contact.

Once the women had been able to meet their close relatives, those who had settled in Nairobi (Yasmin, Zeinab, Aswaaq and Safia) reported that the main problem for them had been police harassment and the fear of being arrested. As Zeinab narrated:

> *We cannot walk the streets at night or during the day, always you are harassed by the police and if you do not pay the bribe you will go to jail. There is a distinction slight bit of tongue that changes [dialect]… so they know that you are not from this part.*

The corruption of the Kenyan police is well documented (Crisp 1999; Moret *et al.* 2006) and there have been numerous claims of how police officers deliberately manipulated the policy requiring all refugees to reside in camps for their own gain (Farah 2000; Horst 2006b; Lewis 2008). Migrants suspected of being 'illegals' were targeted and threatened with detention in jail unless bribes were paid (Moret *et al.* 2006; Horst 2006b).

For those women who had joined their relatives, there had been certain expectations based on custom and clan responsibilities, but these were not always met. Clan members and close relatives did indeed do their best to provide food, accommodation and limited paid employment, but they had to be vigilant if they were to avoid police persecution as aiding an illegal migrant could result in serious consequences. These difficulties had not been anticipated by the women and, once they were living as refugees, the long term effects of their 'choice' continued to impact on their lives and sense of self, with, those who evaded the legal system having different but equally damaging experiences to those who went to the refugee camps.

Three of the women said they were also extremely troubled by the consequences that detention by the police might have for their relatives. These concerns were related to the additional financial burden that the paying of bribes, placed on those who were assisting them with food and accommodation. The women had feared that relations might become strained because of the financial demands on their families, or more seriously, if the police started to take a particular interest in them. This was a significant issue for those Kenyan Somalis who ran their own small businesses and for who increased police surveillance could make life difficult. For example, the women spoke of the frequent scrutiny of the identities of staff and customers in places like internet cafes, restaurants or shops owned by Kenyan Somalis, which they said was not good for business. Desperate to avoid any unwarranted attention for their hosts, the women said they had to be extremely careful when they left the house.

Sara recalled her increased nervousness after she was questioned by the police and had been forced to pay a bribe to avoid arrest. She stated:

> *Always you are looking [watching for the police] stressful and making you very nervous… and my abti [uncle] he took me to where I was working in his car … it was a short distance and I could easily walk but I was nervous that the police would stop me again and so he [her uncle] helped me enormously.*

Living in a Refugee Camp

The losses that arose from the initial flight were only the start of the series of losses experienced by the women, including those who had gone to the refugee camps. The term refugee camp, at least in a Western context, connotes notions of safety and security, offering temporary accommodation in an emergency and from where individuals are moved on either for resettlement in another country or repatriated, back home, once the immediate threat has dissipated (Hyndeman 2000). However, this does not match the descriptions of camp life given by the women who said that they had stayed in one of Kenya's four refugee camps (see figure four) nor does it match the findings of several reports on refugee camps (UNHCR 2011b; Abdi 2006; Horst 2006b).

Figure Four: Map of Refugee Camps in Kenya and Surrounding Areas (UNHCR 2009)
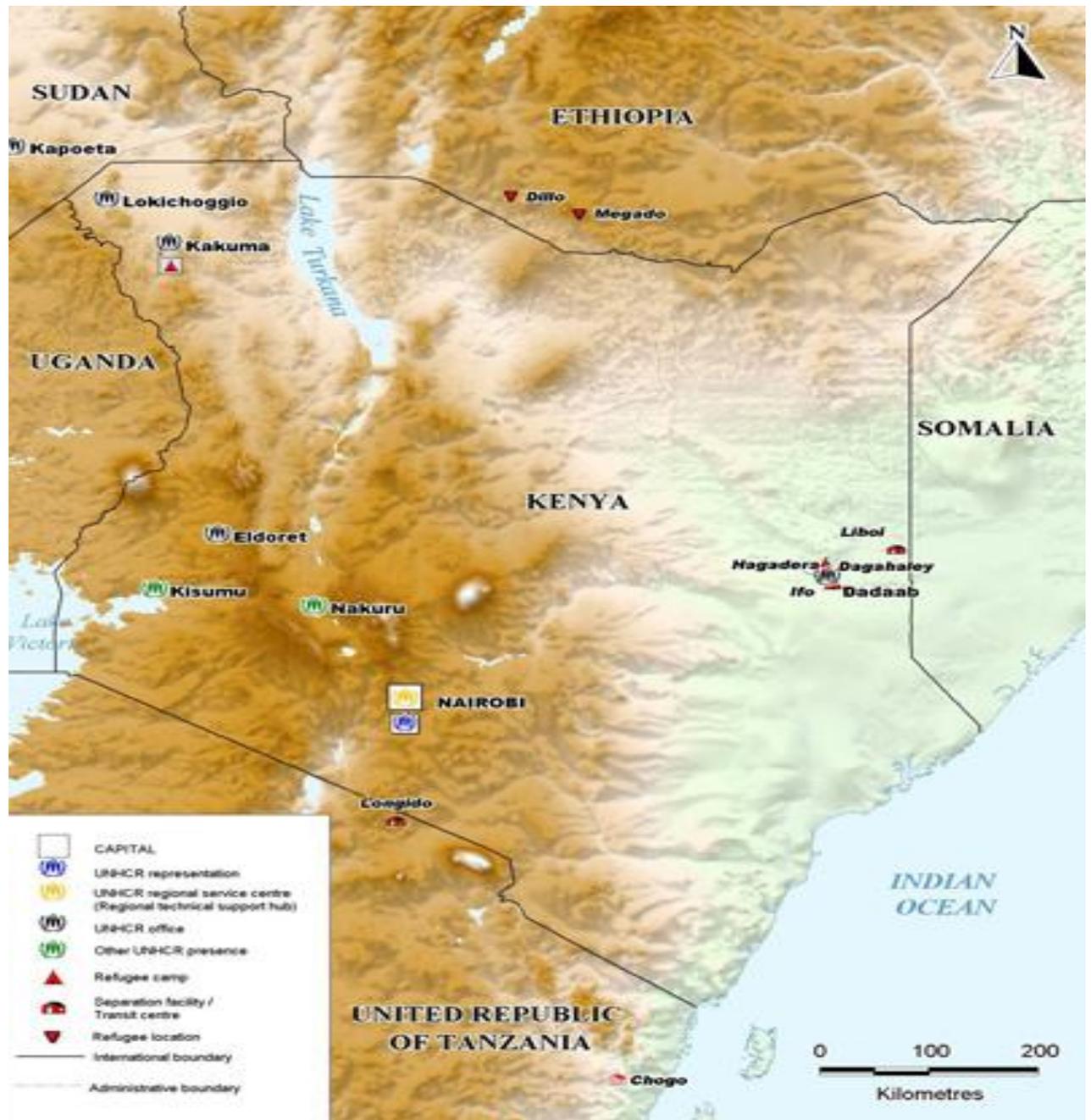
Three of the camps are in the Dadaab region in the North Eastern Province (Ifo, Dagahaley and Hagadera) and are the camps from which most of the women came. The camps in the Dadaab region, are located about 100km from the Somali Kenyan border. The land is described as semi-arid making it unsuitable for agricultural production and

Dadaab has an extremely poor infrastructure (Abdi 2006; Horst 2006b). The area is predominately inhabited by Kenyan Somali pastoralists and is insecure due to frequent attacks by *shifta* (Somali bandits) (Gardner and El Bushra 2004; Horst 2006b). The Dadaab camps, originally built in 1991, were meant to accommodate a maximum of 90,000 refugees (CARE International 1995). However, at the time of writing it is reported that the numbers of refugees in Dadaab had increased to around 400,000 (UNHCR 2011b). In recent months there has been an outbreak of cholera at Dadaab with at least 60 people being affected (UNHCR 2011b).

The fourth camp, Kakuma, is located in the Turkana region of Northern Kenya in an extremely remote, semi-arid area, halfway between Lockichockio and Lodwar. This is the hottest and most arid part of Kenya and the Turkana people are traditionally nomadic relying on goats and donkey herding for their existence. Kakuma has a population of about 50 000 mainly Sudanese refugees, with a smaller number from Somalia approximately 21,000, and some Ethiopians and Eritreans and therefore like the other camps is overpopulated leading to problems of service provision, including staples such as food and water (UNHCR 2011b).

Despite having been in different refugee camps, the women told very similar stories which, amongst other things, included descriptions of their shelters in the camps. Dwellings were said to be mainly tents or made of mud bricks. Otherwise they were constructed from sticks, pieces of metal and plastic as well as sacking. Although they were intended to be temporary places of shelter, in some cases, these dwellings had housed inhabitants for up to 16 years. In consequence, the women reported feeling unsafe and insecure, as they believed that the places in which they had been forced to live, offered them little protection either from the difficult weather conditions or in terms of physical security, as Shakri explained;

> In Somalia we had houses, doors, we could lock but you can imagine in the camps [there was] only tents and anyone could easily cut them and gain entry.

Hyndeman (2000) has argued that the lack of real protection offered to lone refugee women enclosed in camps meant that, although officially in protection, in reality they were forced to live in the most unprotected areas and relegated to sub citizen status. In Daddab an official response to such concerns about the state of the buildings had been to fence the camps with thorn bushes that were meant to hinder intruders from accessing the refugees living quarters, however as Salima reported;

*They [UNHCR] planted bushes and said this is to protect us …
but even a small child can easily gain entry.*

Abdi (2006) has drawn attention to the fact that in nomadic Somali culture livestock would always be fenced in, and suggests that using the simile of the fences surrounding the camps, equates, at least in the minds of the refugees, to the situation of domestic animals who are fenced in by their owners. In the context of camp life, the owners are the camp administration and the Kenyan government. Abdi (2006) draws the conclusion that the camps spatial enclosure with thorn bushes, which were intended to allay the violence against refugee women, in fact contributed to their heightened sense of vulnerability. Given the place of women in Somali society, where male superiority is taken for granted and chauvinistic attitudes are reinforced (Lewis 2008; Abdi 2007; Gardner and El Bushra 2004) the women were corralled like animals and so were easy prey for the men, akin to sheep being predated by wolves (Abdi 2007).

Sara described how she had spent about four weeks in one of the Dadaab camps before bribing a camp official who then issued her with a Kenyan identity card[1]. Ownership of this identity card meant she was able to leave the camp. She managed to travel to Mombasa, funding her travels by selling the gold jewellery which she had concealed during her flight from Somalia. Once in Mombassa she was able to locate her relatives who offered her assistance. She said;

*Because some of my family live in Kenya [in Mombassa]… my
mother's family … it wasn't very hard for us [once she had
managed to locate her family]*

Sara considered herself to be one of the lucky ones. She and her three children spent only a short period of time in the camp. However for those forced to remain in the camps life was extremely difficult.   Mothers were petrified that they or their daughters would be raped.

Fear of Rape

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[1] Identity cards are issued by UNHCR to refugees who need to leave the camp for example for health/ emergency related reasons and need to travel. Whilst these cards are difficult to obtain refugees with the economic means to pay can bribe officials and so can travel within Kenya (Moret et al 2006)

Rape had become a key weapon in the Somali war and the women who fled Somalia; thinking they were leaving it behind, found that they were residing in a setting where sexual violence against women was prevalent. Indeed a range of reports point out that refugee camps have become notorious for such violence (Abdi 2007; Musse 1993). In this study 17 of the 19 women individually interviewed said that their greatest fear had been the threat of being raped or of their daughters being raped. Activities such as visiting the toilet block or collecting firewood were reported to be the times when the women were most afraid as they had to move away from their own living areas to other spaces in which they felt more vulnerable.

The constant fear of rape during the war in Somalia had resulted in many women changing their traditional dress codes and the women said that had started to wear tight trousers under their *dirac* (dress). The idea was that if attacked, in the time it would take the perpetrator to remove the trousers, help might come. As the fear of rape that had been endemic in war torn Somalia was replicated in the camps, so women continued the wearing of trouser (Abdi 2007).

Yasmin said;

> *Wearing the pants it's like important for us, in the camp men and they are looking at the young girls even though they have their wives, and you don't feel safe. … it's like; if someone tries to attack you it is harder for them [with pants on]*

It can be seen that, although the women were geographically away from the war in Somalia, the gunshot and the bombings, other characteristics of war had followed them to their place of supposed safety.

Rape Itself

The women seemed to have been vulnerable to different groups of men. Four of the women (Shakri, Mariam, Ladaan and Waris) reported that Kenyan soldiers committed most of the rapes, however others (Nadiya, Idil, and Sara argued strongly that the blame should not only be attributed to the Kenyans, as men from rival clans had also targeted women and girls in the camps. The majority of these attacks took place as the women had feared, when they went to collect firewood and were in small groups or alone in the bush where no one could hear their cries for help.

> *…The Somali men what they do is they protect their ladies [women from their own clan families] … they follow you until when you go deep inside the jungle and nobody will hear you crying or shouting they take advantage … [rape]*

(Shakri)

All of those who had lived in a camp, recalled stories of women they knew or had heard about who had been sexually violated. This was reported by focus group participants, as well as those who had been individually interviewed. However, it was noted that focus group participants spoke about the experiences of women they knew or had heard about, rather than speaking about their own experiences, perhaps, because an admission of rape, by a Somali woman, is an admission of guilt. Women who admit to rape jeopardise their social standing in the community and are likely to be dishonoured, ostracised and labelled as prostitutes (Gardner and El Bushra 2004; Musse 1993). In a world where they had lost so much, the risk of losing respect from their new contacts and hence their new community was just too great.

Reporting on her observations of what had been happening to the women Shakri said;

> *I have seen my neighbours screaming and shouting all the night and then in the morning I try to ask them what was happening … I said tell me I promise I won't say anything. I tried many many times and then* [eventually] *they were saying this and that happened to me [telling her about their rape] … and then I tried to report and they [*the officials in the camp] *are telling me, what are you talking about. No one is listening, you are speaking rubbish…*

Her account provided some indication of just how difficult it was for women who had been raped to report what had happened to them. Herman (1997: 68) argues that women who are raped are not only violated but dishonoured. Not only was there the shame and dishonour associated with being violated, there was also the distress and humiliation of not being believed. The shame and guilt they experienced might well be dependent on the judgment meted out to them by others (Herman 1997). For Shakri, this certainly seemed the case, for not only was her own disclosure of rape disbelieved by her community but, having gained the trust of others who had also been raped, when she tried to report what had happened to them she was again not believed. Speaking of her own experience, she said;

> *… at the end of the day when you come back to your family [after being raped] you don't say cause if you say they will beat you up to death or kill you… and there is no assistance from anywhere …*

A lack of in-depth investigation and therefore successful prosecution of rape led to a situation where anarchy and impunity were common (Hyndeman 2000). It was often difficult to bring suspects to trial because of the inability to offer adequate witness protection and the fear of revenge attacks (Abdi 2006). Moreover, women had little access to the legal system, as the nearest courts to Dadaab and Kakuma were over 100 kilometres away (Gardner and El Bushra 2004).

The UNHCR (2005) reported a dramatic drop in the number of rapes reported from 200 in 1993, to between 70 and 105 in the next four years as security measures were introduced. There was an increase to 164 in 1998, before dropping again to 71 in 1999, 82 in 2000, 72 in 2001 and 188 in 2002 (UNHCR 2005). However as pointed out by Abdi (2006) and identified in the testimonies of the women who participated in this study, these statistics do not convey either the true numbers or the terror of rape as perceived by the women.

Shakri described the extent to which some of the women she knew in the refugee camp went to conceal their experience of rape. She narrated how women, including those who suffered the additional trauma of having their circumcision cut open by the rapist, rather than seek help tried to hide their injuries at great physical and emotional costs to themselves. For many women there was not even the option of changing the clothes in which they has been raped, as they simply did not own anything else to wear   Shakri summarised;

> *… some of them even they are bleeding [from the injuries sustained] but they won't say, they just keep their clothes*[on] *and try to hide the bleeding they just keep it* [their rape and the injuries sustained, to themselves] *…*

The women received little assistance from the camp authorities and therefore tried to devise ways of keeping themselves safe, but no matter what they did, nothing seemed to work. Recognising that the Kenyan soldiers were targeting dwellings inhabited only by women, because cooking areas tended to be erected outside of those tents, promptly removed their cooking pots. The idea was to trick the soldiers into believing that men occupied the tents, as the men tended not to cook. Sara and Shakri both reported that, whilst this was initially successful, the soldiers soon become aware of what they were

doing and resorted to searching through all the tents, rather than only targeting those they believed were inhabited solely by women.

> *… but the soldiers talked and then they knew what we were doing and they just searched, two, three, four of them in the night… we could do nothing …*

(Shakri)

Men who happened to be occupants of any tents being searched were subjected to threats and beatings if they protested. In the light of such reports, it was perhaps to be expected that it was very difficult for the women to feel any sense of security and safety in the camps. They had found it difficult to sleep at night and reported that they had felt extremely stressed, anxious and depressed. It was evident that sexual violence whether real or perceived was an inherent characteristic of camp life. The women stated that the camp authorities paid little attention to the trauma being inflicted on them. They believed that the Kenyan police stationed in the camps were frightened of the *shiftas* and therefore did not provide any protection for the women. In addition the Kenyan police are reputed to be corrupt and brutal (Abdi 2006: Goldsmith 1997 and Human Rights Watch 1997).

The distrust and fear of those responsible for protecting the women in the camps left the women with little opportunity to negotiate their precarious situation of outsider, non–citizen in camps that were closed and located in the most marginal areas of Kenya. Although rape, safety and security dominated a number of the interviews and had clearly been a key concern for the women, other issues were also discussed by them.

Access to Food and Water

Issues related to the amount and appropriateness of the food provided also compromised women's safety and security. There were concerns about the amount of food received with many reports given of how it was not enough to last for the period it was supposed to;

> *…, we were often hungry and nothing to give to the kids to eat. You can imagine how hard it was … We had no milk, meat or rice and the beans and cereal we received was only enough for a few days although it should last two weeks …*

(Participant, focus group three)

Horst (2006b) has documented how the rations distributed to refugees in the Dadaab camps provided for only 65–70% of their most basic needs. Many refugees had to supplement their income in order to buy food and therefore jobs within the camp were highly sought after. For example CARE[2] employs in excess of 1000 refugees in a variety of jobs including community development workers, and teachers (Horst 2006b). In this study none of the women reported being employed whilst in the camps, although prior to fleeing from Somalia several of them had experience of working in professional jobs such as teaching, working in the health services or as government administrators. The lack of employment amongst the women in this study had serious physical and psychological implications for their health and well-being as well as that of their children, for without the opportunity to work they could not supplement their rations through buying extra provisions. In addition, the opportunity to work would have given them a position and status in the camp, something they lacked, and would thus have been a first step in rebuilding their lives and taking control over their future One woman explained;

> *The food distributed was reduced ... and we had to sell some of the food to buy a cup of milk for the smallest children, but one glass of milk was 10 [Kenyan] shillings…. I tried to find work as a maid so I could feed the kids but there was no work as everybody looking for a job … we had to beg … from people who got help from their relatives abroad.*

(Participant, focus group three)

As this participant described only those refugees receiving remittances form the diaspora were able to supplement their scare rations and whilst they did their best to share what they had, there was never enough for everyone. Many of the women claimed that they had looked for work with no success. However, one woman desperate to do something to occupy her time and distract herself from the problems that surrounded her, said she cleaned the house of one of the aid agency's staff for free, as the woman had befriended her. After some time, the worker started to give her a small amount of cash which was used to supplement the family's meagre rations. No other participants spoke about earning any additional income.

Most of the women reported that their health had suffered whilst they were in the camps and that this was due to the traumas that they had experienced prior to and during their

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[2] CARE International is one of the world's top three aid agencies, fighting poverty and injustice in over 70 countries around the world.

flight. However, they also complained that they did not have enough nutritious food to keep healthy. IRIN (the humanitarian news and analysis service) reporting on information received from Mèdecins Sans Frontières[3] (MSF 2009), validates the women's testimonies. They reported a dramatic increase of 172 per cent in the malnutrition rates of Somali refugee children, within a period of six months, due to a decrease of more than a third, in the general food distribution in the camps (IRIN 2001). More recently, Human Rights Watch (2009) reported that the camps in Kenya faced a dire nutritional situation and that an unacceptably large percentage of children, five years old or younger, were suffering from malnutrition. Furthermore refugees are given the minimum amount of food (2,100kcal per day) required under the SPHERE Standards[4]. The shortage of food in the camp further compromised women's safety and security as it was common for them to be targeted for their food cards or to have their supplies stolen shortly after these had been collected. Khadra, who spoke through an interpreter, reported what had happened to her whilst in the camp when her entire supply of food had been stolen the day after she had received it. She said;

> *They [men from other clans] can easily take the supplies and you can do nothing. You are telling the authorities and they just send you away and you are going to another family who has nothing to give you. It was terrible…*

In addition to the insufficient rations they received, many of the women said there were also problems with the quality and type of food distributed to them, with several of them arguing that the food was not fit for human consumption. Typical concerns was that there was no variety and that maize, the grain most often supplied was not traditionally part of the Somali diet, was no good for making bread and was therefore culturally inappropriate. Sara explained;

> *The kind of food we used to eat at home it was not there [unavailable in the camp] …. Most of the food we was having was poor quality …* [we got] *diarrhoea we were sick.*

The women also reported their difficulties in accessing enough clean water for cooking, cleaning and washing. Nine of the women reported that they had frequently queued for several hours in the hot sun in order to try and get enough water for their daily needs. Khadra, and Mariam said that they had witnessed trouble at the water pumps, as women desperate to get enough clean water would become stressed to the extent that

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[3] MSF is the aid agency responsible for health care, in Kenya's refugee camps.
[4] The SPHERE Standards are minimum standards agreed by humanitarian agencies that they seek to achieve in all humanitarian interventions. See http//www.sphereproject.org.

frustration led to heated arguments with scuffles breaking out between them. I personally observed such scuffles whilst visiting the refugee camp in Kakuma in 2007. A crowd of women had gathered at a water pump waiting for the water supply to be resumed after it had been interrupted earlier in the day. After some time, probably about an hour to an hour and a half, the water supply was restored and those at the front of the crowd started to fill their water carriers. However, those nearer to the back grew restless, at being kept waiting, and started to push forwards, arguing that there would be no water left for them. The pushing and quarrelling eventually erupted into skirmishes, as some women desperate to fill their own containers tried to push others out of the way. It was reported by camp officials that this was not uncommon.

The United Nations Standards for the Treatment of Refugees (UNHCR 1982) calls for a minimum of 20 litres of water to be available, per person each day. However, with the population in the camps outpacing the water available, it has been reported that some refugees had to survive on less than 3 litres per day (UNHCR 2004). Under these circumstances water had to be utilised very sparingly and inevitably was used and reused. Four women said that their health and that of their children had been affected because they had been forced to use dirty water for washing and cooking. Sara explained;

> *Water was a big priority for us ... it was impossible, we sometimes did not even have enough to give to the children … they got sick.*

Another woman reported that she had seen children who had become very ill, and died, because the only water available to them for drinking had been contaminated water.

> *children are dehydrated [from a lack of enough clean water] they got bad diarrhoea…*
>
> (Shakri)

Cholera has remained a key area of concern in Kenya's refugee camps, although outbreaks have been far less frequent than during the 1990s. In early 2005 an outbreak resulted in 418 people being treated and four dying (Shultz *et al.* 2009). At the time of writing there have been further outbreaks of cholera in Kenya (UNHCR 2011b).

Water, was not only needed for drinking, cooking and cleaning but also for washing and personal hygiene. For some of the women a lack of water meant it was sometimes

difficult for them to wash after using the toilets as well as in preparation for prayers, a great problem in a faith which clearly dictates standards of cleanliness. Idil reported how ashamed she felt because she was unable to wash as often as was needed. She also spoke of her reluctance to visit the toilet because these were shared with men, and cultural norms meant that women and men, who were not closely related, should be separated in such aspects of daily life. Even when water was available, it was sometimes difficult for her to wash because she felt that the men were too close to the area where the women washed. She was concerned that she would be followed and watched. For her this problem was exacerbated because she had a medical condition, which meant that she needed to wash frequently. She reported that at times this had caused her to feel depressed and to stay within her tent. She felt unclean and was afraid the other women would gossip about her. Her account is but one example of the difficulties women who lived in the camps faced and the repercussions that arise when water one of the most basic resources of life is severely limited.

All the women complained about stress. Some women said they had become depressed and several of them reported that they had developed a chronic illness such as hypertension, diabetes or asthma. Skin and eye infections were also common, especially amongst the children. One woman said that her menstruation had stopped and attributed this to the stress of living in the camp. The huge influx of refugees in the camp meant that medical supplies had to be carefully utilised (UNHCR 2004). Medical assistance was not always available. Some of the women said there was no medical care available even for those who were in labour. Shakri gave a vivid description of one woman who died in labour, she said;

> You can imagine… the baby head is outside, maybe she needs somebody to just cut [her circumcision] a little… when her husband came back she was dead.

In one of the focus groups there was a lengthy discussion in both Somali and English, as stories were swapped about the conditions witnessed or experienced when people needed medical assistance and it was not forthcoming. Accounts were given about women who had died because of a lack of appropriate medical care or because they were so malnourished that they could not survive childbirth. One woman explained;

> *They [women in labour] don't have enough blood, they anaemic and they don't have enough food … no good medical assistance … a lot of women died in labour … they were very weak and some of them went crazy. I myself have witnessed.*

> (Participant, focus group two)

The women faced a range of problems in the camp however bracketing and reduction of the data makes it clear that the major worry had been the lack of security within the camps. However, women were also troubled by the lack of access to the most basic resources needed to sustain a decent quality of life. A lack of clean water and sufficient nutritious food meant that they and their children were susceptible to many infectious diseases including cholera. Access to appropriate health care was also an issue. Detailed reports were given of personal and observed suffering because there was a lack of appropriately trained medical staff, as well as the resources needed in terms of pharmaceuticals and specialist equipment to adequately care for and treat the refugees, many of whom would have arrived traumatised or suffering from injuries sustained during the war or on route. However, those travelling to Europe also faced difficulties as they attempted to negotiate safe travel out of Africa.

Fleeing to Europe

Whilst safety and security had not been key concerns for the two women who had fled to the West, they too faced difficulties as they ran to a place where nearly every aspect of life was different from that in Somalia. In both cases it was the fear of what would happen to them on route that had caused them the most anxiety, as they had no idea how they would reach a country of safety or who would assist them. Saida, whose father had been killed during the war, and whose uncle had arranged for her to be smuggled out of Somalia, expressed how she had felt when she was made aware that she would be leaving the war zone. As she narrated her story she emphasised;

> *Well I didn't know where I was going, that was the thing… just knew we was getting out of the country. … knew we weren't gonna die because of the war which we didn't care where we were going cause it was safe.*

Saida did not say much else about her journey out of Somalia except that she had been very relieved to find out that she was in England when she arrived at the airport. The

other woman did not speak about her the journey apart from reporting that it was her family who had made the decision to send her to another country, because they had feared that she would be harmed. She had been extremely frightened, as she had left unaccompanied by any of her relatives and did not know if she would ever see her family again. In both cases described, young, unmarried women had travelled alone but their travel had been arranged by their immediate family but with the assistance of relatives who were settled abroad. This was a strategy used by middle class Somalis during the war, as in many cases it was not desirable or affordable for the entire family to leave (Farah 2000). Young unmarried women were considered one of the most vulnerable groups and a high value was put on protecting their honour, so it was they who were often sent to relatives in the West (Abdi 2006).

Family and Intimate Relations

Many families had become separated in the confusion that occurs when large numbers of people are forcibly displaced from their country. The loss of close members of the family, as they fled to a supposed place of safety, was an experience shared by all of the women. Nasra who went to the Netherlands, could be considered to be an exception to this, as she travelled with six of her eight children and her sick husband however she left behind two of her grown up children and other members of the extended family. A key concern for many women, therefore, was trying to find out what had happened to their relatives, if they were alive or dead, and if they had survived how they would be reunited. Sara summarised;

> *It was really really hard really hard because we were to a refugee*
> *camp and we didn't know where any of our family was.*

In the refugee camps, international organisations such as the Red Cross Tracing and Messaging Service or UNICEF were instrumental in trying to locate missing relatives (UNHCR 2005). Reports were given of how, for the lucky few, the dream of locating family members had become a reality. Some of the women said that it was this hope, that one day their relatives would be found, that had kept them going. One woman, who had been separated from her family, explained;

> *All of us came out of it [the war]… We were all scattered my*
> *grandparents were like separated and my sisters and two*
> *brothers, my uncle … and my mum she was looking for us … The*
> *BBC Somali service which finds people* [you] *just say your name*

> *and your age and your clan … . It was through the Red Cross*
> *they find us, except my father … he died actually in the war*

(Participant, focus group one)

For this participant, although she had lost her father, there had been the relief of being reunited with other members of her family. For others there had been no such relief and despite their best efforts, to date they have not managed to locate anyone.

> *So I got split up from my husband …. So obviously you'd left the*
> *rest of your family behind… so you go to Red Cross … and you*
> *hope … you just keep hoping and praying.*

(Zeinab)

Although those living outside of the camp, were, for the most part, assisted by their clans people, the tracing of close family members from whom they had become separated was extremely difficult, as the Red Cross and other tracing services only operated within the camps. Kenyan Somalis did their best to help but in most cases their searches proved futile and women were left not knowing what had happened to their closest relatives.

The situation in which the women found themselves ultimately affected their health and this subsequently impacted on their ability to adequately care for their children. Mariam reported;

> *… you have to look after your kids as there is no one to help but it*
> *was very difficult … but you are not well yourself …*

Without the support of their family members women had no option but to struggle with their children as best they could. As Safia recounted in her testimony

> *… many of my family members missing and I thought I would go*
> *crazy with the worry … you can imagine … for the first time in*
> *your life you are alone, only the children and there is* no [support
> from close family members] *to help.*

The women described the difficult decisions they were forced to make. They said that they had worried about many things as they fled the war zone, but especially about the welfare of their children, particularly the younger ones who needed to be carried as they could not walk. For a few women the decision had to be made about whether it would be safer to leave them behind with a relative or try to take them along. If they took the children with them there was the problem of finding someone who would be willing to

assist them in carrying the youngest children and who could be trusted not to abandon a child, especially when that child's crying could attract the attention of the militia thus potentially putting the entire party in danger. Even several years later the anguish was evident in their voices, as they told their stories. Zeinab described the predicament she had faced;

> *… the older ones they could walk but the two youngest, I needed some assistance … There was no one … it was very difficult*.

For Salima the fear of travelling at night with small children had been extremely frightening;

> *It was very dangerous … we had to travel at night* [to avoid the risk of being seen] *…militia, gunmen everywhere shooting, robbing, beating.*

Unlike many of the men, women as mothers could not simply leave the conflict areas. Sara relayed her thoughts on what it meant to be a woman with the responsibility of children whilst running away from the war;

> *I think most people who don't have children are fortunate. When you have a small child and you're in a situation where* [it] *is so bad you just have to make the sacrifice and find another place, you had to do whatever you can, it's not just about you.*

For Sara, women without children were now considered to be the fortunate ones, which Is a direct contradiction to Somali norms and values. Traditionally, in Somali society as in many developing countries, such is the importance placed on married couples having many children, women without children were considered socially dead, likely to be divorced by their husbands and to suffer rejection from their communities (Lewis 2008: Gardner and El Bushra 2004). Whilst Sara's testimony gives no indication of any rejection of her children, it does give some insight into how difficult the women felt their lives had become.

Whilst some women received assistance from aid agencies in trying to locate missing family members this was not the case for all the women.   Those from whom they sought help treated some with disdain. One woman described how whilst running away from the troubles in Somalia, she had become separated from her husband and three children. She had been in the camp [Ifo] for two weeks with no word of what had happened to most of her family. Desperate to find her children, she requested she leave

the camp to search for them. This woman had relatives who were Kenyan Somalis and believed that if she contacted them, they might have news of her children and husband or could at least help her to find them. She recalled her shock that her request to be allowed to go and search for news of her children was met with utter contempt and the response that she must be crazy, she almost shouted at this point in the interview, she retorted;

> *I said to them [the camp officials] I want to leave this place and find my people [clan family], they will help me find my kids. They [the camp officials] said to me … you are mad woman … you cannot leave unless you go back to your war … you are foreigner here, a refugee … We do not want you refugees running all around Kenya*

(Participant, focus group three)

This woman spent several years without any knowledge of what had happened to her family. About two years after her resettlement to England she was reunited with her children who had been living in Sweden as unaccompanied refugee minors. She has never seen her husband again but she believes he has migrated to the United States where he has married again and started another family.

The welfare of their children was also a key issue for the women who lived outside of the camps. Those women with children (Sara, Nasra and Safia) said that what mattered to them after the initial period of arrival when basic survival had been a priority, was to try to establish some kind of normality for their children. All three women spoke of their distress when they had found out that it was impossible for their children to attend school in Kenya as without birth certificates or identity papers, the children's status would be questioned and could mean that the police would demand the see the family's identity papers. If they were unable to provide these they would either have to pay a large bribe or be arrested (Gardner and El Bushra 2004). For Sara, Nasra and Safia such news further compounded their sense of loss and of being a displaced people who had no rights to even a basic education for their children.

> *refugee it is like a person, someone who has nothing, a person who abandoned his territory and has nothing, no rights … not even the kids to go to school.*

(Nasra)

Sara described just how devastating this news was to her. She had been one of the first Somali women in her town to gain a university degree. She described how during the late 1970s and 1980s, Siad Barre under his socialist regime, ran mass literacy campaigns which meant that for the first time in Somalia, women were actively encouraged to access education. Sara, who highly valued the education she had received and whose husband had gained a doctorate at a university outside of Somalia, placed a high value on the education of her children. The news that they would be unable to attend school because of their status, was heart breaking for her. She said;

> *When I learnt the news [that the children could not go to school] I almost went crazy, what was I to do I asked my auntie, how will they learn … . They will become nothing, no future at all … .*

She recalled how, prior to escaping from the refugee camp, she had made enquiries and had learnt that her two eldest children would have been eligible to attend school in the camp. However the conditions in the camp were just too awful for her to even contemplate returning there. As she stressed in her interview;

> *There were a lot of problems in Somalia because of the war and the fighting [but] … the quality of camp life was very poor … I was very frightened, it was not safe … in the camps we were threatened every day, there was no security at all.*

Despite the difficulties Sara had faced whilst living in Mombassa and the disappointment that as 'illegals' her children could not attend school, she felt life in Mombassa was in her words '*a thousand times better than living in the camp*' .

> *Mombassa it was ok … the children they were happy and healthy. We teach them at home and they had good food … everybody was glad that we had left the camp and after a time you accept the life .*

> (Sara)

Whilst for Sara conditions were better in Mombassa than in the refugee camp, her freedom was severely constrained. Zeinab summarised;

> *As a mother it is up to you to make sure your kids are ok, and being in a country that is not your own, there is no freedom … You are a nobody like you don't exist, so you know your kids are not ok and you are worried all the time day and night about what will happen [in the future].*

Concerns about the welfare of their children, who they had now realised would never be able to enjoy the freedom that had been hoped for in the host country, bore heavily on the minds of the women and left them feeling anxious and depressed about the future

prospects for themselves and their children. Such feelings undoubtedly impacted upon the women's sense of self. This will be examined in the next essence, 'Changing Norms and Values' which provides an in-depth discussion of how the conditions in the host country affected the women's perceptions of themselves as Somali women, who were now a displaced people, living in a country that they could not identify with and where they were labelled as 'illegals' or refugees. The women who went to Europe and Ethiopia had little to say about how their experiences had affected them in terms of their norms and values and therefore, this discussion focuses primarily on those who went to Kenya.

Changing Norms and Values

The women described a range of experiences that left them both demoralised and dehumanised within the host country. From the descriptions given, it would appear that refugee status and camp life had resulted in a loss of any respect, dignity or humanity. Several women explained that they felt they had been living in a state of limbo. They described how dismayed they had been by their dependence on the inadequate aid metered out to them. These women reported how, after the emergency period, when they were provided with shelter, food and limited medical attention, they then started to feel that their self-worth had diminished because of their inability to better their situation or to escape the regimes of camp life, as illustrated by this woman;

> *Always you are* [were] *sitting waiting, just waiting and with nothing to do … you are nothing just a refugee … you feel there is no hope … no body is interested in you. You will remain* [in the camp] *all your life.*

(Participant, focus group one)

Women reported how bad they had felt that they were no longer able to care adequately for their children.

> *As a mother, you just feel it is up to you to look after the children … when you see your child is in need and you cannot do anything … you to feel very bad and like you are not a proper mother.*

(Participant, focus group one)

The women reported how they felt that the camp officials saw them as a nuisance that they did not want in their country. Requests for assistance were often treated with disdain and contempt:

> *I was shot, the bullet it was there* [points to the top of her groin]*, I was so ashamed to say … I was in pain … I told the woman at the camp. She ignored me and so I said again I am sick I have been shot she shouted at me and said you people have so many problems and you bring them all here. We have many sick people in Kenya … she told me to go sit and so I went … , I was so ashamed and the bullet it was there all the time* [she was in the camp] *and I was in a lot of pain….*

> (Salima)

The women's stories echo Farah's (2000: 19) description of the enormity of despair amongst the Somalis he interviewed in Kenya's refugee camps who said the way in which they were treated, stripped them of their dignity and reduced them to 'a state of someone to whom things were done'. Their experiences resulted in many of them saying that they felt dehumanised which had a major impact on their sense of self. These two issues can be seen within the context of the total institution (Goffman 1961). In a camp situation, real power lies with the lead non-governmental organisation. In Kenya, this was UNHCR who had absolute power over almost everything within its confines and thus exerted power over nearly every aspect of the women's lives; what they ate, where they lived and the opportunities to access work, education or health care. Akin to Goffman's Asylum (1961) there was also a clear demarcation between those who were detained (inmates in Goffman's language) and the smaller group of those who supervised them. As Goffman (1961) pointed out relations between the two tended to be hostile with staff often seeing inmates as untrustworthy, bitter and secretive, whilst inmates frequently perceived staff as highhanded and mean.

From the data provided by the women it is clear that Goffman's (1961) concept of total institutions, can be applied to camp life, in that if a person lives in such a system their individuality is constrained.

> *…I'm middle class Somali, my father was well educated and even my mum but in the camp we were like prisoners, there was no freedom and you are told to do this and that and to go here and there and you cannot think anything for yourself. … I am a qualified health professional but was just sitting around all the day worrying. …*

> (Nadiya)

and the dignity of the individual was disregarded

> *I saw them [the camp officials] the lady was really sick I think she had been raped and could not even look after her kids, they were just yelling at her …, giving her no assistance*

(Shakri)

The individual's lives are highly regimented with little attention given to the personal desires or inclinations; and escape was not an option. Finally like Goffman's (1961) inmates, lone women, the most vulnerable group in the camps were forced to live in the most unsafe places, where they were easy prey for anyone wanting to take advantage of their vulnerability.

Several women spoke about their perceptions of the term *qoxooti*[5] (refugee), a label that they had come to identify within the camps, but which traditionally had negative connotations and was associated with someone who is weak. The term would not be one that any individual used to describe themselves but rather to talk about others who were seen as undesirables (Farah 2000). As Salima said;

> *… when someone tells you that you are a refugee it hurts, really hurts…, you feel like you are despised, weak … less than other people. … I became depressed when that word was used … at first [when newly arrived at the camp] I say I am not refugee I am Somali but they [camp officials] just laughed and slowly I knew that I was qoxooti because I am very weak woman who cannot do anything by myself.*

For Salima, the term refugee, or *qoxooti,* was heard when she first arrived in the camp. She vehemently tried to disassociate from this. However, the regimes and constraints of camp life eventually led to a situation where she accepted she was living in a protracted state of limbo and felt helpless to change her situation. She was proud of her education and professional, middle class status when living in Somalia, but, as camp life eroded her self-esteem and self-worth, she began to identify herself as someone who was dependent on others in all aspects of her life. Other women also had negative portrayals of themselves as refugees, associating the term and by definition themselves, with someone who was suffering, weak or in a state of hopelessness. As one participant explained;

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[5] Prior to 1991 the term qoxooti was always associated with Somali – Ethiopian refugees who had fled to Somalia in the 1970s and 1980s. For Somalis the term carried multiple negative connotations and a person referred to as qoxooti is perceived as someone with an undesirable identity (Farah 2000).

> *… in the camp cos we was suffering … we had nothing for ourselves, ... and we was begging for food. That is how we interpret the word refugee. It is not a pleasant word.*

(Participant, focus group three)

Farah (2000) amongst others (Human Rights Watch 2009: Harell-Bond 1986) has argued that instead of hospitality in the camps, refugees in limbo often experience exploitation, extreme insecurity and constant harassment. After a period of time in the camps the majority of refugees assume a state of victimization, which is internalised and results in them accepting the undesired identity, of a weak person, unable to do anything without the assistance of the authorities (Crisp 2003).

Chapter Summary

Using the phenomenological process of data refining, reduction and reviewing, it was clear that on arrival to their host country, the women believed that they would return to Somalia once the fighting had subsided. However, as the war continued, they became resigned to the fact that Somalia would continue to be a war zone for the foreseeable future. The Kenyan government did not see Kenya as a destination country, but rather as a place of transition, temporarily hosting those seeking asylum (Moret et al, 2006). It did not concern itself with any activities that supported the integration of refugees within or outside of the camps, despite the significant contribution made by the latter group to the local economy (Lindley 2007). Refugees therefore did not have a legally recognised status and were often victims of abuse, harassment and extortion.

The harshness of life for the women, led to a situation in which the women felt they had no choice but to look for a place of safety and security in another country where they could access the resources and facilities needed to improve their life situation. The women knew that resettlement in a third country was the best option for them. For those in the camp UNHCR managed a resettlement programme, but only a very small percentage, of the most vulnerable refugees were considered (UNHCR 2004). Those who lived in Kenya's urban areas such as Nairobi or Mombassa had no access to the UNHCR programme. Only those with the finances to pay an agent or smuggler, often referred to as a *mukhalis* by the women, were able to escape. The next cycle 'Moving On' provides a discussion of the challenges faced by the women as the difficult decision was made to move on from the first country of asylum in order to seek safety elsewhere.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CYCLE THREE
MOVING ON

This cycle focuses on the third stage of the women's experiences, as they discovered that the place to which they had fled for safety was not a place in which they could stay indefinitely. Consequently they had to move on. Three of the women began this next stage of their journey by moving to a different African country, but this was only as another step towards the decision made by every woman to find a place of safety outside Africa altogether. Thus, irrespective of the country to which they had first fled, all the women made a decision to travel to a western country

For all the women, there were significant challenges, both in arranging their travel to the West, and on arrival, adapting to life in an environment that was radically different from that in Africa. It is important to note here that the focus group discussions revealed relatively little information in relation to travel to the West therefore, overall, the descriptions provided are based on the data obtained from the individual interviews. For these women the journey to the West was intensely personal, and whilst willing to share on a one–to–one basis, they openly admitted that it was difficult to discuss such an emotive experience in a group setting. This was an indication of the nature of Somali society, where whilst women have their own groups in which to discuss 'female' issues, their societal taboos dictate that adverse and difficult situations that could be seen as sent from Allah, are just accepted. They pointed out (in the individual settings) that to discuss these challenges within a group could be seen as complaining about the life journey that they have been sent on.

Using phenomenological reduction and epochè (Giorgi 1975: 1997) enabled me to accept the differences between group and individual accounts, whilst still analysing their stories in the context of secondary transition.   This encompasses three types of movement, first, from one host African country to another; displacement within the first country of asylum (mainly from refugee camps to the cities), and finally from Kenya to Europe.

Safety and Security

Leaving the Camps

For two of the participants, onward travel, was arranged by UNHCR as part of a resettlement programme. That so few women, in this study were able to gain access to the West in this way mirrors the literature (UNHCR 2007; Moret *et al.* 2006; Nadig 2002). Whilst resettlement is part of UNHCR's mandate, it is normally only promoted when other solutions such as voluntary repatriation are not feasible or viable (Moret *et al.* 2006). In Britain, UNHCR figures show that under the United Kingdom's Gateway resettlement programme, about 750 refugees are admitted per year (UNHCR 2011a).

Fatima was one of the two women in this study who had been assisted in resettlement by UNHCR. She was a teenager at the time of leaving and travelled from a refugee camp in Ethiopia to England accompanied by her sick mother. Fatima explained that during the five years she had been living in the camp, she had only heard of one or two families being resettled in another country. She reported that many families believed that they would be prioritised for resettlement if they could provide evidence of victimisation such as serious conflict between particular families, or, in the case of rape or serious sexual abuse and being ostracised by the community. In reality, the family or individual tended to be moved to a different camp, not another country. In consequence, she had not really believed that they would ever move on, and the news that both she and her mother were to be resettled in the West, was a welcome shock, a complete surprise, something that she had longed for but did not dare to dream would ever be a reality.

> *I remember my mum she was very ill … diabetes … and I thought she was gonna die, lots of times she had to go to the hospital cos she was very sick and [I]thought you know I would be total orphan. We was in Ethiopia for a long time … it was only me and my mum, my brothers and my father had been lost. Then my mum, she told me, we are to go to another place [to live] and I couldn't believe her.*

Unlike Fatima and her mother, women in this study were forced to resort to their own devices using familial support, social networks or smugglers to escape to the urban areas or to other countries. Most of those who managed to move originally came from middle class families sometimes with family connections in other parts of the world and had been able to rely upon them for assistance. The more educated and wealthy the

women, the more enterprising they appeared to be and this greatly improved their ability to move onwards, reflecting Bourdieu's (1986) argument that social and economic capital, translates (though not always) to better knowledge and opportunities both culturally and globally. This greatly improved the women's chances of moving.

The first step towards onward travel, for those who did not get into a UNHCR programme, involved escaping to the urban areas. Nadiya reported that;

> *My relatives [Kenyan Somalis] they were in town [Nairobi] and because I was in need sent me a small amount [of money] every month so I could survive [in the camp] but my situation every day was getting worse and my habar yar* [maternal aunt who was in USA] *she had heard how bad things were and instructed them* [relatives in town] *to assist me in leaving the camp.*

Leaving the camps had one major disadvantage it entailed the loss of the limited protection offered by UNHCR. Refugees living in the cities had no official status and therefore no access to services. In Kenya the issue of security was particularly salient, with refugees frequently finding themselves subject to police harassment and extortion (see pg. 100). Life was extremely difficult for the women. Amongst other things, finding the money needed to bribe the Kenyan police was a major challenge.

> *Every time* they [the police] *come they wanted money and we didn't have enough to give them so they say we will make trouble for you* [arrest them]
>
> (Sara)

In addition, although willing to do what they could, most ethnic Kenyan Somalis simply could not afford to maintain their refugee family and friends, as they themselves often relied heavily upon assistance from their relatives in the West. Thus the women struggled to survive.

> *In Kenya it's about how much people you can pay to do this or do that* [pay bribes]*. So if you don't have that particular financial power, then you are nothing, you are counting your days [until the police arrest you].*
>
> (Zeinab)

Some faced yet another problem. Women who had no clan ties in Kenya reported that they had faced high levels of hostility from the local population. For Sara this had been a big problem;

> *… You know when you are in a country where nobody wants you and the government is making life very difficult ….*

The women dreamt of settling in a new country, where they would have a better opportunity to build a new life for themselves and their children, but they knew that arranging such a journey was problematic because all of their assets had been looted, left in Somalia or spent during their journey to their first host country. As Zeinab reported;

> *We were so desperate to leave Kenya … but we had lost everything and had no funds to arrange for our travel. … If our relatives did not send money we could do nothing …*

Zeinab, was not alone in needing such help. Remittances sent by relatives in Western countries via the *xawilaad* system[6] (Lindley 2007; Horst 2006b) were extremely important in aiding the survival and migration of many refugees who had fled camp life. It was evident that all aspects of migration, when and how to leave the country, who should go and how to fund the trip were issues for both the immediate and extended family. Shakri confirmed this;

> *Let's say their families are calling* [from abroad] *maybe one of your family or all of your friends … all they do is they send us some money and then we say try to move from that camp there. Without money you cannot go…*

From the testimonies of the women it is clear that they had been deeply distressed by, and dissatisfied with the conditions in which they had lived in the first host country. Although they had all experienced financial problems, their main problem had been concern about their safety and security, the fear that they would never be free, and in consequence, there would be no opportunities for a better way of life for their children.

> *That* [Nairobi] *was not the right place to raise my daughter … The only solution for me was to go overseas… .*

> (Ladaan)

Although organising the necessary financial resources had been a major challenge, this was only the first step. The women had also needed other forms of help to enable them to move, with one of the most important being the assistance of a carrier or *mukhalis.*

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[6] Horst (2006b) provides an analysis of the *xawilaad* system.

The Role of the Mukhalis (smugglers)

With so few opportunities to travel legally, the only course of action open for many refugees was to seek an illegal method, and for this they needed to find a *mukhalis* who could facilitate their travel (Horst 2006a: Gardner and El Bushra 2004). The women in this study matched the findings of Perouse de Montclos (2003) that since the 1990s, about 90% of Somalis arriving in Europe, do so illegally and generally through the assistance of a smuggling network. The women found there was no shortage of *mukhalis*, but they had experienced considerable difficulty in finding one, who they felt could be trusted:

> *In Nairobi it was easy to get a helper [agent] for tickets, passport …. the right documents … but it was very difficult to know who to trust, as you know as women we was vulnerable … could easily be robbed or violated.*

> (Waris)

As the amount of money demanded by these agents was substantial, the consideration of who could be trusted was a major issue. None of the women specifically discussed the amount they had paid, however Moret et al (2006) suggest that fees would have varied from $3,000 to $10, 000 US dollars depending on the services provided by the *mukhalis*. These ranged from simply supplying travel documents such as the loan of a false passport, to arranging the entire trip and accompanying those travelling, for part, or the entire journey (Farah 2000). In Nairobi the various *mukhalis*, offered differing ranges of service, from assistance in crossing borders without needing inspection papers, to providing houses in which the migrants could hide from the authorities on arrival in the new host country (Martin 2001).

The importance of the *mukhalis* came through very strongly in the women's testimonies. Mukhalis provided documents, determined the destination or gave instructions about how to get through immigration.

> *There were many agents…, some good, some bad if you choose the cheapest you don't get much for your money. But you know you are in their hands and have to believe what they say … he gave good advice that man* [the second mukhalis].

> (Yasmin)

Before coming to England Safia said she had been lucky. She had worked as a child minder and housekeeper for her maternal uncle[7], who was a middle class Kenyan Somali. She described how her travel had been funded by his generosity. In addition to providing her with work, a place to stay, food to eat and clothing, he saved her wages every month, until she had accumulated enough cash to leave Kenya. She explained;

> *So I got a man [mukhalis] who said give me a thousand dollars and I will arrange everything … I didn't believe him but also there is peer pressure [from others in the community who want to leave but do not have the resources or connections needed to do so] I said ok I will pay the amount of money I have. He said don't take much [personal possessions] because we don't have proper papers and passport*

(Safia)

Safia, also described how the *mukhalis* had been very cautious, in providing her with details about the journey. Although frightened and unhappy at the lack of information given to her, Safia said that she had no option but to trust that he would not cheat her. Like many other women (Gardner and El Bushra 2004), she left the first host country without knowing where her final destination would be. That these women were willing to leave the only limited security they had and venture into the unknown with a stranger who could abandon them at any time, gives an indication of their desperation and courage. However, accompanied by the *mukhalis*, once she had arrived at Istanbul, Safia was told that she would be going to England. The *mukhalis* explained to her, that he had in fact planned two routes, one to America and one to the UK, so if one did not work they would go for the other. Farah (2000) suggests that this is a common strategy employed by the most professional *mukhalis,* who are ready to change route at a moment's notice if any danger is suspected.

Safia described what had happened;

> *…. it was a surprise to me I came from Kenya and it* [the plane] *didn't stop anywhere else and when I came out of the airport he said we are in Istanbul …. I said what is going to happen now and he say ok our next journey is going to Georgia in Russia. He said its back door to Europe.*

Safia said she had been treated very well by the *mukhalis.* For other women, who did not have the support of a caring uncle, the entire experience of arranging their travel was

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[7] In Somalia the father's brother plays a different role, from the mother's brother and a woman would have a strong relationship with her maternal uncle (Warsame 2001).

fraught with difficulties fear and anxiety. The risks entailed meant that the *mukhalis* were elusive and vague about details. Moret *et al.* (2006) and Farah (2000) report that smugglers or carriers, as the *mukhalis* are often referred to, often work closely with airport personnel, who, for a cut of the money ease passage through passport control in Kenya and other parts of the developing world. Therefore, in the event of something going wrong, not only would the cover of the *mukhalis* be endangered, but also that of his accomplices, some of whom worked at a senior level for immigration and passport control services. Their secrecy meant that the women, could never be sure when or whether they would travel, and in some cases the *mukhalis* collected their cash and promptly disappeared. Katima's relatives sent the remittances necessary for funding travel, for both her and the children, including two of her brother's children who were orphaned during the fighting in Mogadishu. She spoke of her anguish when the *mukhalis* simply disappeared with most of her cash, which he had claimed he needed in advance to arrange travel documents and to purchase tickets.

> *the mukhalis was in the town … I was wary but I had no choice if*
> *I wanted to leave … I needed papers, tickets … he said it would*
> *be arranged … I gave money for tickets but after that I never saw*
> *the man again and nobody knew what had happened* [to him]

It took more than a year until Katima was in a position, to once again, attempt to leave. By this time it was considered too dangerous for her to be accompanied by all five children, as large family groups were attracting the attention of the authorities, and so the two eldest were left behind in the care of an elderly aunt. This meant that only one of the children who she took with her was her own biological child.

In Somali society, children are socialised at a very early age to take on some of the responsibility of looking after the home and supplementing the family's income. It is therefore not unusual for children, even before they reach their teenage years, to be treated as adults. In leaving the two eldest children Katima would have been following her cultural norms as in the Somali clan system, if your brother is orphaned and there are no other brothers, the children become yours and therefore you take the most vulnerable regardless of biological parentage. She was faced with the anguish of leaving her own child. She spoke about praying to Allah that her aunt, elderly and frail, would stay alive long enough until she could arrange for the children to join her. From the moment Katima arrived, both she and her family had to save every penny of their benefits, in order to bring the final two. They knew that they would have to pay the *mukhalis* more, as he would be required to accompany the children on the journey as no other adult was travelling with them. After some months, the travel of her two young teenagers was arranged. However, they were taken to Italy rather than to England,

where Katima and the three youngest children were waiting for them. Sick with anxiety about the whereabouts of the children, and after many fruitless phone calls to Somalis living in Italy and the wider diaspora, word reached Katima, that the children were being looked after by another Somali family in Italy. About four months after arriving in Italy they were reunited with their mother.

To trust a stranger is difficult for anyone, but the situation was made worse for the women, because, as pointed by Lewis (2008), despite the value placed on national self-esteem and ethnocentricity, the Somali culture is deeply ingrained with suspicion. To trust a stranger is not a natural attitude for most Somalis. The Somali culture is based on trusting only your own clan, a situation exacerbated by the civil war. The women had endured major hardship during the war and its aftermath, and so, would have been even more wary of trusting a person they did not know well. That they would part with such substantial amounts of money is a further indication of their desperation. As Sara said;

> *… when you are in such a desperate situation you take risks that*
> *before you would not do*

Some paid the *mukhalis* on the understanding that their final destination would be a specific country, usually the United States or England, as they had connections in those countries, but, as in the case of two of Katima's children, found that they had been abandoned in a different destination from the one chosen (and paid for). Nasra, an extremely successful business woman had paid in her words '*a considerable amount of money*' to arrange the travel of her family, which comprised six of her eight children, herself and her sick husband. Her travel was unusual, for, as highlighted in Katima's story, smugglers preferred to transport lone women with one or two children rather than the entire family group, as with each additional person the risks of something going wrong increased (Farah 2000). To convince the *mukhalis* Nasra had to pay substantially more than was usually required per person, when a family travelled in two or three small groups. To help them, the sister in law of the *mukhalis* who had been a close friend and business associate of Nasra's family had exerted pressure to persuade him to assist them. Nasra said;

> *… my friend she helped us enormously … persuade the carrier*
> *to take us, we were very close and I asked for her assistance as*
> *she was already in Europe and knew what we should do. He did*
> *not want to help us but we persisted …*

Nasra explained that she knew the extra risks, but she had been insistent that the family all travel together as she did not want them to be separated, and end up, in different

parts of the world. Nasra too, had only been told by the *mukhalis* that they would be taken to Europe or Canada. She had wanted to go to Canada, as her brother had settled there several years earlier. However the fact that two of her sons had been detained several times by the Kenyan police, in a short period, resulted in the family making the decision to leave as quickly as possible. Consequently, they decided that they would go to any country in which they could be offered asylum. She reported;

> He [the mukhalis] *did everything, even the passports... for the children. First he told us that we are to go Germany … . so the second day when we were ready to go, he say they heard that the Government [in Germany] don't allow anybody to have transit ticket to Germany so they said we are not going. It's 50/50 to go or send you back. At that time my husband was sick … we said whatever happens stand ready for it* [wherever we can go we will try]*.*

After several months of waiting for plans to be finalised and with her husband's ill health getting worse, the family eventually arrived in the Netherlands, a country in which they fortunately did have family connections. However, arriving in the Netherlands was a surprise, as they had been told by the *mukhalis* that they were going to Italy, an important transit country for refugees arriving in Europe, because prior to its independence in 1960 Southern Somalia was ruled by the Italians (Lewis 2008). The *mukhalis* had told Nasra that he had arranged a safe place for them to stay, until such time as they could travel on to Canada. Whilst Nasra was pleased that they had not gone to Italy, because she said Somalis do not benefit from being in that country and living conditions are poor, her experience of needing further travel to the country of her choice was not uncommon (Moret *et al.* 2006; Farah 2000).

Arrival at the Second Host Country

Although they were glad to be away from the physical insecurity which had been a feature of their lives in the first country of asylum, the women found their arrival in the West terrifying. Unlike Nasra, the majority of the women had travelled unaccompanied by any of their adult relatives. The *mukhalis* had travelled with some of the women, often playing the role of her husband, but leaving before or *immediately* on reaching the final destination. Safia, recalled what it had been like for her when she had been left alone in the State of Georgia. She had no idea that she was being abandoned, and explained;

> *… he gave me the tickets and the passport and he said he's going to get food, I don't know where he went. So I just told*

> *myself he's coming back, you know the way you reassure yourself, he has to come back and then it was announced* [the call to board the aircraft]. *I was shaking … You can't walk basically. Remembering now I am shaking.*

Thus, some of these women were left alone to navigate their entrance into the new country, an extremely stressful and frightening experience for them, as many could not speak the language and so had difficulty understanding what was happening. Safia again was more fortunate than some of the participants, as she had some English language skills, and could understand the airport announcements. Most of the women could not understand what was happening, and bewildered they simply followed fellow passengers not knowing what was being said and what would happen to them.

> I was *very stressed and worried … you don't know where you're ending up. You don't know who you're going to meet … how you're going to be treated there …,*

> (Zeinab)

Occasionally the help provided by the *mukhalis* was more substantial and on-going. Hawa was not abandoned when she arrived in Italy. Instead the *mukhalis* assisted her to find a place to stay and a job.

> *… the agent he took me to a place where I could stay ... and I was working cleaning and cooking.*

However, for the majority of the women, without family connections or other networks of support in the new country, arrival in the West had been very difficult. Immigration interviews were distressing. The women described immigration officers as being hostile towards them, treating them with suspicion and questioning them to such an extent that they felt both intimidated and confused. Throughout the interviews, at the forefront of their minds was the fear that they would be sent back to Africa, a terrifying prospect for all of them.

> *It was very hard and you know, you feel no one is believing what you are saying and you are saying your story… my dialect I am from minority tribe, it was a little difficult and I was so scared he wasn't understand me* [the interpreter]*… so I am telling my story and I'm praying that I was saying a good story … so I just told my story and praying that they would believe it.*

> (Katima)

She believed her interview had been so problematic because of the difference between her own dialect and that of the interpreter, an issue raised by other women in this study who also came from minority tribes. However, even without such language barriers, the women found it difficult to adequately explain their situation. Most of the difficulties were related to their inability to recall and recount information that the authorities deemed important. For example, questions were asked about the women's date of birth but in Somalia it is not usual to celebrate birthdays and few individuals would ever be registered or possess a document stating when they were born (Abdullahi 2001). Whilst accepting that in the West these details are the basis for all identification, none of the immigration offices explained why this information was so important. They repeated the questions, which the women found difficult to answer, and they could not understand the emphasis placed on these questions. The format and manner of questioning may indicate a lack of awareness of Somali culture and traditions. However, immigration officers will be exposed to many such encounters every day and their approach to questioning may well be the only way to cope with the awfulness of the stories they regularly hear.

The situation was exacerbated, as most of the women had to answer through interpreters. Nadifo, who was from a minority clan felt that she was neither being understood or believed,

> *… you don't know the interpreter… you know, you do not know if they are understanding what you are saying and so you don't feel like you can tell them everything. … you know at that time you are feeling like they will think you are lying and will send you back. It was unfamiliar to me* [speaking through an interpreter] *and I didn't say everything.*

(Nadifo*)*

In addition, many of the women had travelled on false passports, and whilst in most cases these documents were destroyed during the flight, if these were handed over to immigration, the date of birth on the passport was very unlikely to relate closely to the woman's actual age.

> *… and so after some time they asked for my date of birth and I didn't know what to say … so they think I did not understand. Later, when they asked … they said* [the] *date that was on the passport, I was supposed to be that woman so I said yes I was confused very frightened … but that woman she was much younger than me and then* [later] *I had to say that I had brought the passport from someone in Nairobi so they said but you say this is your birth of date … are you lying to us.*

(Nadiya)

The women were also asked details about the dates and times of flights and the route taken. In most cases this had not been disclosed by the *mukhalis,* and the language barrier prevented many of the women being able to understand announcements given during their flights. Consequently, they were unable to respond to the questions with any certainty, resulting in the airport officials treating them with even more suspicion. Safia described what had happened to her at Heathrow.

> *I don't understand he [the immigration officer] is saying you are supposed to go back to Kenya, and your flight is not from here you are meant to be at Stansted so how come you came here, … he was speaking a lot and I told him listen I am refugee and he said you mean this passport's not yours and I said yes. He took my bag, grabbed my arm and, ran away with me, left them there in the line, the queue. He phoned somewhere, they came. They looked at photo, looked at me and then they realised it's true.*

After extensive questioning which lasted several hours and throughout which she had been convinced that she would be returned to Kenya, Safia was finger printed and had x-rays taken. Safia was then told she would be taken to a camp [hostel]. The following quote illustrates her elation at the news that she had been allowed to stay in the country. She could not take it and had to keep asking if it was true;

> *… he [the immigration officer] said you are free to stay in this country and I ask him are you serious, he said yes and then I still ask him, are you serious … , He asked the interpreter tell this lady to stop following me and tell her she's free to stay in this country … I was a bit confusion [confused] freedom means everything.*

For one or two others, the passage through immigration was less traumatic, not because of any special arrangement by the *mukhalis*, but because they had previous experience of travelling to other countries. Nasra, whose family had been fairly wealthy in Somalia, had studied overseas. On arrival, in the Netherlands, as an educated and well-travelled woman who was accompanied by her husband and children, she was able to explain to the authorities that they were seeking asylum as the safety of her family had been under extreme threat in Somalia. Her husband, who at one time had worked closely with the government, had later openly opposed Siad Barre's dictatorship. Nasra explained that the entire family had been targeted by the militia putting their lives at significant threat. She said she understood that the entire family's future was in the hands of the immigration officers, who she said '*were not happy to see her money'* meaning that they were not open to bribes. Coming from a setting where bribery had been the norm, this

was the first indication of their new world, a new situation with them having to accept that whether the family would be allowed entry, solely depended, as Nasra said, on their ability '*to tell a good story'*. In some other parts of the world, notably Libya and Egypt, *mukhalis* were able to bribe officials (Abdullahi 2001), this was not the case in the Netherlands. She knew it was important to be able to give specific examples of how her family had been persecuted by the militia and how their home had twice been invaded and ransacked whilst the militia interrogated her about the whereabouts of her husband. She did not disclose their stay in Kenya, as she feared that they would be sent back there to '*rot'* in a refugee camp.

Nasra's experience shows the value of *capitals* (Bourdieu 1986) in negotiating entry into the new country. As an educated woman, Nasra possessed a degree of '*symbolic capital'* (Bourdieu 1986) that she could call on. She was convinced that her previous knowledge of travelling and her ability to respond in detail to the questions asked by the immigration officers facilitated the family's passage through immigration. She said;

> *… we were telling our story … everything and* [answered] *all the questions… and then we pass out* [were told that we could stay] *….*

Once they had gained entry to the second host country, the women's concerns about safety and security were, to some extent, abated, giving an immense sense of relief. Hawa, explained that she was extremely grateful that at least she had somewhere safe to sleep, where her security was not threatened.

> *… but* [the] *one thing that keeps you going is that they tell you it's a safe place to be … you can get your life on the line. You can have a life in other words coz you can start living again.*

However, entry into the country was only the initial stage of the overall process. As refugees seeking asylum, the women were required to provide evidence of their persecution, something that they said, they found extremely difficult to do.

> *It is difficult to speak about those things… psychologically I am not able to express the pain… it is the one who has experienced such things who can know …*

> (Mariam)

Mariam believed that it was impossible to convey what she had been through, explaining that only a person who has suffered in the same way could possibly understand just how terrible life had been. For these women, traditional beliefs regarding the concept of shame and honour prevented them from speaking out about their experiences. Their

feelings were so strong, that they could not reveal, even to each other, what had happened to them. Remaining silent was all that stood between them and complete disgrace in the eyes of their families and communities. Shakri had tried to persuade the women to speak about their experiences of rape, as she believed that disclosure of what they had been through would add weight to their claims for asylum. She explained;

> *… but these other women … the people who came first to Holland and Germany and other European countries they didn't talk about much of the rape thing, they only talked about the war … the clans … the civil war in general they didn't talk about the rape. That's what they have in their mind and their culture… it's shame. No one can talk about it.*

If they could not tell Shakri, they would not be able to tell a stranger, especially if that person was a man. The stigma associated with rape crosses cultural and geographical boundaries. In Britain, it is only in recent years that the taboos surrounding rape and other serious sexual crime have been minimised. In this study many of the women admitted that speaking to me was the first time, that they had voiced in any detail, what had happened to them. This meant that those handling their asylum claims would have been making decisions without the full knowledge of their life experiences (Freedman 2010; Bloch *et al.* 2000).

Although all of the women in this study had eventually been granted asylum, their inability or failure to disclose all that had happened to them could have affected the processing of their claims for asylum. Several of them admitted that during the interviews they were surprised to discover that they had felt safe enough to be able to freely express personal and sensitive information. That the women felt able to reveal such personal information to the researcher can at least partially be attributed to the combination of both feminist (Oakley 1992: Liamputtong 2007) and phenomenological approaches (Giorgi 1975: 1997) which helped to establish rapport between the interviewer and the women, allowing them to freely express themselves and give accounts of their journeys as truly experienced by them.

Whilst the women reported that the immigration interviews had been stressful, all of them expressed their gratitude that they had been given permission to stay. This was a huge relief with the fear of being sent back from whence they came no longer dominating their thoughts throughout the '*whole day and night'*. Nasra explained;

> *They sent us to another camp [detention centre] and we stayed for four months. … you know we were not afraid [of being sent back] … I could not believe we were safe.*

Whilst the women were at least physically removed from the refugee camps, the memories of camp life remained with them and the term 'camp', was often used to describe the temporary accommodation in which they had been housed. For most of the participants, this type of accommodation was a hostel or bread and breakfast establishment. Despite the limitations of such types of accommodation, for example sharing a bathroom, the women said they were grateful for the security offered to them and for the most part, did not have any problems with the living conditions. Given the nature of bread and breakfast accommodation, the fact that the women did not express any dissatisfaction with their new living arrangement speaks of the lives they had led. Several of them commented that this was the first time in years that they felt as though they were living as a normal family, where they could relax with their children, rather than as women who feared for their lives on a daily basis and worried about what would happen to their children if they were harmed or killed. As Nasra said when discussing her accommodation at the detention centre;

> *We were in a good place* [accommodation] *… they gave us everything … We were just going to a hall and eat come back and sleep in our house, it was really fine for us… no problem for us …. … we were so happy …. but we was worried … you know about those who were left behind.*

With their immediate needs for security and shelter met, the women said that they started to experience a deep sense of loneliness, as they felt they no longer had links with those they had left behind. One woman described it as being as though she was '*incomplete*, that part of her heart was missing. She said;

> *You know when you are completely alone, separated from everyone, all your family members and you cannot find a way to know if they are alright, then life is very difficult and you feel like you have nobody, are there by yourself ….*

(Participant focus group three)

Although they had security and safety, or perhaps because they now had time to think and feel, the women reported experiencing difficulty in coming to terms with the fact that they were so far removed geographically from their families and homeland, and the realisation that they might never see either family or land again. The link to Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs can be seen within the descriptions given by the women. Once their basic human needs for food, shelter and clothing were satisfied and the dominant need for safety and security had been met, the women became painfully aware

of a lack of meaningful relationships, which according to Maslow (1954) are required to fulfil social or affiliation needs.

Family and Intimate Relations

The well-being of their family members and the loneliness experienced because of the separation from their families dominated the thoughts of the women, to such an extent that they found it difficult to focus on the more everyday aspects of living in a different country. Mariam said;

> *I had a lot of problems in my mind… you know we left many of our people in Kenya and Somalia, and I think to myself I will die without seeing my people ever again … so you know I cannot think about other things.*

Zeinab, described the overwhelming sense of the loss of her family as very traumatic;

> *because obviously, you've left the rest of your family behind so there is nobody to be able share … to share what you are going through … and my children used to see me falling apart. I didn't want to hurt my children … but sometimes you can't help it, you just can't help it … [letting them see you cry]. … so that was the most difficult part for me.*

Hawa, who had more assistance, from the agent on her arrival to Italy, had initially been very satisfied with her situation. However, after several weeks, she too said she had started to long for the close family network she had lost. She spoke about feeling very low, depressed and stressed and explained;

> *… but I was not happy about my situation. I was depressed … cos I was alone, not even one of my sisters … it was very difficult for me …I had relatives in Italy but I could not find them.*

After several months of searching for her father's family who she believed had been living in Italy, she said she had to accept that they must have moved to another country. This participant was not married and did not have children and described feeling very alone. Most of the other women had travelled with at least some of their children. Zeinab explained that she was very grateful to have her children with her, but, she missed deeply the absence of an adult who could be trusted and who could help to share the worries and concerns she experienced.

> *When you are a refugee you are suffering a lot, thinking about your family who are still in [Somalia] we left our problem but some of our families are still in that problem … they are not with you*

and you cannot help them or they you. … [it makes us] feel bad
inside and out.

That the women missed Somali society and the close social networks described in earlier cycles, was very evident in their testimonies about life in the new host country. Particularly difficult for them was the lack of opportunity to mix with other Somali families. They felt they had no links with other Somali refugees who could help them to re-establish their social networks and thus could have provided practical and emotional assistance.

For Nasra, some comfort came from a friendship that developed during the first few weeks of arriving in the Netherlands. Her children had not been appropriately dressed for the cold weather conditions and a stranger had helped them. She explained;

> *I remember I was walking in [to] the train station, my people*
> *[children] were very cold and a lady she was passing … we were*
> *in front of a hotel, she saw the children shaking, no proper*
> *clothing then she went to a shop and buy a very good jacket for*
> *my daughter, the smallest one …I could not believe, a stranger, a*
> *white woman … she was very kind …*

Nasra readily accepted the help of that was offered and a friendship developed which she says is still maintained, although she no longer lives in the Netherlands.

Although she did not speak Dutch, Nasra, unlike most of the other women had good English language skills, a language she shared with some of the Dutch, with whom she came into contact. She was, therefore, able to communicate her needs more easily than those who did not share a common language with the native Dutch. Here again her *social capital,* Bourdieu (1986) played a significant part in her ability to be able to navigate life in the new host county. This experience was uncommon amongst the women and without *social capital* (Bourdieu 1986) to facilitate their transition into another country and lifestyle, life was difficult. Even when assistance was provided by the agent, women were still left feeling lost and alone in a land that bore no resemblance to their homeland.

As refugees seeking and then given asylum in the West, the women were often faced with a bewildering set of challenges, such as learning the language, finding suitable permanent accommodation and exploring work opportunities. Coming from a collectivist society where there was a great deal of interdependence, the struggle to cope alone proved extremely difficult. In addition to this, many European Union countries such as Norway, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden have a policy of housing refugees individually rather than in enclaves of other similar refugee groups (Moret *et al.*

2006: Alitolppa-Niittamo 1994). As Brons and Schaap (2002) note, during the 1990s, most Somali refugees claiming asylum in the Netherlands were dispersed to rural areas and were required to live in already established Dutch communities, where there were few if any other black or non-indigenous families. In most cases the social services agencies did try to support refugee families by easing transition to the new country but much of this support was concerned with child rearing practices rather than the women's need to establish social networks (Deacon and Sullivan 2009). At first, the women welcomed the assistance with childcare as they saw it as an opportunity to take time out. As one participant explained;

> *… so you have a case worker to guide you through, … they take the children out and tell you, you just stay home. I was happy they were helping me in that way so I could just have some time to rest …*

(Participant, focus group three)

Later, when the women were more settled in their new surroundings, such assistance was perceived as being interfering and a way of watching how they were caring for their children. The women found this perceived scrutiny both intimidating and threatening, and believed that the case workers were spoiling their children by undermining their traditional child rearing practices. Some focus group participants, who initially went to Sweden and the Netherlands, spoke emphatically about how they felt the case workers were spying on them. They reported that their children had been encouraged to abandon their Somali identify and instead take on the identity of the country in which they were now living. One participant said;

> *You know what they [the case workers and teachers] are doing is they are telling the children you are now Dutch, not Somali … and the children do not want to listen to us but want to be like the Dutch children … you know children are impressionable… .*

(Participant, focus group three)

That such issues were topical, was borne out by the arrival of the seven year old daughter of the participant, in whose house the focus group had been held. Participants were relaxing, enjoying a cup of sweetened Somali tea and talking amongst themselves. Some of this discussion was about their children and life in Somalia, as well as issues related to the research project, as the women were keen to find out more about why I was interested in them and their experiences. Whilst the women congregated in the large kitchen area, the hostess busied herself with getting a drink for her daughter who had just arrived from school and said to her, '*you are Somali aren't you*' [name of child] to which the child retorted '*no I am not I am Dutch*'. The women

blamed this on the caseworkers from those countries and some women said that this had led to their children becoming 'lost', meaning that they had taken on the ways of the majority community. A clear example of this was that of boys and girls, who were not related to each other, mixing, rather than adhering to traditional Somali values where unrelated people of the opposite sex are separated. Parents found this difficult as the children met regularly at school when they were outside their parent's control. Such behaviour was perceived as disrespectful and a constant source of tension between the women and their children, especially the boys. In some instances teenagers rebelled and were ostracised by their families. Nasra explained that her eldest son had rejected the values she was trying to instil in him regarding smoking and staying out late at night. She described how her son had become 'lost',

> *… so the biggest boy was doing nothing. When he was at the age of 12 he refused to go into school and then I fight him. I think go go go [that would make him go] then he went to the government woman* [welfare worker] *who came to our house and he* [her son] *said that I am being abusive… so they took my son from me … they listen to the kids not the parents. … they put him with a family and then he became aggressive and angry … so from then the child was in their hands and later no education, … . That one he is lost.*

Many of the problems the women faced with their sons related to schooling. Like many other refugees who have fled their country because of conflict, Somali children will have had interruptions to their schooling. Many of them have extremely limited or no schooling at all for several years (UNHCR 2011b). In European countries, the current school system usually places students according to their age, rather than their ability, which meant that refugee children are at a distinct disadvantage. The difficulties encountered at school led to problems in the family as the young people became even more stressed and alienated from their peers (Sporton *et al.* 2006). Furthermore, refugee children often arrive in Europe with adult experiences of conflict, personal hardship and persecution (Sporton *et al.* 2006). There is some evidence to suggest that up to 200,000 Somali children, that equates to one in twenty, have carried a gun and have been involved in militia activities (United Nations 2003). Like their mothers, the majority of these children will not have received any help in coming to terms with their experiences of war and trauma (Sporton *et al.* 2006: Kahin 1997: Naidoo 1999).

With any generational breakdown, ways can be found of handling these situations that can reduce the tensions between young people and their parents, but with the many challenges the women faced, it was very difficult for them to find ways to influence their children. They said that this was very stressful for them, particularly as traditionally the

male role models guided and influenced the boys. The children gained western views but retained enough of their family traditions to resent the women trying to control them.

Yet another major challenge was encouraging their older children to spend time with their mothers. Western cultures, which emphasise individualism over collectivism, leads many children to prefer to spend time playing with computer games or social networking sites rather than spending time with their families (Guerin 2001). In Somalia parents and grandparents provided entertainment for their children and spend time with them in the evenings telling stories, a traditional past-time in Somalia (Abdullahi 2001). Women said that their children were influenced by Western ways and that they no longer connected emotionally or socially with their families. One women speaking of how difficult it was to establish any kind of relationship with her teenage son said;

> *He stopped going to college and stayed in his room the whole time. He doesn't speak to me and if I ask him what the problem is he just says nothing. I have lost my husband [in the war] and now my eldest son he is also lost … there is no one to help and he won't say anything. I am very worried because he is out all the night and I don't know where he goes … he refuses to say anything*

> (Sara)

Young refugees do pick up the cultures of countries that they have lived in quickly and in many cases operate between these and that of their home (Sporton and Valentine 2005). This often causes friction, as parents want their children to operate in the cultural spaces of their country of origin. In the eyes of the women, the movement between cultures was considered to be negative.

> *A major problem in the community is losing our children. … we are afraid the culture will disappear completely. … the ladies they are stressed because everything is getting confused …*

> (Participant, focus group three)

Whilst the women said they encouraged their children to practise cultural norms at home for example by speaking Somali at home or eating Somali foods, because many of them had left their country of origin at a young age or had been born during their family's transit, they had little recollection of life in Somalia. Their knowledge and understanding of the country was therefore second hand, from their mothers or other adult or from the media (Sporton et al. 2006). Media reporting of Somalia focuses on war, terrorism and dire poverty, whereas when asked about their homeland, the women offered a more positive representation, often glossing over some of the hardships, which they or their relatives had experienced. In the focus groups the women constantly referred to how

good life had been in Somalia frequently describing their big houses, servants, cars and close knit, loving communities. As one participant summarised;

> Somalia - It is a beautiful country, and we had a good life and you know we was very happy.

(Participant focus group two)

As in Sporton et al. (2006) study, their children had little or no memory of the life style described and needed to position themselves in relation to public narratives about what it meant to be Somali. Pollock and Van Reken's (2009), concept of 'third culture kids', seems to be applicable here in explaining how young people who have spent a significant part of their developmental years in a culture that is different from that of their parents, develop a sense of relationship to both. They argue that 'third culture kids' are often in a state of 'betwixt and between', neither fully adapting one culture nor the other, but taking on elements of each (Pollock and Van Reken 2009). Parents would naturally want their children to embrace the culture of their origin and their inability or unwillingness to do so can lead to tense relationships between the different generations.

The women in this study said that they had no previous experience of coping with such conflicts and could therefore find no way to respond positively. As one participant said;

> *You know we Somali ladies, we think nothing of ourselves, it is about our kids, but you know when you are unable to change a situation, then it is difficult … you start to think to yourself if you are* [a] *good mother … you know that your kids they are not ok … then they will become spoilt, so all sorts of pressure on the mother … ladies are feeling shamed, stressed but no one is saying. … no one is saying what is going on, what they feel inside they just keep it … Inside pressure and outside pressure.*

(Participant focus group one)

These feelings of despair and distress were commonly expressed by the women. They said they worried '*every day and at night'* about the tensions between them and their children. The women also said that, as mothers, they felt a strong duty to shape their children's identity as Somali, whilst at the same time supporting their access to education, so that they could make the most of the life opportunities available to them. These tensions significantly affected the women's own sense of self, norms and values which are explored in the following essence.

Changing Norms and Values

The way in which women were dispersed, within the new host countries, meant that they were often housed in areas, which were predominately white. The women reported feelings of relief after leaving behind the threats that characterised their lives in the first host country and shock, confusion and loss, as they grappled with a third set of cultural norms and values:

> *Everything outside of you is different and inside you are different. That is the shock, you come to this place and it is another kind of life. … you feel lonely, depressed, like what am I doing in this place.*

> (Saida)

In the first country of asylum, they had been forced to adapt to values and cultural norms that were different from those in Somalia, but they said nothing had prepared them for how different life would be in the second host country.

Although they struggled with the cultural norms in the first host country, they knew that Kenya or Ethiopia would never be their home and did not feel settled in these countries. Their dreams of resettlement to the West had helped them to cope with their difficulties. On arrival to the new country, the realisation that they had to adapt to yet another set of norms and values that were profoundly different from anything they had known before left the women reeling with shock and an overwhelming sense of loss. For example, one woman spoke about the need to pray five times a day, and the difficulty of doing so when attending language classes in Sweden. Although she could easily do her prayers at the back of the room, she was asked not to.

> *We were told it was not acceptable, in that country. We would have to pray when we went home, but my religion it is a big part of my life, I pray five times a day… I needed to be in school and it was difficult for me so when I was at school I did not pray. You know when you have lost so much your faith is very important to you… but this is the life now and you have to adapt.*

> (Participant focus group one)

The women spoke about the self-conflict experienced as they tried to modify their own norms in order to adapt whilst at the same time being desperately afraid of losing their own traditions that had become increasingly important to them. Sara reported;

> *Living in Sweden … it's like a big shock everything is different,
> like the buildings, the people, just everything … . You were this
> person all your life and then you have to be different … it was
> very difficult … you do not want to be Swedish but you are in that
> country …, you are Somali and want to do things in your own way
> but it was difficult because you know you are in a different country
> and life is not like before.*

.

The women said the most difficult aspect of life for them was the shift away from their close, interdependent society. They told stories of how the close alliance of family members had meant that they could leave the first host country and so their survival had been due to the interdependence they shared. They said that in this new host country, people did not want to help each other and always wanted to do things in isolation of each other. Mariam said;

> *In Somali, we was not used to like being doing things without our
> family members and we knew we could rely on each other all the
> time. I remember if my mother was busy with her business she
> would say to our neighbour you can cook and feed the kids… ,
> we just went to that house* [to eat]. *… if you was in trouble, sick,
> needed money, everyone help, that was a good life. Even in the
> camp some families helped each other … they did not have much
> … it was still expected, your duty and so we survived.*

Separated from other members of the community and living in an area they perceived as hostile, the women spoke at length about the deep and penetrating sense of loneliness they felt, a loneliness that was at the very depth of their soul and that they found difficult to communicate.

> *In that country [Denmark] you are not living near to other Somali
> families, only white people. In Kenya life was very difficult … we
> are grateful that we have left all those problems behind, but you
> could talk to others from your community and they knew what you
> was saying, they were also living the same life. … we was all
> suffering the same.*

(Participant focus group two)

In Denmark, as in other Scandinavian countries, the Somali community did not have space to establish its own identity, because the government placed high importance on the integration of migrants (Nielsen 2004). As Nielsen (2004) points out all newly arrived refugees are required to take part in an 'integration programme' where they learn about Danish culture. They are taught to speak the Danish language and in order to get permanent status refugees must pass a language test as well as demonstrate knowledge about Danish society (Nielsen 2004).

Similar to Sweden and the Netherlands, refugee communities in Denmark tend to be integrated into neighbourhoods which are predominately white. Immigrants tend to be referred to as 'the strangers' (Nielsen 2004), illustrating their perceived lack of belonging. Wren (2001) has suggested that despite the aim of Danish policy to integrate migrants into Danish society, what has resulted has been a legitimisation of negative attitudes among the indigenous population towards migrants and their cultures. One woman told how she was constantly being asked where she had come from and when she was going home. She said that one man had referred to her as a Christmas tree because she had been wearing a hijab.

Other participants in this study reported similar stories, talking about feelings of isolation and loneliness as they struggled to accept the social norms of societies, which they felt did not want them and where neighbours were suspicious, hostile and judgemental. They said that despite not liking the social norms that they were seeing, for example young people dating, the drinking of alcohol and the undervaluing of religious practices, they tried their best to adapt. However, attempts to make friends with the host community were treated with suspicion. One woman said;

> *… you know when it is Ramadam we prepare lots of food … it is important for us to share* [sadqo] *… so I made sambusa* [samosa] *and I said to my daughter it is nice to practice sadqo so go give some to the lady next door, she lives alone … and you know that woman she sent them back to us not even opened the bag.* I think she could have put them in the bin if she did not like … but she wanted me to know she didn't want anything from us.

(Participant, focus group one)

Two other women in the group said they had too had tried unsuccessfully to develop friendships with their neighbours, but had been rebuffed. Describing an acculturation with one of her neighbours, one participant reported;

> *I just used to say hello to her [the neighbour] and we talk a little bit. Then one day I spanked my son … he was being very rude to me… I don't agree with hitting or beating in any form but a little spank is ok. I was at the front of the house and he was crying. Then my neighbour she came, she told me, you are beating your children.*

> *I told her, I am not beating my children just a little smack as the boy is being very disrespectful … but she said that if I couldn't cope, I should not have so many children. … she did not speak to me again after that. … after that they are asking my children at school   did your mother hit you? So I think that woman she reported to someone.*

(Participant, focus group one)

The focus group discussion generated various views of what was considered appropriate parenting and a lengthy, lively discussion about the differences in child rearing practices in Somalia and in European countries.

Another participant said;

> *Let me tell you, there are many social norms in the lifestyle in these countries [Europe] that are not acceptable to Somalis. It is the parent's responsibility to educate their children so that they can understand what is acceptable and what is not. … It is our responsibility to bring up our children and not school teachers or welfare officers.*

(Participant, focus group one)

What was perceived as appropriate and inappropriate parenting by Somalis was broadly consistent between all focus group participants, with all of the women agreeing that the problems surrounding raising their children in the former host country, was related to different cultural norms. As one woman said;

> *They [the Dutch] are very shocked when they see Somali women shouting at the children when they are misbehaving. But we are Muslims and our way to bring up children is different. We do not want to lose authority over our children.*

(Participant, focus group two)

These testimonies provide an illustration of the way in which the women said they were made to feel different, as if they did not belong and that their traditional practices did not fit into the new societies cultural norms.

Summerfield (1996) has shown that social networks are a significant resource which help to buffer the uncertainties of life in a new country. The women often felt rejected. One woman said;

I remember, one time it was in the winter and it was cold … there was a festival in the park, so I took the children, I was feeling that my children did not have friends and that I did not know other mothers, so we went but everyone was just staring and saying where are you from, when are you going back to your country. We went home … very upset.

(Mariam)

Somali women do not experience their identity as autonomous, but as dependent on family and community. To be recognised, respected and have self-respect at every stage of their life is important for Somali women and therefore questioning about their appearance or being singled out as different is uncomfortable. However in some Scandinavian countries, refugees, especially those from Africa, are a fairly recent phenomenon and thus it may well have been curiosity rather than discrimination which informed the questions.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has given an overview of the difficulties encountered by the women as they moved on to the second host country. It has described the strategies used by them to arrange their travel and given some indication of the challenges faced, by them, both during their flight and on arrival in West. The chapter has also presented the opportunities of life in the West as the women saw them. However, their stories also told of the deep sadness and overwhelming sense of loneliness experienced as they, tried to adapt to yet another culture with a different set of norms and values, including issues related to child rearing. This proved to be very difficult for the women who struggled to rear their children and cope with the demands of being solely responsible for the running of their homes. That the women were often housed in areas where there were few other immigrant populations only seemed to add to their distress and sense of loneliness. It was for this reason that those who had gone to Europe, decided to move on to yet another country in which they hoped that they would find the acceptance and sense of belonging that they had yearned for. The fourth and final cycle 'The Present' describes the women's life experiences now that they are living in England.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CYCLE FOUR
THE PRESENT

As the analysis progressed, it became evident that although all the women had gone through the same cycles, there was a clear division in the impact that the process of forced migration had had on them. Two distinct groups of women emerged, with the differences in the groups expanding exponentially through the overall process of forced migration. There were those who at the time of the study could be described as being in a state of '*anomie*' and secondly, a group seen as being in '*recovery*' (see figure five; Revised Representation of the Downwards Spiral of Loss; Showing the Two Groups). As the theoretical and conceptual basis for this study places great value on legitimising the voices of all participants, from this position this cycle reflects on and explores the way in which both groups of women perceived their lives in England, as their permanent place of residence and the country in which they now had to bring up their children. For clarity, the expressed experiences of the women who were in '*anomie*' and those in '*recovery*' are presented separately. It is therefore crucial that before describing the women's experiences as they 'settled' into a permanent placement, the terms '*anomie*' and '*recovery*' are explored within the context of this study.

Anomie

Taken from the Greek meaning *lawlessness*, anomie was further developed by Durkheim (1893/1997) to refer to the breakdown of social norrns. Durkheim's (1951/1997) argument was that the inability to adapt to sudden changes in people's lives such as economic boom or economic depression, can lead to dissatisfaction, conflict, and deviance, resulting in higher rates of suicide. Merton (1957: 121) utilized the work of Durkheim (which was singularly concerned with suicide) to develop a more generalist sociological approach to deviance. He argued that '*the real problem is not created by sudden social change*', as Durkheim proposed, *but rather by 'a social structure, which whilst presenting the same goals to all its members, does not give them equal means to achieve them'* (Merton 1957: 121). It is this lack of integration between what the culture requires and what the structure permits that causes deviant behaviour. Accordingly deviance is perceived to be a symptom of the social structure (Merton 1957: 121). More

recently the term has been used to refer to the psychological state of individuals who experience a personal state of isolation, loneliness, powerlessness, distrust, cultural estrangement and generalised alienation (Slattery 2003). In this study the concept of *anomie* is used to describe a sense of '*normlessnes*s' signified by feelings of alienation and purposelessness. Within the anomic group the women's lives were characterised by isolation, multiple disadvantage and social exclusion. These women described their everyday lives as stressful, difficult and full of worries. They had little to say about the opportunities that living in England had to offer them. Instead, their testimonies were littered with discussions about the difficulties of operating within the society in which they were required to rebuild their lives.

Recovery

The notion of *'recovery'* is strongly associated with mental health and can be dated as far back as the eighteenth century when there was a move away from a regime of coercion and compulsion towards more humanistic interventions for psychiatric patients (Davidson *et al.* 2010). Recently the concept has been used to signify a shift away from a focus on illness and cure, to embrace a more holistic approach which includes a journey of resilience, discovery and hope, self-determination, agency and empowerment (Coleman 1999: Repper and Perkins 2003), with the concept also featuring heavily in the Mental Health Strategy (DOH 2011). In this study the term '*recovery*' is used to characterise those women who despite their extremely difficult past appeared to be adapting well to life England and fits with Repper's (2005) and Wallcraft (2002) arguments that recovery can be seen as a process of moving forwards, rather than as a specific end point. Endemic in this should be the opportunity for people to talk about and reflect upon their life journey. In seeking to ascertain the difference between this group and the other, it would appear that women in the '*recovery*' group were primarily those drawn from middle class Somalia, with higher stocks of *capitals* (Bourdieu 1986) to begin with and therefore some reserves on which they could draw. In addition, most of the recovery group had learnt English before they had arrived, usually as a second or third language in school and even where their use of English had its limitations, they were able to communicate directly. Thus, this group had access to greater range of resources, such as information, education and housing opportunities, than those in the anomic group. These women were therefore more able to take advantage of what their new homeland had to offer, and indeed, they found new and better opportunities than would have been available to them in Somalia. Also, in contrast to the women in the anomic group, these women were optimistic and positive, although acknowledging that they faced many challenges,

seemed to have a strong determination to rebuild their lives. The model was therefore revised to include these two concepts (see figure five).

Figure Five:

Revised Diagrammatic Representation of Downwards Spiral of Loss Showing the Two Groups
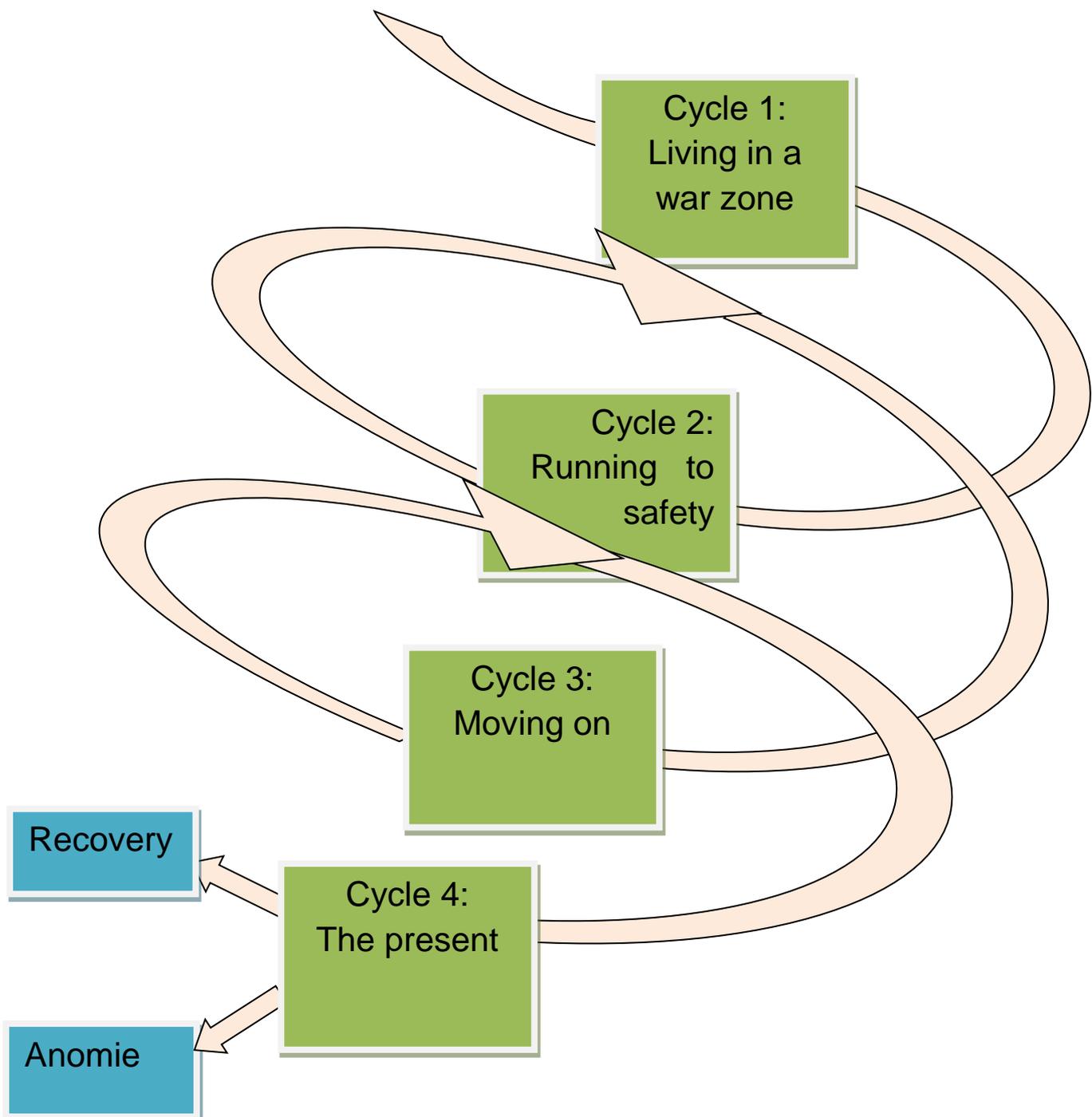
Group One - Anomie

Safety and Security

For those in this group life in England remained focused on trying to survive. The women reported the challenges they encountered as being overwhelming and they could not see any way in which they would be able to recover from all that they had 'lost'. For them, one of the most difficult aspects of life was adapting to their new environment, whilst still focused on their losses, and yearning for the past.

On arrival most of the women had been placed in emergency, short term accommodation, used not only for refugees, but for also for other vulnerable groups deemed to be homeless (Cole and Robinson 2003). Still reeling and grieving from their experiences they found themselves in accommodation with total strangers, who, for the most part had no idea of the conditions from which the women had fled and who appeared, to the women to be totally focused on their own problems. This lack of shared experience and understanding was difficult to adjust to resulting in anxiety and fear about coping with a life of confinement with people they neither knew nor understood. Even though she had anticipated the changes, Yasmin underestimated their impact.

> *It was shocking, everything different, the sky, building, people ...*
> *really shocking for me. … really frightening and not a suitable*
> *place ....*

In their loneliness and isolation they described the '*greyness*' of the physical environment, which, after the open spaces of their homeland, seemed small and confined. Some also described how their fear and dismay were heightened when placed in mixed sex accommodation, an alien concept for Somalis. This had led to a reawakening of the fear they had felt in the refugee camps when, similarly, they had been placed with men outside of their family and clan group. Remembrance of the atrocities they had witnessed or experienced in the camps impacted on how they reacted in their new setting. Yasmin explained that she saw a man coming out of the bathroom with only a small towel wrapped around him. Fearing that he might attack her she had rushed back into her room and locked herself in.

> *To see someone ... you are not used too... It is really shocking for you*

Her fear was so strong that she did not venture out of her room again except to use the toilet, and then only if she could not hear anyone else moving around in the corridor.

> *... I was very scared. ... I was supposed to go to the place for*
> *breakfast* [dining room] *but I stayed in my room, with the door*

> *blocked, didn't want to leave my room, ... it was very bad for me*
> *… I cried a lot.*

Yasmin survived through the good will of the staff in the hostel, who worried that she was not eating. They were unable to coax her out of her room, even to the dining area, and eventually bought food to her. To her relief, after about a week she was moved to alternative accommodation, which also housed some other Somali ladies. She described her joy that she was at last in a place where there were others like her and in which she felt she would be safe.

> *I could not believe ..., my own people, ladies they hugged me and*
> *I started to cry and then to laugh, you know when you are so*
> *happy to see your people ... speaking your own language, ... I*
> *was so happy to be away from that place [first hostel] ...*

Her reaction to the other Somali women was not a natural one. Somalis are normally wary of those they do not know well, and ordinarily she would have been careful of the way in which she made contact, as they were not from her clan. However, her intense relief that she was now with people with who she could relate overrode these normal cultural rules. What Yasmin did not know, however, was that under British law (Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act (Home Office 2006) temporary emergency accommodation of this sort was usually only available for a short time. After a few weeks, she, along with her fellow country women would have to be re-housed and for some this had a disastrous effect on their perceptions of their new lives.

The women were unaware of the compulsory dispersal programmes intended to discourage economic migrants from entering Britain as asylum seekers, and to ease the pressure on the already severely over-burdened systems in London and other parts of the South east (Zetter *et al.* 2003). Consequently, some of them found themselves allocated to housing geographically distanced from everyone they knew and placed in communities that they perceived to be hostile towards them, in places the women had never heard off and in which they knew absolutely no one. In the emergency hostels each woman was adopted in by those already there, and so, they had recreated something of the clan family structure they had left behind.

Moving on again meant that they were left totally bereft as once again, they had lost everything, including the new 'family' relationships that had been in the process of establishing.

> *They say you have to move you can't stay in this place ... I* [was]
> *very upset I say why I no keep this place ... Somalis here, kids
> happy ... Somali food, Somali shops all close by.*

(Participant focus group two)

Women such as Jehan had not only found her relocation extremely stressful but, with the loss of any other adult Somali support, also reported that she never felt safe in her new home. She was in England with her three children but without any of her adult relatives and had now lost the new 'clan' that she had been creating with the other refugees. Married in her early teens, to a man closer to her father's age than her own, she had only been able to access a basic primary school education and had been dependent on his advice and guidance. She could understand some English, but did not feel confident about her own abilities and preferred to use an interpreter. Being housed in an area in which she knew no one had been deeply distressing and frightening. She remembered and reported only the negatives of her new situation;

> *House bad very bad, ... cold; damp ... on street* [boys*] they follow
> me shout [racist comments*] whenever they notice* [me] *they
> shouting and one time they throw stones I had to run away ... I
> stressed all the time ... can do nothing to change my situation.*

This fear of hostility or persecution from residents in the area in which she was re-housed was not unique but seemed to be shared by nearly all of the women in this group. That all of these women stated that they were permanently afraid of being targeted, persecuted and expected hostility from local residents, was a striking finding, even in a small scale study.

> *We not feel safe in this place... it is problem for Somali ladies –
> no men just ladies and children so we are frightened. ... my
> friend ... , it was a man at bus stop, he shout abuse [racist
> comments] she was shaking and did not say anything to him ...
> he spat at her and you can imagine she did nothing to him and he
> just abuse her. ... so I feel scared in this place ... just to go out for
> shopping and take kids to school* [only time she goes out]

(Khadra)

For Khadra, the response to perceived or actual threats to her safety was similar to that of Yasmin in the hostel. She remained within her home, only going out when absolutely necessary. This meant that she had very little contact with people both from her own community and the wider population, with the result that she had no help in overcoming

or reducing her anxieties and continually lived in a state of fear. The outcome of this was that when Khadra's community worker eventually persuaded her to go with her to see a GP, she was diagnosed with clinical depression.

Khadra's case was not unique with women speaking openly about their experiences of harassment and verbal abuse. The women reported that when they did go out, name calling frequently occurred. It was usually by children or young people but in some cases adults had been extremely abusive or had even attacked them or their property. The community worker had not been able to persuade them that their insistence in isolating themselves from the local community was making the situation worse:

> *There is no choice here you cannot stay home so I say to them you go out so you accepted like, you know people they will see you are ok not alien, you are normal ...but the ladies they lazy some very scared ... just stay home.*

One participant described, in detail and in floods of tears how her teenage son had been attacked by a group of youths who had taunted him and the rest of the family with racist comments. She had called the police who took a statement, but she said '*nothing came of it*'. Another explained how her fear had accelerated to the level where she felt she had no choice but to move out of her flat. She was allocated housing in an area popular with Somalis and other refugee and migrant populations and had initially settled. She noticed graffiti on the walls outside her property, labelling Muslims as terrorists, but had tried to ignore it. She left after learning that the previous tenant, also a Somali woman, had moved out after lighted newspaper was pushed through the letterbox. She explained that she had not wanted to move her family again but had felt too frightened to stay in case the same happened to her.

> *... at first it was ok then* [after some time] *they just write things on the wall* [racist comments] *but I ignore that, and then they broke the kitchen window ... two times, once with a very big stone, I became frightened and stressed, worried you know about the children being hurt. I complained to the housing office, they only say they would investigate and I should phone the police if I had any more trouble but I did not know who these people where, so what could I say* [to the police]. *I was stressed, going crazy, couldn't sleep, afraid to go out and worried when I was in the house in case they try to do something. ... . my mum's relative she say you can come and live with me. ... I sleep on the floor, .., but I was happy to be away from that place. ....*

(Participant, focus group two)

Insecurity triggered the fears that arose during forced migration with every incident having a strong cumulative effect thus making it more and more difficult for the women to adapt to their changed life circumstances. Worries about safety dominated their lives and whilst many spoke about their longing to visit others from their communities, they did not feel safe leaving their homes or neighbourhoods and so became more and more isolated and disenfranchised. This meant there was little opportunity for them to develop or utilise networks of support, whether formal or informal, or to meet with those who had developed strategies for coping.   Such social networks are instrumental in reducing the negative effects of forced migration, and in consequence, their chances of replenishing their stocks of social capital, were severely constrained.

Family and Intimate Relations

All the women arrived without their husbands but came from a world where guidance and direction for many aspects of their lives had come from these missing partners. Thus they were not only grieving for their lost partner but also an accepted and understood way of life. They now had to take on the male role without any preparation or guidance. The sense of desolation and loneliness that followed from this were vividly expressed in their narratives.

> *You don't know where to start from in this new life ...every day you are hoping, praying to Allah, please send news, but there is no news so you not know, terrible ... children not know what happen to father, asking where is father is he coming, you just feel so lost, really alone...*

(Jehan)

For some their loss was still so near the surface that they could not easily speak about their husbands or other male relatives because, to deliberately call to mind or speak of happier times was just too painful. Nadiya said little about her husband except that she believed he had died in the war. For her the days in England were '*filled with sorrow'*. Speaking through her tears, she went on to explain that the '*great grief* 'in her life was that she could not find the rest of her family. They had, become separated as they had fled from Somalia. She spent 10 years alone with her daughter in an Ethiopian refugee camp before being resettled in England. It was another six years, before the Red Cross had found the younger boy, who was then reunited with his mother and sister. Grateful that she now had two of her children with her, Nadiya explained that there was still '*no peace in my life'* as her oldest son, her firstborn, was still missing. Her greatest fear was

he too was dead and that she would die not knowing what happened to him. In her eyes, she had limited time to find out as diabetes and renal failure (necessitating dialysis three times a week) increasingly impacted on her life and ultimately life span.

Her two younger children had started to rebuild their lives in England and appeared to be integrating well into British society. Indeed her daughter Fatima, who was interviewed separately, could not be more pleased to be in England and was enjoying the educational and employment opportunities that she said would never have been available to her in Somalia.

> *I never have been to school* [before arriving in England] *I like I don't want to move from here again. I really love it ... because they give me a chance to study. They give me a chance to work.*

However, Nadiya unable to leave her home without transport and with very little English language skills, despite living in England for nearly ten years, could not move past the need to find out what had happened to her first born. In her eyes he was the rightful head of the family and without him there was no one to care for her younger children when she could no longer do so. Her focus on the past and its traditions, was preventing her from seeing that, as the interview with her daughter revealed, her daughter was not only happy and integrating well, but, rather than needing care herself, was in fact, her mother's and brother's primary carer. Those women who still had family living in Somalia or other parts of Africa said they worried constantly about them. As with Nadiya, many of them did not know what had happened to their family members and could only imagine the worst.

> *Many years now [since she last heard from her husband] maybe he sick ... crazy... fighting ... maybe died ... worry everyday no news.*

(Participant, focus group one)

Others, reported that they spoke to their family members at least once a week, but found these short telephone conversations distressing and depressing, as most often there was only news of yet more violence, lootings or deaths. They described their apprehension every time the telephone rang.

> *... every week it is more problem, worse than before, people from our district they are missing and nobody can know what happen. We scared, frightened ... what will happen next, our people suffering very bad ...*

(Participant, focus group three)

Although these telephone calls were one means of keeping in contact with their relatives in Somalia or other parts of Africa, the women experienced no relief in re-establishing contact with their families, although for many just the knowledge they were alive would have made all the difference to their lives. They spoke only of how anxious they were, each time they received a call or how depressed they became when an expected call was not received. Speaking to their relatives bought them little comfort as, whilst they could hear them, they could not see them and they worried that they would forget what their relatives looked like. They also explained that it was difficult to ask everything that they wanted to know in a short telephone call and at times were more despondent after speaking to their relatives than before. Positive reports about life back home, they explained, made them depressed as they considered all that they had lost when they left, and wondered if it would have been better if they had remained in their country and waited for the war to end.

When the news was not so positive, the women stated, that they were overwhelmed with sadness as they could do little to change the situation of their families.

> *They tell you all the problems and you don't want to hear, you*
> *cannot help you only feeling sad, worse than before, worried what*
> *is to happen next.*

(Participant, focus group three)

Frequent requests, for money, by their relatives who were still in Africa were a heavy burden for the women as they reported that they struggled to survive on their benefits and constantly worried that they would not have enough to pay their own bills. The constant pleas for financial support left them feeling demoralised and ashamed that they could not fulfil this important cultural practice. The women reported that they did what they could, but, despite their best efforts what was sent was never seen to be enough as often the amount demanded exceeded their total monthly income.

> *My aunt she call [and ask for money] I cannot send, ... kids need*
> *food, warm clothes, bills to pay, when I send she say not enough,*
> *we hungry, cannot buy food, need more help ... but I don't have*
> *and she not understand here different to life to Somalia, she*
> *upset and don't call for long time ... I worry if she ok. Every night*
> *I am crying ... cannot sleep ... our way is to help but I cannot ...*

(Katima)

Katima who was raising five children alone, including two of her deceased brother's, reported that her only source of income was welfare benefits which she explained was

not enough to cover the family's needs. Katima, who had never had the responsibility of budgeting in Somalia, reported how difficult managing money was for her. She explained that she had now learnt to budget, so that there was enough money for the gas and electricity meters, but still found it difficult to buy everything the family needed. She described how a lack of money was a constant source of worry for her as the children had to go without the things they needed but mostly she worried about her family back home.

Although they could not send what was requested, all the women reported that they regularly sent money back home. That they could send anything at all, was a testimony to their austerity in managing their finances and their willingness to help their less fortunate relatives. However, their traditional norms meant that in their eyes they were failing in their social and moral duties, and they dwelt on the fact that what they did send was not enough.

Relationships with their sons continued to add to their distress of living in a strange country without family support. In Somalia, family is the centre of all social organisation and at the core of the family system is respect for the elders. From a very early age children are taught to respect and honour their parents (Lewis 2008; Gardner and El Bushra 2004). That their sons would be disrespectful to them was deeply distressing for the women and they described their 'shame'.

> *My son he is in his teens now, he not close to me anymore, answer back, make rude comments, ... no respect like I am his mother so it is hard for me to live this life*

> (Jehan)

Unaccustomed to these behaviours, the women struggled to cope. As in the previous cycle, the women again reported issues related to their children's schooling which only added to the already escalating tensions at home. One of the major problems was that their children had arrived in the England with limited schooling, as the war in Somalia had severely disrupted the education system. Although some children did attend schools in the refugee camps, this was sporadic and rudimentary. In addition to this, the dispersal programmes meant that families were frequently moved which added to their children's difficulty in settling in school. Children might also arrive in England after having spent time in a different country in Europe and therefore had to adapt to yet another system of education (Sporton and Valentine 2005). For some children, English was a

third or fourth language after Somali, Arabic and one or other of the European languages such as Dutch, Finnish or Swedish (Sporton and Valentine 2005).

The women described how they had expected that their children would be helped to adjust to a different educational experience but to their dismay this did not happen and they were left alone to cope with children who were having extreme difficulties settling at school. Whilst the women were struggling with the language barrier, their children were complaining that they could not understand their lessons as they could not get to grips with the language. Bullying in school was a common issue and the boys in particular responded to this by becoming disruptive, not wanting to attend school and becoming increasingly angry with their mothers. They all agreed that their worst fear was that their boys would drop out of school altogether and join gangs or become engaged in other '*shameful*' behaviour. This deeply troubled them.

> *Take for instance my son really he good boy, very helpful to me,*
> *but now he go out with other boys not Somali ... black and white*
> [boys] *..., I worry they do bad things. I try talk but he no listen to*
> *me ... just angry all the time. I worried he get trouble from the*
> *police like his friends.*

(Participant, focus group three)

Whilst there was much discussion about the problems they were encountering with their young people, the women did not make any suggestions as to what they as mothers could do to support them. When asked about their own contact with their children's schools, the women were dismissive in their responses and looked blankly at each other. When prompted, the women explained that their lack of understanding about the English educational system meant it was difficult for them to know what to do. They did not feel confident discussing their children's problems with the school They maintained that the teachers were the ones who knew best how to handle matters around schooling as they were the experts on educational matters.

> *I no know school here [education system], different from Somalia,*
> *they* [school*] know what right way kids to learn*

(Participant, focus group two)

Unlike Somalia, the English education system places great value on working in partnership with parents. This was a concept that was alien to these women as in Somalia parents do not get involved in their children's schooling, and would only be

requested to visit if there was a problem. Being asked to visit the school would indicate that there was a problem, which would reflect negatively on the child's parents and the community (Sporton and Valentine 2005).   In spite of these cultural norms, there was a strong consensus amongst the women that education was important and something they valued. They recognised that there were problems but just did not know what to do to help their children. The women felt so uncomfortable speaking with their children's teachers, which illustrates their perceived sense of helplessness as they struggled to cope with a system of education that they did not understand. The language barrier was also an issue as interpreters were not available in the schools. This was difficult for the children as well as their mothers who had no way of communicating with their children's teachers.

The women reported that Somali men needed to do more to help them raise the boys. They maintained that in the absence of the boy's fathers and other close male relatives, the wider community of male Somalis should take on the responsibility of discipline and act as positive role models, as is the cultural norm.   The women expressed their disappointment and dismay that, far from taking on these social and moral obligations most of the Somali men they knew, were chewing khat and had time for little else. Aswaaq said;

> *You know that place on xxxx in xxxx   they* [the men] *are there all night just chewing, they saying they are talking politics but they are still talking about the war, about who did that to this one, clan politics ...chewing ... spending money on khat and ladies they are the ones that are suffering with the kids.*

Another participant had explained that she had been reunited after two years, with her husband but that he had become an alcoholic, and had spent all their money on khat, '*to lessen his pain of what had happened*' after about a year they had divorced and she was left alone to raise their four children. Whilst every woman told a story that was individual to them, they all stressed the heavy burden of being the sole carer for their children.

> *Five kids ... no one to help, men from your community they know you are suffering but they do nothing, not like in Somalia..., we life very hard ...*
>
> *(Katima)*

The issues raised with their families, especially problems with their children, were compounded by the women's sense of helplessness and hopelessness in many other aspects of their lives. They grieved the loss of the close knit relationships and support

networks that could have acted as a buffer to the demands of single parent life and what they saw as, the 'alien values' being adopted by their children. Although they were dedicated to their families, the hardships of their lives had left them discouraged, pessimistic, and in some cases depressed. Their lack of confidence was reinforced by the low status accorded to them as refugee women as discussed in the next section.

Changing Norms and Values

Whilst the women had expected things to be different in England, they were not prepared for the enormity of the changes that they faced. One of the most significant changes was in their status. The women in the anomic groups had generally been house wives or had helped with the family business in Somalia. They explained how they had found the change in their status and roles difficult to deal with as in Somalia they had been well respected in their communities. They had been in a position to help the less fortunate, as although they were not rich, they did have a good standard of living. One participant who described her family life in Somalia as '*ordinary, not rich'*, but that they had owned their house, had a nice car and servants reported;

> *I tell you the first thing I experienced I come to the United Kingdom ... If you compare [to Somalia] totally different ... I realise from the beginning that I was refugee and that is my position here ...*

(Participant, focus group three)

Some used the words 'second class citizen' to refer to their changed status.

> *I know that I am living in UK as second class citizen ... this is not my country and I have to accept this is my life now ... when you not in your own country life is not like before cos it's not your country.*

(Participant, focus group two)

They claimed that the way in which they were treated by those who should have been helping them had been deeply distressing and had caused them to question why they were here.

> *... for example you go to neighbourhood office, they rude very rude people, they should respect ... you can see they're just making judgement, they look at you, making judgement, the way they are looking at you, you know, you can see their eyes. You feel like they are saying ... why you here, you Somalis... giving us problem*

Most of the women had arrived in England without any qualifications, but even those who had worked in administrative jobs, reported that it had been impossible to find employment. Several women explained how they had gone to the job centre expecting to find work, but had been stunned when they realised that there was little appropriate work available for them. This woman a senior administrator in Somalia expressed how shocked she had been by the lack of assistance she had received when she had wanted to investigate employment opportunities.

> *... You imagine I go to the job centre that is the place you go to find work right. I say I am professional in my country, I have qualification, I can do some course* [to bring skills up to British requirements], *they tell me you can do cleaning or shop work.*

(Participant, focus group three)

Proud of her professionalism and the recognition this afforded her back home, the apparent dismissal of her status she explained, had left her deflated and depressed. To be told that the only employment that she could reasonably expect to be offered was at a menial level had a massive impact on her self-confidence and self-esteem. She explained that from that time her spirit had been crushed. She accepted that the opportunities she believed were available in this country did not exist in reality for Somalis. Her decision was to completely dismiss the idea of working.

> *I shock ... just to sign the form and get the benefit that is all ... so I just say OK, sign the form and get the benefit ... stay home with the kids... I* [had wanted] *to work, improve English, nice house, very keen, but nothing came off it ... now it is too difficult for me*.

Other women who reported that their intention on arrival was to work recounted similar experiences. Whilst, they were optimistic over time their optimism had diminished.

> *... cos no one to give advice, you don't know where to go... here no help ... you just feeling bad all the time so you kinda give up ...*

(Participant, focus group three)

A support worker who was interpreting added;

> the ladies they feel bad, they have no status like back home ...
> *take the benefits and that is all. I understand myself it is difficult*
> *like for me, paying for childcare for my kids, in the school holiday*
> *very expensive more than £50 each kid, no one had told me I*
> *could receive help, I was working six month just paying all the*
> *time for three kids.*

(Participant focus group three)

.
This woman had eventually been able to claim assistance with childcare and had eventually managed to find a job that she described as rewarding but the women in the anomic group expressed their discontent that the employment situation was not what they had expected. They hated depending on income support, which did not give them enough to live on but maintained that they did not have a choice as no one was interested in employing Somali refugees.

In recent years, jobs in the UK have been in short supply for everyone. What the women perceived to be dismissive or racist attitudes by benefits agency staff may simply reflect the reality of that situation, as without recognisable professional qualifications and good English language skills, the types of jobs they wanted were not available. Furthermore, not only can poor English act as a barrier to employment as in most types of work it will be required for the job, but as in the case of the participant who was reluctant to discuss her child's problems with the school, it can severely hinder confident self- presentation.

Several of the women did speak about their difficulty in communicating effectively in English, but paradoxically none of them reported that they were trying to improve their language by attending English classes, although most admitted that there were classes running in their neighbourhoods. Various reasons were given for not attending, such as child-care, the cold weather and of not knowing what time the classes were taking place. One or two women admitted however, that it was just '*too difficult'* and that they had resigned themselves to never learning the language, depending instead on others to interpret for them.

Questions about problems encountered because of language difficulties led to a lively discussion with the women complaining about the amount of paperwork they needed to complete. This aspect of resettlement was very worrying for them and usually they relied on their children or other Somali women who had better language abilities.

You know xxx I call and ask her [to read letters] but sometime she busy so I no see and I worry if trouble for me [if important information is missed]

(Participant, focus group one)

One woman reported that she had not been able to understand some of the paperwork that she had received from the benefits agency, and so had not known that she had needed to reapply for housing benefit. It was only, several weeks later, when a friend who was visiting read her mail that she had realised that she had needed to make a new claim. However, this same woman admitted later, that she had been asked to attend English lessons by the support worker, although the class was only a short distance away from her home, she had never attended.

When asked if they had ever sought help from local organisations, for example, any of the local advice centres, the women explained that they did not know about some of the services in their communities as no one had given them information or advice about what was available. Some women admitted that they had heard about a local women's organisation which held a Somali woman's advisory service but did not go there as they did not like to discuss their private affairs with people who they did not know well. Some of the woman also spoke about a number of Somali advice centres that had sprung up in different areas and which they knew offered translation services and advice about claiming benefits. However the women maintained that they would never use these services as they did not trust those who ran them and believed that they discriminated against those who did not belong to the same clan as themselves. Furthermore, the women reported that they could not be certain that anything discussed would be kept confidential and not discussed within the community.

You know Somali will not talk in front of another Somali... it's like shameful in our culture. People gossip and you will feel shamed so it's why ladies not go. You cannot trust.

(Yasmin)

It would appear, therefore, that although the women claimed not to know about general advice services within the community, they were aware of some of the Somali led organisations. However, they were extremely negative about those running these services. They recounted stories which suggested that those running the services were

dishonest and had used the grants given by the British government to help their community resettle, for their own means.

> *I swear that one in xxx he get big grant from council, twenty thousand or more, ... I heard ..., we are still suffering and council is giving money but what they are doing ... nothing.. Another one in xxx he receive money but just take it* [money] *for themselves] ... Nothing change for our community but the money is gone.*

(Katima)

Far from seeing the agencies as places where they could seek assistance from people who shared their language and experiences, the women expressed a great deal of pessimism and did not have anything positive to say about them. The women were therefore not utilising the facilities provided by the local authority nor were they willing to seek advice from community specific organisations. They were, therefore, mostly unaware of many of the services available to them. For example, some of the women complained that their homes were damp and that the children suffered from asthma and other respiratory problems. However, they did not seem to be aware of the service provided by the local authority to help remove draughts and damps from homes, nor were they aware of their need to report such shortcomings. One reason for this is that many of the women cannot read their own language, so, information sent in Somali may remain unanswered because the women cannot find anyone who they trust to read for them.

Adapting to a new environment is extremely challenging especially when a number of factors seem to exacerbate the women's fears, such as concerns about their safety, family matters, the language barrier and a lack of trust outside and within their community. These issues were compounded by the absence of the support networks that could act as a buffer and thus help the women to resettle. As Zetter *et al.* (2003) assert, the label 'refugee' creates diverse forms of vulnerabilities which need to be considered as differentiated before making decisions about how refugee women can best be assisted with resettlement. The discussion so far has pointed to some of the specific vulnerabilities for those women who are perceived to be in '*anomie*'. A description is now given of present day life for the women who are on a journey of '*recovery*'.

Group Two - Recovery

Safety and Security

Similarly to those in the anomic group, on arrival, most of these women were housed in temporary emergency accommodation. However, their reactions to this kind of living arrangement could not have been more different than that of the women in anomie. These women explained that they had perceived the offer of a bed and shelter as a positive indicator in that they had been allowed to enter England and were not turned back immediately by immigration. For them this was just another phase of their migratory journeys, which they saw as positive and which they had hoped would eventually lead to them having a permanent and safe place of refuge in England. The women said they did not feel disaffected by the difficulty of finding secure accommodation. However, some acknowledged that their arrival in England had been planned and so they knew that relatives or friends would have organised a place for them to stay. In general this latter group were women who had already been granted asylum in another European country, but had decided to move to England to join other family members or because they did not find conditions in the first resettlement country favourable.

> *I had my passport then and my cousin she was in UK, ... so I visited her, we talk and said it is better I live in this place* [England] *...*
>
> (Sara)

Another woman although initially worried about where she would stay, found to her relief that her relative, who had not been able to accommodate her as their house was already severely overcrowded, had arranged a house share with another Somali family.

> *We arrived from Sweden ...., myself and the children, ... my mother's relatives [clan members] they had found us a house, we shared with another family... it was alright and we stayed around six months in that place* [before being re-housed]. *... We was ok no problems, no body bother us*
>
> (Participant, focus group three)

Thus, women who had family connections in England could draw on these to help them find a safe place to stay, but this was not the case for all of the women and some of them initially had to live in emergency accommodation. It is well known that temporary accommodation of this kind can present a host of problems including a lack of space and privacy, isolation, limited or no cooking facilities and limited understanding or

appreciation of the cultural requirements of Somali refugees (Cole and Robinson 2003). However, the women in recovery reported that in general the accommodation had been acceptable and that they had just felt relieved to be in a safe place. They commented that they were '*not expecting much*' and therefore were grateful for anything that kept them safe.

> *The hostel, it was a good thing ... only for families ... most of them without husbands ... you come without anything so you get the bed so you feeling ok*

(Ladaan)

Ladaan explained that although she had not received any money whilst she was living in the hostel, she was provided with food and accommodation. This meant that she had to survive on the meals provided and had no disposable income whatsoever. Whilst some women complained about a lack of money, she reported that she believed this was ungrateful and petty as everyone should be thankful to the British government that they had been offered refuge and were now away from the fighting. She added, that after living with the harshness and hostilities as an '*illegal*' in Kenya, it meant everything to her that her children were safe, that they had enough to eat, and most importantly, that they were free to move around without persecution.

However, emergency accommodation was always allocated on a temporary basis and, typically after a period of few weeks, the women were required to move on to more permanent housing in different parts of the country. In Ladaan's case despite her desire to stay in London, she reluctantly agreed to move over a hundred miles away to Sheffield, which has a sizable Somali community (Cole and Robinson 2003), however she was placed in fairly rural area where there were no other Somalis. She maintained that she was given no choice about where she would live but told '*you either accept our help or you are on your own*'. She explained her dismay when she first saw the house that was to become her home.

> *... I start to complain, especially the door also it's only one lock ... the kids they can open easily, anyone can come [in]. So I am still scared. ... the carpet it was rubbish, kind of melting when you put your foot ... so the kids become sickly because the environment was horrible. It was damp house.*

(Ladaan)

Ladaan explained she had found it impossible to settle in Sheffield and had yearned to return to the London area. There were no other Somali families living nearby, services such as the health centre and school were a long walk away and this was difficult as she did not have a car. Although she had some English language skills she discussed how isolated and depressed she had become.

> *People in Sheffield ok, but no Somali, they say good morning and hello [the neighbours] but that is all and you feel like alien, people looking at you ...   Yeah, no friends, no family, nothing just we go there ... I accept it because you don't have a choice. I didn't feel comfortable just lonely like I'm lost and all the day crying*

Frightened that she would become '*crazy*', she took the decision to yet again uproot her family and move to another place.

> *... school for the kids and shopping... very difficult as I didn't have a car. So [in] June I sold my stuff and come here [to Birmingham] I come um on the coach. I went to what you call home office [neighbourhood office] I said I am from Sheffield and I don't have a house, they look at different hostels [sent her to a hostel].*

She chose Birmingham as the best place, even though she wanted to go back to London, because she feared being forced to return to the house she had left in Sheffield. She knew that there were many Somalis living in Birmingham, some from her own clan family, and reported that, at the very worst, she would be offered emergency accommodation until she could work out what to do.

Ladaan's story illustrates the importance to her of support networks as well as her determination, to settle in a place where she felt accepted. She recognised that her living conditions and environment were affecting her well-being and had drawn on the resources she had to hand, including economic capital to move on. Her response to the situation she had found herself in could not have been more different to women in the anomic group who, faced with a similar set of circumstances, felt powerless to do anything positive that could bring about a change their situation.

Similar to Ladaan, Safia was told that she would be moved on, in her case to Liverpool. Unlike Ladaan, she did not have the responsibility of children and was therefore not as restricted to the type of accommodation that she could access. She explained that a refusal to move meant that she would be without the assistance of NASS, who were the ones arranging her move to Liverpool, so she made the decision 'go it alone'.

> *A social work, a lady she told me ... there's going to be no place to live...* [in or around London] *the place she wanted to send me*

Safia described how the social worker had tried to reassure her that there was a Somali community in Liverpool, but she explained that she did not trust the '*woman*'. She maintained that the social worker must have been telling her lies, as she could not understand that, if there were Somalis in Liverpool, why she was being required to move from one Somali area to another. However, Safia like many other women did not appreciate that the dispersal programmes were designed to help resettle refugees by moving them to parts of the country, where services were not as stretched as those in the South East, especially in London.

Safia made enquiries amongst the community which led to her being introduced to another single Somali woman, who agreed that Safia could share her room. Whilst this meant two adult women living in a single room, in a shared house, Safia reported that this had not been a problem for her and that she had been very happy with the arrangement which had lasted for nearly a year. She explained that living in a confined space was a small price to pay for being in a geographical location in which she felt safe and secure. Her story, along with the testimonies from other women in this study, illustrates the importance placed on social relations and the expressed wish of many of the women to remain in the areas in which they had been temporarily housed and were already developing relationships with other Somalis. In effect they were rebuilding a new kind of clan system where they could depend on each other for support. Whilst from a Western viewpoint refusing the opportunity to relocate to more spacious accommodation, in a part of the country where there is less congestion and demand on services, may seem to make sense, for women such as Ladaan and Safia this was not seen as an attractive prospect. Giving reasons for the decision she made, Safia said;

... and in the morning you wake up and you don't become homesick ... everybody's talking about home ... so that was another decision I made, [not to go to Liverpool] I was brave.

Another topic that received a great deal of attention amongst the women was that of the reaction of the majority community in the areas in which they were placed. In most cases and to the immense relief of the women this was very positive and they could only speak of their satisfaction.

I'm glad, it's very tolerable, [her neighbourhood]..., I'm very happy to be in that place, its mixed [ethnically] ... I'm lucky in that you know the people are good they will come out to you, they'll ask

*how you doing, I know a few of them well now... and I know my
kids play outside and they are ok ... nobody bothers them.*

(Zeinab)

Zeinab was housed in an estate that was predominately white, working class, in an inner city area, where there were a few families from other minority ethnic groups living close by, although none of them were from Somalia. Zeinab reported that she had felt welcomed by her neighbours and enjoyed good relations with them. She stated that this had given her confidence and she had started to really believe that she could have a good life in the England. What is significant in Zeinab's story is that despite of the absence of fellow Somalis, she had settled into her new neighbourhood fairly easily and had quickly moved from the stage of being so afraid that she had to force herself to leave her home, to becoming an active member of the community. She reported how she had made good friends with her neighbours;

> *... I'm very lucky and I'm very happy [living in her estate] because
> err onto my right you have a Jamaican family and onto my left we
> have a Chinese family married to a British woman... there's a
> couple from the Philippines so we kind of, the grove is mixed.*

Whilst Zeinab had settled well into the community, there had been some problems. She had been particularly concerned that her children would settle well, as the schools they attended reflected the demographic profile of the area in that nearly all of the other children were white. She was very concerned that her children might be seen as different and become the brunt of racist comments or bullying. She reported that despite her fears, there had only ever been one incident which had been swiftly dealt with.

> *She [Zeinab's daughter] had an incident last year… , one boy
> threw a stone at her and gave her some racist remark. I went to
> the school, I spoke to the principal and she said yes, I've heard
> about it and we are taking action. You know before I went to see
> her, she heard about it and she had already summoned the boy
> and called his parents and everything ... I was very happy that
> she had done this before I had gone to see her. She knew what
> was happening in the school and had done something about it. ...
> makes you feel like you know they are concerned about the
> children and not ignoring any problems, so after that I was
> involved in the school, helping the teacher with the kids
> sometimes… .*

For Zeinab the fact that the headmistress had taken action before she had even visited the school was a pleasant surprise. She was so satisfied with the response of the headmistress who had treated her kindly, acknowledged her concern and explained the

action that was being taken, that she had offered to help out at the school on a regular basis. She explained that she had felt confident to do this and that she wanted the white children to know that Somali people are ordinary people, just like them. So, for her, an unfortunate incident, which could have caused problems, in-fact inspired her to become more involved with school life which ultimately led to her studying to become a teacher.

The issue of racism had been swiftly dealt with in Zeinab's daughter's school.   Unlike some of the mothers in the anomic group, she had had the confidence and language skills to approach the school and the issue had been quickly resolved. Another woman, Mariam, also worked hard to address racist comments towards her children at school. Mariam explained that, at first, she had simply tried to reassure her children and told them to ignore the name- calling. However, her children continued to come home very upset.   She was not prepared to '*sit back and do nothing'* so she approached the school. At the same time she contacted a local community organisation to find out if there was anything that could be done to address the hostilities directed at Somali people in the area as she felt things became more serious after the terrorists attacks in 2005.

> *At my daughters school talk to the mums and let them know what is happening to my community and tell them we do not support, we very upset at these things [terrorism]. I think some of the mums, you know they were really really surprised, before we only say hello not really talk [before] ... I even talk to the health visitor and she was saying yes yes but your community needs to speak out, tell the ladies to come to the play group so other mums can listen to what is happening ... . So after that we organise an event at community centre and invited all the ladies, to come. You know we did some food and we talk to the school and they say it is alright so we give leaflets at the school .... Some of our ladies they still did not come, too lazy but I was pleased and we talked about many things. The ladies they say this is the first time we have done something like this it was very good – you know both sides mixing and enjoying Somali food.*

Mariam like Zeinab felt strongly that the way to change people's views about Somalis was to talk to them and to help the local community to understand that the reportage in the papers and on television did not present an accurate description of the vast majority of the Somali community. With the help of other mothers from the Somali community and a local community organisation, she believed the event really helped to challenge the perception of people in the neighbourhood who had been suspicious and hostile towards their Somali neighbours. Unlike those in anomie, both these participants had come from middle class Somalia and one of them had worked as a trained interpreter and therefore had not only a very good command of the English language but had also been trained in negotiation and assertiveness skills. These undoubtedly would have helped her to have

the confidence to speak out, a trait not evident in many Somali women, especially the uneducated, who often deferred to the men in public.

Experiences of discrimination and harassment were commonly reported by both groups of women and as with those in the anomic group, issues around safety and security were a priority for women in recovery. However those in recovery were active in regard to their situations. As Tiilikainen (2003: 61) argues '*action is something embedded in the web of social relationships*' and it would seem that the women in recovery were more readily able to tap into or convene support networks.   This may well have helped them to replenish their much depleted stocks of *capital which may have mitigated against some of the challenges they faced.*

Family and Intimate Relations

Similar to the general population of Somali refugee women, with the exception of Nasra, all of the women in this group had arrived alone or accompanied with their children. Although all of them admitted that it was extremely difficult for them to be without their families, they reported that they had accepted the difficulties of having to flee their country and had known before they travelled that it was not going to be possible for the entire family to leave together.

> *... now we are separated ... My husband he couldn't come with me so it was me and the kids ... but there's a brighter future for us here.*

(Sara)

Whilst the women admitted that they missed their families dreadfully and were naturally worried about their safety as outbreaks of sporadic fighting continued, they were also extremely pragmatic. They explained that what had been important for them was to maintain links with their families back in Africa and to find ways of supporting them financially until it was possible for them to be reunited.

> *Yes we are sad, every day we miss our family very much, ... every day you wake up and you are not with them... but it's no use we think on that all day, we have to be strong, we are here, safe, we can help our people, that is the most important to me to help my family. This is the life now ...*

(Aswaaq)

The women explained that it was important for them to have regular contact with their relatives abroad and in some cases they spoke to them at least every week, as this helped them to feel connected with their loved ones.

> *... I phoned my mum. ... so I used to talk to her at least every week and send her £100 (every month). I know it helps … that they are ok.*

(Safia)

Knowing that they were doing their best, to support their families helped to mitigate the loss of not having their relatives with them. Unlike those in anomie, these women were extremely hopeful that they would eventually be reunited with their loved ones, and explained that they would never give up hope. Safia's husband had been missing for nearly four years when the couple were reunited. She explained;

> *You know in all that time I didn't know where he was, what happen to him and so I just keep on you know hoping that he come. ... my husband also came as refugee through Hong Kong. ... I sent nearly £3000 to help him to come. ... My baby came 2004, [from Somalia], but my mum she didn't move and just came to stay for a while. I did apply for my mum ... was rejected because of her age ... they say she's too young to come.*

Safia was delighted that her husband had eventually been able to join her. She had always believed that the family would be together again one day and this helped her to cope with some of the difficulties of life in a foreign country. Although disappointed that her mother's application for asylum had been rejected, Safia admitted that her mother was happy to be back in Somalia as she did not like England and although the fighting in Somalia continued her family were, at present, in an area that was relatively safe.

However, Safia's outcome was not a common one and whilst the women reported that they would never give up praying and hoping that they would find their missing children, brothers and sisters, most did not express the same sentiments about their husbands. Some did not have much to say, but others made it very clear that life in England did not include any plans to be reunited with their husbands. Aswaaq had learnt, after several years of separation from her husband that he had migrated to the United States and had started another family there. She asserted that;

> *ladies are better here with no men, yes life is difficult, kids ask for their father but I tell them you luckier than many children, you have food, clothes, education and even a play station. Somali men they are photocopies of their fathers who feel women are behind them and must do what they say.*

These types of sentiments, were expressed by several women in the recovery group, who seemed to have accepted that it was unlikely that they would find out what had happened to their husbands. In some cases, like Aswaaq, they openly admitted that they were not unhappy that they were separated.

Sara did not have much to say about her husband, except that they had become separated as they had fled Somalia and that she did not know where he was. Like Aswaaq she was adamant that her preference, now, was to raise her children alone. It would seem that these women, strong and taking control over their lives, were reluctant to give up the independence that living in a free society like England brings. Salima explained that she had married about two years after arriving but the marriage had been a short and unhappy one as her husband had been violent towards her. With the assistance of her family she had eventually divorced him. Although she was now raising her two young children without the support of their father she explained that she had never been happier.

> *You know the other day I was standing washing my dishes and thinking O my God, I am a free woman, no one can tell me do this do that and I am not afraid anymore. You know I have house, my kids are happy and the government in this country they protect ladies like me so I am happy. In Somalia you could not just divorce your husband even if he treating you very badly as you would have no one to look after you, but here ladies are free. You know some of them say the government is our husband.*

The women explained that one of the biggest problems women married women faced in their community was that of men 'eating' khat. The men had become addicted to this drug which had been chewed occasionally in Somalia, mostly by the elders. Every woman who spoke about khat concluded that the chewing of this drug was responsible for the breakdown of many Somali families in England. Aswaaq reported;

> *It's like any other drug, everywhere it's a problem. They are not allowed to eat like that apart from the UK. The problem without drugs sleep is gone they can stay awake two three nights, The lady's cleaning, washing, ironing, keeping kids quiet in the house because he's telling you … I don't want to hear these kids making a noise in the house. That's a big problem for men that's what is destroying men. The ladies they are suffering very badly, very stressed.*

All the women reported that they knew of someone whose family had been badly affected because the man had become addicted to khat, and this was the reason many of them gave for not wanting to remarry, which is an expected cultural norm following divorce or separation.

One of the topics most frequently discussed, both in the focus groups and individual interviews, was that of how their children were adapting to life in England. Whilst the women in recovery admitted that there had been problems, they had been determined to find ways to deal with the issues and in general their children were settling well. Sara did

have some concerns about her eldest son, who had dropped out of college and was staying at home all day. Although she was worried that he might start mixing with the 'wrong type of person' she explained that she was being very careful not to alienate the boy, as she knew that this would create more problems. Instead she emphasised to him that it was normal in teenage years to not know the direction you wanted your life to go in, and suggested he just take a few months to work out what he wanted to do. She explained her pragmatism as a direct attempt to keep the lines of communication open with her son as she did not want him to become 'lost'. Although worried about her son's behaviour, Sara had worked out that this was probably a direct result of the dramatic changes in his life style and decided that the best approach was to support rather than to confront.

> *The children are ok, the younger ones doing well but bit of problem with the eldest one, he's finding things tough. So you know I don't argue with him too much, he's typical teenager so I just try and talk to him, encourage him and you know hope he will go to college later. He has been through a lot and I have to try to help him find what he wants.*

(Sara)

Although the women did not talk at any length about their clan backgrounds, it became clear that they represented a range of different clan families. This was something that they did not dwell on as they believed that their differences should be put aside.

> *You know for us ladies ..., we don't join* [pledge allegiance to any clan].

(Participant, focus group three)

Another explained;

> *You know we don't care about* [clan] *caused lots of* problems [in Somalia] *everyone want the power .... that's what caused the fighting.*

(Aswaaq)

These views were expressed by many women who explained that they had no interest in continuing the clan based feuds that had resulted in the civil war in Somalia. Instead they had to try to support each other.

> *Like you know we don't think about clans just to help each other now that's what we do it's important … we sick of the fighting ...*

(Participant, focus group two)

Given the atrocities that were committed in Somalia under the umbrella of clan allegiance that the women were able to put aside clan loyalty and instead focus on providing mutual support for their fellow country women testifies to their determination to rebuild their lives.

Like their sisters in the anomic group, the women in '*recovery,*' had been forced to adjust to different types of relationships. However, those in recovery seemed to be far more active in working out how to make their relationships work or to detach themselves from those relationships that they perceived to be detrimental to their well-being. Clan allegiances seemed to play little part in the women's lives, as they developed relationships with each other, which were based on mutual understanding, and a desire to help each other through the process of resettlement; rather than genealogical ties.

Changing Norms and Values

All the women reported that living in England had meant that their lives were radically changed as they adjusted to the differences in their roles and status. Some of the women in the recovery group were well educated to degree level or above and had held professional jobs in Somalia or had run their own successful businesses, such as importing and exporting clothes or other goods. Whilst there had been a great deal of interdependence within their extended family networks they had also been used to having some autonomy over their lives and their occupational status had been an important aspect of their identity.

> *You know everyone* [in England] *thinks Somali women just are really submissive and have no say over their lives but it is not true. For me my father he was very educated, PhD from British University and working for the government ... I was educated to Masters level, I study in xxx ...*
>
> *and then I was managing a very busy xxx department, my sister she was working for the government as well, very high level before the war, she studied economics...,*

(Participant, focus group one)

Another participant in the same focus group added;

> *When I arrived I didn't understand the system about how you can work here in my field. I make enquiries and the ladies [other Somali women] told me you cannot work here in that job like in Somalia, your qualification it is not recognised in this country.*

The women reported that initially they were shocked and found this type of news difficult to come to terms with. However, they explained that they were strong and extremely independent women. For them being dependent on others was perceived to be a negative trait and was not something that they could easily identify with. They had therefore been determined to find a way to use their experience and professional skills so that they could support themselves and their families. They gave similar reports to the anomic group of how they had been dealt with at the job centres, however, as their English in general was far better than those in anomie, they were able to communicate more effectively with the staff and express their wishes directly.

> *He was very young man ... no older than twenty ... and he is saying, you cannot work here in that job [the head of a clinical department] you have to be trained… . He said you can work as health care assistant maybe, so I said ok I will do that job and you can explain to me how I can train for my profession. He looked at me like he was you know shocked and then he said ok I can see you are determined let me make an appointment for you with the employment advisor. I think he wasn't expecting me to say yes I will work for now and then train for the work I did back in my country. He was thinking I would just say ok and go away.*

(Sara)

Another woman fluent in several languages including Arabic, Italian and Dutch had trained as an interpreter in her first resettlement country. Unable to locate paid employment she had initially worked in a voluntary capacity.

> *You know [after several months] I realised that I am not just going to get a job like that ...I find a place in the town where they are interested in people who will work without any pay [volunteers] and I said look I can speak Arabic and Somali and Somali people are suffering because they don't have the language, even in the hospital they are suffering can't say what is wrong ... . I said I will work and you don't have to pay me, so they sent me to a place and then I was even helping to train other ladies.*
>
> *It was very good I really felt good that I was helping in this way and started to get some pay, but then the funding finished and I was volunteering again but it was ok for me, I was helping my people and now I can study xxx at xxx university.*

(Mariam)

For both these women, as well others in the 'r*ecove*ry' group, although the kind of jobs they had initially wanted were not immediately available to them, they did not give up their aspirations to pursue meaningful careers and become independent of welfare benefits. Instead they did whatever was necessary to retrain or develop the skills needed for their preferred professions. With the exception of one woman in this group who was

heavily pregnant, all of those in recovery, were working either full or part time, studying or were actively seeking opportunities to study or work.

As Waris said;

> *My father* [who was killed in the war] *... he was an educated man very important position in Somalia ... , so you know for me it is the way we were brought up. In Somalia there is now no university because of the war, but here we have opportunity, after we get our papers* [exceptional leave to remain*] we can study so we need to learn something ... have Somali nurses, social workers, dentists here. It's like the government here have taken you into their country so now it is your turn to do something ... you know we don't just take everything ....*

Similarly Safia reported;

> *They started paying you money to stay in this country* [giving the women welfare benefits] *... so in some kind of way you think you are taking too much. That was what was in my head anyway.*

As Waris and Safia explained it was important to them to be able to give back to the country that had welcomed them in as asylum seekers. Waris continued to explain that she had felt really 'bad' when she had to claim welfare benefits, and had hated the fact that she was not earning her own living or studying to enable her to do so. She explained that she had had to wait until her immigration claim was settled before applying to university and reported that although she was not able to study whilst her claim was being processed, it had been important for her to 'do something'. She described how she had been very involved in running a community support group for Somali ladies and that because her English was good she had felt it was important to use these language skills to help others from her community.

> *You know before when I was not doing anything and I was feeling like really stressed and like I am nobody, for the first time in my life I thought O my god, I am not doing anything just like sitting at home and I am not used to this kind of life so I wasn't happy. ... I started with my friend to visit the community centre you know they have different things there like for advice. The manager there he was very nice ... we talk to him, explain what the problem is with the Somali ladies, nowhere to go and like you know there are lots of problems and no one to help. O my god my mobile phone it used to be a very high bill and I could not* afford [she was ringing agencies on behalf of women who did not have the language skills]. *They give us the room... three times a week and say you can use the computer and telephone which was really good, we couldn't believe... .*

Similar to Waris several of the women had helped out at different types of community advice centres and had seen this as an important way of rebuilding their status and self-esteem whilst helping others from their own communities who were having a difficult time.

> *You know one woman her husband he chew the khat and he was being very abusive to her and the children very bad, hitting her even when she very heavily pregnant and she frightened she may lose the baby. We explain to her you don't have to stay there with your kids and we get her help so he cannot go to that house anymore and if he try to do anything to her she can call for help... so that was really good.*

(Ladaan)

A striking difference between those in the anomie group and these women was the close and trusting relationships between them. Most of the women said they had over time developed a network of friends who they saw regularly and who they knew they could rely on. These women did not speak of loneliness or isolation. Instead they spoke about their days being full and busy, as they rushed from this group meeting to another or visited ladies who were sick or did not leave their homes for various reasons. Although they did speak about missing their families who were still in Africa and of being concerned about their welfare, they also said that they knew that it was important to support each other in this country as this was where they were now living. Nasra, who had originally settled in the Netherlands, and was the oldest lady to participate in the study, was perceived by several of the younger women to be a mother figure and they regularly convened at her home. They reported that as she had lots of life experience, she was someone that they could ask for advice about many of the problems they faced. Nasra who participated in focus group three explained;

> *When you are a refugee you are suffering a lot, ... Inside outside pressure, pressure, pressure yes everything change but for us we are still alive. ... a mother's having children, always running, you need somebody to share your problem with... especially the ladies they can't talk, they cannot express [their feelings] ... It is good to have place for Somali ladies to have to discuss ... To have this thing Somali lady community ... which we can do so many things because if there is a lot of problems ... when she gets her problem she comes to me [to ask for advice]*

Within this group the women explained that the support from each other was vital to them, they stated that the close relationships that they enjoyed with each other was an important part of their identity. Their interdependence resonates with Bourdieu's (1986) notion of *capitals* which emphasises individual's contacts, networks and shared identities which can provide support as well as access to resources, (for example information).

Some women explained that they regularly met with other Somali ladies at the mosque and emphasised that their religious faith had helped them to maintain a sense of who they were. Whilst reiterating that whatever happened to them was the '*will of God*' and that their destiny was pre-determined, the women also explained that they felt it was important that they did what they could to rebuild their lives, with whatever resources Allah had made available to them.

> *You know this is the life now and we are thankful that Allah has helped us we have housing, food, education ... things have been difficult .... we know that Allah, he is the one who makes things possible, when we cannot sleep and our mind is troubled by many things, we can make our prayers and read the Quoran, we get strength [that] things will be ok. God he gives the strength, the power like ... we need to do things to help ourselves.*

(Aswaaq)

Therefore, far from being fatalistic, the women reported that their Islamic beliefs meant that they had a responsibility to themselves and others to make the best of their situation. Mariam whose father was murdered during the war and her mother imprisoned and tortured for many years explained;

> *Before we had the war I was not that religious but you know after seeing what my mother she went through ... there must be a purpose for it* [the troubles the family had endured] *.... Whatever is going to happen to me, it's God's will ... I learn the Quoran... go to the xxx mosque to meet the other ladies and we learn to be patient, gives me more power to help my people.*

In contrast to those in the anomic group these women had a strong sense of self-determination. Their sense of self had been severely shaken as they grappled with the changes they faced in their roles, status and occupations. However, far from being passive victims, each had resolved to actively seek out the opportunities and resources that were available. They continually sought advice and information which they then passed on to others within their communities. Of prime importance was the principle of shared reciprocity, support and the building and maintaining of social networks. The women were therefore able to draw upon their networks of connections and their limited volume of *capitals* which helped them to start the process of replenishing their social capital in the context of their current situation.

This final cycle of the downward spiral of loss which describes the women's lives now that they were in England, has shown that although extremely grateful to be in a safe place, the women, found things difficult as they grappled to adjust to the changes in their

life circumstances. Throughout the analysis, it became clear that although all the women were forced migrants and had fled their country because of the escalating violence, there were differences in the ways in which they were able to adjust to life in England. The women in anomie were finding it far more difficult to adapt than the recovery group. This second group of women had shared similar difficulties, such as poor housing, unemployment, hostility and discrimination, as well as problems in helping their children to hold on to their Somali identity, whilst having to live out their everyday lives in a British context. But, unlike the anomic group, these women saw these difficulties as challenges that they could, with effort, overcome.   The anomic group seemed to be far more fatalistic and every new challenge appeared to push them further and further down the spiral to the extent they described their lives as extremely difficult, and expressed feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and despair.

These differences present a significant challenge to practitioners and policy makers. Although Somali refugee have been coming to England for more than three decades, they have tended not to discuss their problems and needs outside their own group, and so service commissioners and providers have had limited information about them. Policies and the services which are informed by them have therefore tended to be based on a 'one size fits all basis' but in the light of this study, it would appear that this approach, can at best be a compromise. The following discussion considers the implications of these findings for social policy and practice.

Implications for Social Policy

First Contact: Meeting the Border Agency

The development of the spiral of loss revealed that each contact and experience builds on to the next, creating and impacting on the ways in which the women responded to life. Thus, the tenor of the women's first contact affected all future interactions with the various agencies involved in resettlement. In line with immigration law (UKBA 2009) the women were immediately required to provide evidence of identity. In Somalia, as in England, names are an important marker of identity, but in much of Somalia, birth dates are not. The women were prepared to be asked about clan lineage but this did not happen. The women were also required to provide evidence of the route they had taken to reach the UK, and as with identify once again they could not answer the official questions. Thus, this first interaction was frightening for the women and left immigration officers with gaps in the data needed to process the women's applications.

Reviewing their arrival in the light of the spiral, even at this early stage, differences between the two groups could be seen. The women who ultimately moved into the recovery group were able to draw on their reserves of *social capital* (Bourdieu 1986). They reported that although it had not been easy and they had struggled to find the words to describe their experiences, they managed to provide answers with the help of the interpreters. This had included explaining that the details on their travel documents were not accurate as these had been given to them by the agents who had arranged the travel. Thus, even the women who knew how old they were and could give some details, for example, the season and the year in which they had been born, were likely to have different information on their documentation. Those from the anomic group were more distressed by the persistence of the immigration officers. They felt too ashamed to speak of the things that had happened to them, even though the revelations could have facilitated their entrance into England.

Immigration officers not used to these differences, may find it difficult to understand why the women's behaviour varies. One possibility for the UK immigration service would be to explore alternative forms of identification which recognise the cultural nature of individual identification. This could include recognition of months, seasons and years rather than the actual date of birth. It is acknowledged, that immigration officers are required to work within the boundaries of immigration law and any changes in terms of how a person could identify themselves would need to be underpinned by appropriate policies.

Accepting this, and in recognition that they are likely to need to pursue extremely sensitive lines of questioning, immigration officers may need access to and support from experts trained in working in traumatised individuals..

In terms of policy and practice there are further issues here that warrant consideration. Care needs to be taken in respect of who is acting as interpreter for whom. For countries in civil war, inter-clan or cross party conflicts will inevitably impact on the acceptability of available interpreters (Tribe 2007). The use of telephone interpretation could mediate against some of the problems with acceptability, as the interpreter does not have to be present or meet those needing their services. Asylum seekers often arrive before all the facts are known about the conflict from which they are fleeing (Friedman and Klein, 2008; Gardner and El Bushra 2004). Thus, there may be little information about who is fighting whom. Even when this is known the lack of available, professionally trained interpreters may mean that immigration officers are forced to use whoever is available rather than the most appropriate person. To minimise the type of problems reported in this study, the UK Border Agency is dependent on information being supplied and updated by the Home Office. Whilst the evidence suggests immigration officers do their best (Home Office UK Border Agency 2011), as the women in this study reported, difficulties do still arise.   Immigration officers need to know who has been specifically targeted by dominant groups and which factions are in opposition with each other.

For the women arriving with children, there was an additional fear. Either, they would all be sent back or that the children could stay and they, the mothers, would be sent back. The fear of separation was so great, that the women believed that, even if they were given temporary asylum, their children could be taken away and placed with strangers. Under section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act (2009a) the UK Border Agency has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of any children whilst investigations are taking place, this includes the need to demonstrate that the child's interests are primary. This means, wherever possible, that children remain with their parents. It is therefore not normal policy either to keep the children and send the parents back or to separate children from their parents. However, arriving from a background where their human rights had been repeatedly compromised and without knowledge of British law, it is understandable that some women would be afraid that they might lose their children. A great deal of reassurance is therefore necessary, to help the women accept that UK policy and law, are such, that wherever possible, children remain with their parents.

Housing and Accommodation

On arrival and in line with legislation (Home Office 2004) the women were placed into temporary emergency accommodation. However, as Cole and Robinson (2003) note and as the experiences of the women in this study show, Somali refugee women may face difficulties in relation to their housing needs and choices starting from the time they are given permission to enter the country. Again, the differences in how the two groups coped with this process were very apparent. Those in the recovery group were pleased that they had somewhere safe to stay and although, they found things difficult at first, tried to make the most of the living arrangements in the bed and breakfast type accommodation in which they were placed. They settled in quickly and tried to get to know the other residents and the surrounding area, as well as to find out their rights. They were also keen to recreate the networks of support which had been a fundamental aspect of their lives in Somalia. They proactively sought out other Somalis who were living in close proximity to them and tried to establish links with others from their own clans in other parts of the country. The women in anomie, although grateful that they had somewhere to stay, reported that the change in their living environment had been extremely stressful and that they had felt vulnerable and threatened by the other residents. Placed in mixed bed and breakfast hostels, the women were terrified that they might experience some of the atrocities committed against Somali women during their flight, when they had also had to live in close proximity to men to whom they were not related.

Whilst it is not always possible to place asylum seeking women into single sex temporary emergency accommodation, whenever it is possible, this should be the preferred option. The percentages of male and female workers in these establishments should, whenever possible, reflect that of the residents who are likely to be staying there. In the case of Somalis, approximately fifty per cent of those claiming asylum in the UK are women, most of them travel alone or with their children (Harris 2004). Palmer (2007b) detailed how refugee doctors are able to draw on their own experiences of forced migration and so bring unique insight into the challenges faced by newly arrived asylum seekers. A similar scheme for those working in emergency accommodation could help to facilitate the settlement of newly arrived refugee Somali women.

There are also other issues to consider in relation to the women's long-term accommodation needs. The Asylum and Immigration Act (UKBA 1999) made access to basic housing and social security provision conditional on asylum seekers accepting compulsory, no choice dispersal to locations across the UK, as specified by NASS. The

women maintained that they were not aware of these dispersal programmes which meant that after just a few weeks, they had to move to other parts of the country. Moving on again meant leaving behind not only a geographical area that they were beginning to get accustomed to, but also their newly established networks of support.

The findings from this study suggest that the women arrived disorientated and frightened, and it may well be that the Immigration officers felt that explaining the complexities of dispersal would not have been helpful to them at that time. However, given their reactions when they had to move on, it may be good practice for the women to be informed of all the facts as soon as possible. Unused to hostel type accommodation they need to be informed that this is only emergency accommodation and that UK legislation requires them to settle permanently elsewhere. The women also need information about the types of areas in which they may be relocated and the support services available to help them resettle in these new locations. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act (Home Office 2000) makes clear that housing corporations have a duty to promote equality of opportunity. Under this legislation, local authorities have a duty to monitor and provide detailed information about the housing needs and experiences of minority ethnic groups including refugee communities. The lack of suitable and secure homes in desirable locations is an on-going problem. However, there is a clear need for housing providers to ascertain the needs of Somali families and work with them to identify the most appropriate types of accommodation.

Additionally, wherever possible refugee women should be allocated a mentor or support worker who could help them to acculturate to their new surroundings, as is happening in certain other parts of the country (Palmer 2007a). Furthermore, this would fit the patterns of 'sisterhood', commonplace amongst Somali women, where support and guidance is offered by women to women (Gardner and El Bushra 2004; Summerfield 1996). The impact of dispersal programmes can lead to incidences of real and perceived racism and hostility (Marfleet 2006). In this study, hostility, from the host community was an issue for both groups of women. Here, the role of the refugee support worker (RSW) or community support worker (CSW) could assist women to engage with the local community, and thus help them to move from the position of marginalised 'other' to active participant. In terms of integration a proactive system such as that in Denmark could help. There, all adult refugees, rather than being left to their own devices on arrival, are actively supported and are required to participate in a three year 'integration programme' (Sporton and Valentine 2005; Neilsen 2004). For those in anomie some of their problems could be quickly identified and proactive measures taken. This would facilitate resettlement and integration, and would also help them to learn the language.

Language and Education

One of the most pressing concerns for the women on arrival was the language barrier. The findings from this study, similar to those highlighted by Griffiths (2005) demonstrate that a means to accurately assess English language skills and make referrals to classes that are appropriate to levels of ability is needed. Griffiths (2005: 2) went as far to say that 'language is the key to integration' and proposed that without identification of the language needs of forced migrants it will be impossible to plan appropriate responses. Bloch (2002) has also argued that full integration, economic and social participation of refugees depends very much on them becoming familiar with the English language. Given these assertions and the findings from this study, it is clear there is a need to address English language provision, this should include professional and vocational language development.

Policy makers could find programmes from other European countries that accept and integrate asylum seekers helpful. In Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands for example, refugees and asylum seekers are required to attend language classes. Childcare, if needed, is provided, as are single sex classes. In these countries, a refusal to attend may affect the welfare benefits received (Neilsen 2004; Korac 2003). In addition, in the Netherlands, the Dutch Ministry of Health announced in May 2011 that in this time of economic constraints all Dutch citizens must speak Dutch and therefore subsidies for translating and interpreting services will be stopped from 2012 (Mighealth.net 2011), so placing the responsibility for speaking the language on the new resident. This has caused widespread concern for refugee organisations across much of Northern Europe, fearing that the Dutch example may be adopted by others seeking to reduce spending (Mighealth.net 2011).

In the UK, the Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum (MRCF) in London (Palmer 2007b) offered a culturally specific mentoring service known as 'Face to Face'. This scheme aimed to address the '*social, bureaucratic and cultural dimensions of a person's life*' that may impact negatively on their mental well-being (Palmer 2007a p.17). Whilst the MRCF project was a pilot project, it could have an enormous potential for improving access to services and addressing the information needs of amongst others, refugee Somali women. However this kind of provision needs to be part of a long term plan, rather than a quick fix, and therefore should be adequately financed. In the likely event that the women are moved to other geographical destinations, this type of provision would need to be continued in their new location.

Health and Healthcare

Health Assessment

Although healthcare was not perceived to be a priority, for most of the women when they first arrived, many of them already had health problems that required attention. There are several policies that impact on the health of people seeking asylum (DH 2003a; DH 2003b; DH 2004; DH 2007). Most of the women reported that they had not been offered any health screening. In view of the limited English, it could be that health questions were asked but not answered. However, the findings from this study match those of the Audit Commission (1999) who reported that for the majority of asylum seekers no questions about their health are asked, either at their point of entry or during the first few days after arrival. Most women in this study were also not given any advice about how to access health care or register with a GP. This finding is in direct contravention of DH (2003b) guidelines which recommend that, when refugees arrive, a basic health history be recorded so that any public health concerns can be addressed, and that this information be recorded into a hand held record.

It is imperative that newly arrived asylum seekers do have the initial health assessment recommended by the DH (2003b). Furthermore, once they have been moved into temporary accommodation, asylum seekers should be given assistance to register with a GP as they are entitled to health care, without charge, whilst their application for asylum is considered (DH 2009). It is acknowledged that refugee populations are extremely transient, and therefore, even where health needs are identified, some may become lost in the system (Research Development and Statistics Directorate 2003), but from this study it appears that the majority have been missed.

The RSW or CSW could act as an informal advocate for refugee families and can potentially offer a great deal of help to newly arrived asylum seekers (Palmer 2007b; Tribe 2007). Whilst employing and training a person to take on this role, necessitates some financial investment, this could be offset against the costs of addressing the social and health care issues related to isolation and marginalisation, as these roles involve training in active listening, supporting and encouraging skills (Palmer 2007b). Once relocated to their new homes, a RSW or CSW could help the women to register with a GP and seek follow up from the initial assessments. For those leaving NASS accommodation, usually the most vulnerable, a formal exit strategy which includes continuous health care is recommended (Research Development and Statistics Directorate 2003).

Access to Health Care and Knowledge about Health Services

The DH (2009) clearly sets out the responsibilities of NHS Trusts in terms of NHS treatment for refugee and asylum seeking people. Here too, the role of the RSW or CSW could be extremely beneficial in explaining NHS entitlement to the women. The RSW or CSW could raise the alert in relation to deteriorating health and facilitate access to appropriate services. Additional training could be provided to enable these workers to act as interpreters during the medical encounter. Such an approach would help the women to communicate their health needs whilst reassuring them that confidentiality would be maintained. It takes time to build up relationships of trust, but any investment in terms of resources could be offset against the costs of caring for women whose health has deteriorated to the extent that they may need more intensive care. The induction programme proposed earlier could also be useful. The programme should include information about the health services in the UK, health promotion and preventive services. Resources should be made available in a format accessible to newly arrived asylum seekers such as audio recordings in their own language, as in addition to limited or no English, they may not be able to read their native language.

All healthcare professionals have a duty of care under their respective codes of professionalism and conduct (Nursing and Midwifery Council 2008; General Medical Council 2006). However, findings from this study as well as from the published literature, suggests that along with other professionals they may lack knowledge about the needs and entitlements of asylum seeking people (The Refugee Council 2009). To meet the needs of this group as suggested by the DH (2003b; 2009) additional training and upfront resources may therefore be necessary.

Chapter Summary

To conclude, although asylum seeking and refugee women may have shared similar experiences they have different needs and will therefore have diverse outcomes. There is an urgent need for increased awareness and understanding of the disparate groups seeking help and support. It is imperative therefore that more research be carried out into the barriers to integration and the impact this has on their ability to be able to adapt and integrate into life in the UK. Government agencies as well as individual practitioners have a responsibility to ensure that the services provided are legal, effective and ethical and if they are to do this need to be kept fully informed about current legislation and asylum seeking entitlements. In the light of this, and given the significant challenges the women faced in resettling, an understanding based on an awareness of the interplay

between all these factors should help in the development of social and health policy and thus facilitate the women's ability to integrate and adapt to life in England

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CHAPTER NINE:

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This present study was developed in response to an identified gap in previous work, and the starting point was therefore the existing literature. There are studies that have analysed the experiences of Somali refugees who are attempting to create a new life in an unfamiliar country (Essen *et al.* 2011; Valentine *et al.* 2009; Ingram and Potter 2009; Harris 2004; Cole and Robinson 2003 and McMichael and Manderson 2004). These have explored the mental and physical trauma of the migration and settlement processes, and have been useful in helping to identify some of the needs and concerns of Somali refugees in general. They provided a base for this study, which by moving from the general to the specific, focused on identifying from the women's perspective, the factors that impacted on their lives.

Unlike any of the previous studies found (Communities and Local Government 2009; Harris 2004; Cole and Robinson 2003; Elam et al. 2001; Davies and Bath 2001) the essences that emerged during data analysis, rather than being linear, were multifaceted and interlinked. This new and unique perspective has implications for the ways in which previous research can be utilised. It suggests that where linear processes have been used these need to be reviewed and possibly revised. It is accepted that a second study would be appropriate to support or refute this criticism of past research. However, the findings were so consistent that it is the belief of the researcher that all future studies need to consider the findings from this study when planning future projects. The development of a downward spiral of loss was also new as few other studies have been able to develop a model that consistently addresses all aspects of the findings. Looking at Bourdieu (1986) it is clear how the model has developed from existing work, heralding the start of a new perspective, illustrating the complex and compounding nature of forced migration on Somali women.

Trying to remain true to the women's stories and yet present the findings in a format that both readers and policy makers could use was extremely challenging. The development

of a model based on heterogeneity is new, as previous research has given no indication of the distinct differences that this study revealed. Education and training, policy and practice all need to be revised, to accept that refugee women, who originate from the same country, may share some core cultural practices, norms and values, but their lives may well be very different.

The development of the 'spiral of loss' was complex and only emerged when the concept of social capital (Bourdieu 1986) was linked to other theoretical constructs such as transnationalism (Vertovec 2009). The final structure of the discussion was flexible enough to enable individual factors to be considered but robust enough to retain the context of the women's journeys. It gives new insights and ideas that although specific for this group of women may well be transferable to other similar groups. It is accepted that more research is needed to check and refine the spiral of loss, but in this study, each reflection on, and refinement of the data served to confirm it.

All the women possessed some degree of social capital before they were forced into migration. The challenge for professionals is to identify the women with severely depleted stocks of social capital and who have limited resources for rebuilding their lives. If no steps are taken to search behind the contained and silent front these women present, the UK will be in danger of compounding their problems rather than helping them to move on. It is accepted that there is no easy or single answer, as these women are 'hard to reach'. Inevitably, it is those who are more articulate who become known to services as they have the skills and confidence to reach out for help. The problem is that if this group are taken to be representative of Somali refugee women, then the 'one size fits all' approach is likely to continue. The women in anomie, who cannot reach out for themselves, will then continue to spiral further down and inevitably, their families will be trapped with them. Their narratives revealed that, once settled, they tended to stay within their narrow confines that arose from their limited social capital. Time alone was not enough for them to move towards a state of recovery.

This picture of the women's journey only emerged because the method chosen for the research, descriptive phenomenology, gave sufficient flexibility, to continually refine and reduce the data sets. The use of this approach coupled with an anthropological background has facilitated the discovery of the paradox inherent within the study population. As the cycle of loss emerged at the culmination of data analysis, ideally, it would be presented after discussion of the findings. However using this approach meant it was impossible to convey the meaning of the women's experiences without major

repetition and confusion. A way had to be found to illustrate the processes the women went through whilst maintaining the authenticity of the study. The spiral of loss demonstrates the key points of the women's experience of migration. Therefore the decision was made to use the key points of the model as the basis for discussion and to include the two final elements of anomie and recovery at the point at which they illustrated demonstrably different life chances, and that they had been 'running differently' throughout their migration.

This study argues that the homogenising discourse assumed by the official views of refugee women is problematic. Rather than facilitating attachment to, and integration into British society, the overarching social policies may, in some instances, inadvertently reinforce the barriers that prevent Somali refugee women from adapting to their new environment and rebuilding their lives. This has important implications not only for immigration agencies but also for others working with newly arrived Somali refugee women. Professionals, if they are to meet the needs of refugee Somali women, need a practical framework which enables them to recognise and work with the inherent differences between the groups of women. The downward spiral of loss model does this as it can be applied at all levels of practice. It illustrates how and why the different groups develop, and why, the one-dimensional view of refugee women often portrayed in the literature as well as in policy documentation is inappropriate.

Dissemination

The active application of this study was a key consideration and dissemination began early on. The first step was to take the proposal to an international research conference, to discuss with experts, the approach chosen. This was because I was using the descriptive phenomenological approach, as it has been used traditionally, on a one to one basis, but also in a group context, and for credibility and acceptability of the findings I felt it was essential to check out the congruence of the phenomenological focus group, with those who have expertise in this field. Those present were very supportive pointing out that this approach is in line with experts such as Van Manen (2002). There were also researchers present who have worked with refugees and with Somali women and it was therefore possible to discuss the aims and planned outcomes of the study. They were interested in the outcomes and requested that I present the completed study at the relevant future conference, and this I plan to do next year.

On completion, the prime issue was to present the findings back to the women themselves. The first stage of this is completed and involved feeding back to the facilitators, who welcomed the findings, seeing them as apposite, they reported that they could recognise elements of their individual journeys, and believed the study would be helpful for new members of their community arriving in the UK. They participated enthusiastically in discussions regarding how best to feed back to the women. An unanimous decision was that all participants should be invited to a presentation and that the university would be the appropriate place for this. As the women wanted to wait until their children had returned to school after the summer holidays, this meeting is scheduled for a date just before the autumn half term holidays. Each participant will be given a summary of the research findings, in both English and Somali, and as soon as it is possible to do so, sent a USB stick with a recording of the presentation. Two participants have now moved abroad, one to Sweden and the other to Germany, but as the facilitators are still in contact with them, they will be informed of the presentation and sent USB sticks. Another dissemination activity that the facilitators are keen to be involved in, is the development of two DVDs. The first will be designed for the women and will be in Somali and English as the facilitators see it as important that the women hear English as well as their own language. It will include some of the women's stories and the information that the study identified as being important in the process of adaptation to life in the UK. This will include information on the services available and how to access them. The second will be for professionals and will include short case histories presented from the women's perspective and cultural information that will help identify the specific issues facing Somali refugee women in the UK.

I also needed to disseminate the findings, of the research, in an arena that would benefit Somali refugee women. In terms of educational input, the work has been presented to undergraduate nurses, midwives and social work students and is now included in their programmes as an example of working with vulnerable populations. The work has also been introduced into one multi professional health care postgraduate programme and has been well received. Discussions are on-going regarding inclusion into other postgraduate programmes within the faculty.

The findings of the study are also being considered in terms of improving health care practice. Having heard me speak about the research, at a local conference, the chief nurse of a local NHS Trust is keen to use it for training purposes. I am meeting with him in the near future to progress this. In addition, the findings from the study have been shared with an international audience of practitioners and academics, specifically around the area of cancer education. The discussion following the presentation revealed that the

issues and challenges in relation to the needs of participants are also a challenge in Northern Europe, Australia and some parts of the United States. I have therefore accepted an invitation to publish the findings in a specialist, cancer education journal and have accepted an invitation to speak next year at their international conference in the USA.

There were findings that are useful in informing practice in terms of housing and accommodation. Having sent a summary of the key findings to one of the largest housing associations in England, I accepted an invitation to present the key findings of the study, to their senior staff. They are keen that their senior housing officers are aware of the context of the lives of this disparate group and know best how to meet the challenges of working with them.

Another way, in which I have been able to share the findings of this work, is by utilising links already established with national organisations such as the Refugee Council and the National Council of Women. It is recognised that although the findings from the study have implications for national policy, as an individual, it would be extremely difficult for me to reach those responsible for making policy decisions. However, working with these organisations can lead to the results feeding into immigration and social policy.

This is seen as an important aspect of the study, as it is difficult to see how the problems that the women face in their everyday lives will be addressed without changes to policy at a local and when appropriate national and international level. I also believe that it is important that the issue of positionality be further explored in research circles and am therefore planning to present a paper regarding this at an international research methods conference in 2013. As the dissemination process continues other opportunities will arise, indeed, as a result of the steps taken to date, I am in currently in discussions regarding the possibility of publishing some aspects of the study in a journal focusing on diversity.

Recommendations

This study has yielded a wealth of information, that are useful in informing policy and practice and from which the following recommendations are made. Where appropriate, direct links to the study are made where these issues are discussed.

International Policy

Although this study focused on the individual lived experience, in some areas, the findings support those of other researchers working with Somali communities (Horst (2006a and 2006b; Moret et al. 2006; Gardner and El Bushra 2004; Hyndeman 2000). It revealed policy implications for agencies such as UNHCR and other non-governmental organisations working with refugees. The majority of the women had spent time in Kenya, most of them in a refugee camp and so had been under the protection and care of UNHCR. However, UNHCR could not offer them long-term solutions (adequate security and integration). The women therefore only stayed, as long as they needed to organise onward movement (see Cycles Two and Three). Movement onwards was often facilitated by a network of smugglers, funded by the women's relatives, who could organise the women's migration (see Cycles Two and Three). In consequence, the recommendations in this section refer only to aspects of the journey where UNHCR and other non-governmental agencies could be realistically expected to play a role.   It is therefore recommended that:

i.   UNHCR and other non-governmental organisations operating within the camps include within their induction briefings, information specifically regarding the activities and movement of women within the camp. For example, women need to be made aware of the risks, to them, should they leave the proximity of their living areas unaccompanied (see pp. 91 – 96)

ii.   Every effort be made to empower and strengthen the capacity for the women to take control of activities that affect their lives. For example, senior women, who in the absence of men have to take on a leadership role; assistance from UNHCR workers could facilitate and support this major cultural change (see p. 94)

iii. That, the women are informed about the judiciary system, in the camps, and need to know who key personnel are, and how to access them. This should include how to report specific incidents and examples that demonstrate that transgressors are pursued and justice administered (see p. 94).

iv. Whenever possible, refugees with transnational links be assisted to utilize these networks to facilitate long term solutions to their encampment. For example family reunification or sponsorship (see p. 97; 101; 104 and 114).

Social Policy

Traditionally policies that impact on the lives of refugees and asylum seeking women have advocated 'a one size fits all' approach (UK Border Agency 2011; DH 2009; DH 2007; DH 2004; Home Office 2006; Home Office 2004; Great Britain Parliament 2004; Research Development and Statistic Directorate 2003; DH 2003a; DH 2003b). However, as this study has shown, at best, this is a compromise as forced migration impacts differently on the women (see Cycle Four). It is therefore recommended that:

i. Immigration officers and other staff who meet with the women at the point of entry have access to resources and training so that they can work within an appropriate cultural frame, acknowledging differences as well as similarities (see p. 120 and 122).

ii. Extreme care is taken when using interpreters, in not only matching language and dialect, but also recognition of the fact that inter-clan or cross party conflicts may mean some interpreters are not acceptable (see p.120).

iii. Accessible information be provided regarding the women's rights and entitlements and a community support worker be assigned to help the women acclimatise to their new host country (see p.158 and 172).

Housing and Accommodation

Cycles two and three describe the difficulties experienced by the women who suddenly found themselves living in close proximity to men with whom they were not closely related. They were not familiar with the concept of compulsory dispersal as decreed in legislation (Zetter et al. 2003); (See Cycle Four) and of living in communities where the cultural norms are very different from that of their homeland (See Cycle Four). It is therefore recommended that:

i. Single sex accommodation be accepted as the preferred option for women arriving without any male relatives or who are likely to have experienced rape or serious sexual abuse (see p. 140)

ii. Asylum seeking women be made aware of the compulsory dispersal scheme, early after arrival. This should include information about the types of areas that they are likely to be dispersed to and the support services available to help them resettle in these communities (see p. 140)

iii. In communities where there is no previous experience of receiving asylum seekers and refugees, information about forced migration and its consequences should be made available to the indigenous population and relations between the local population and refugees supported (see p. 141 and 158).

Language and Education

Limited or no English language skills were a major barrier for most of the women, impacting on their ability to access information and services, and contributing significantly to marginalisation, isolation and an inability to secure appropriate training or employment. It is therefore recommended that:

i. A proactive approach be taken to helping forced migrants attend a programme of induction which includes language classes (see p. 151).

ii. Refugees, who already have good English language skills and professional qualifications should be offered opportunities for professional training, including academic and discipline specific (e.g. medical) English language classes, to improve their chances of employment later on (see p. 152 and 164).

Health and Health Care

Health was not usually a priority for the women on arrival. However, many did arrive with chronic or infectious diseases, which were left untreated as few were offered a health assessment. Furthermore, some women did not appear to have received any information about accessing the various services offered within the UK nor did they know their rights

regarding issues such as confidentiality and data protection. It is therefore recommended that:

i. All newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees be assessed in accordance with DH (2003b) guidelines.

ii. Clear information about health service provision, for example accessing a dentist or optician and health service policies on issues such as confidentiality, be made available in an accessible format (see p. 152 and 170; Palmer 2007a; Tribe 2007)

iii. A register of trained interpreters, who understand medical terminology and are trained to work with those who may have experienced rape and torture be available (see p. 170; Tribe 2007).

Research

This study has revealed some of the challenges that researchers are likely to encounter when working with refugee women, and that access and acceptance take time (see chapter four). They are likely to be exposed to highly emotive and sensitive data, as they work with individuals whose lives are, or have been, in a state of flux. Furthermore, it has to be remembered that Western beliefs and concepts may have little relevance for the group and issues such as written informed consent may initially be difficult for individuals to accept (see chapter four). It is therefore recommended that:

i. Researchers working with refugee women are made aware of (and are able to commit to) the considerable time investment needed to facilitate access and develop trust with the women, recognising that their lives maybe in a state of flux (see p. 46).

ii. Research studies are designed which recognise non-westernised perspectives of concepts such as consent. Where necessary this should include cross cultural communication training for researchers (see p. 59).

iii. All those working with working with emotive data sets are made aware of how this may impact on their own emotional well-being. It is essential that researchers have the professional expertise to work with refugee groups and have access to counselling services (see pp. 43 – 45).

The Final Note

This study was developed based on the expressed needs of refugee Somali women and an identified gap in the literature; as such it drew on a range of theoretical concepts including transnationalism (Vertovcec 2009). However, it was only when the concept of social capital (Bourdieu 1986) was used in the light of other theories that the lived experience could be reduced, refined and described within context (Giorgi 1985). All issues were explored within the priorities set by the women, with the result that the findings provide new insights into the lives of women fleeing from their homeland which can be used within a range of different disciplines. Specifically, this study adds to the body of knowledge in women's studies, refugee studies and has implications for social and medical anthropology (psychological well-being).

The study has also major implications for research training. Positionality is rarely discussed in research methods literature, but as described in chapter four, the risks to the researcher cannot be ignored. It is essential that researchers follow good practice and utilise tools such as reflective journals and supervision to monitor their own progress and help them recognise the impact of such research on their own well-being.

Finally, this study has focused entirely on the lived experience, presenting the women's perspectives. For a fuller picture, research needs to be undertaken with the various agencies involved in the women's migratory journeys. This includes the Home Office, Border Control UK, UNHCR and the multiple statutory and voluntary organisations that play a part in immigrant resettlement. Without the views of all the key players, at best, we have an incomplete picture. Whilst the recommendations are made in light of the findings from this study, which focused on Somali refugee women, they are also relevant to other groups of refugee women. The importance of recognising and addressing the heterogeneity within this group cannot be ignored and therefore policy and practice issues need to be flexible enough to accommodate these differences if the women and their families, are to be helped to rebuild their lives. To continue with policies and practice, that endorse the 'one size fits all approach', will mean that many Somali women will continue to remain trapped in a downward spiral of loss and trauma, thus missing out on the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

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APPENDICES

Appendix One: Chronological History of Somalia's Significant Events

1880 – 2011 (British Broadcasting Corporation 2012)

1880   Start of division of Somali–populated areas between Britain, Italy, France and Ethiopia. Somalis from the north begin to come to Britain as seamen.

1960   Independence of British Somaliland, Capital Hargisa, Independence of Italian Somalia, Capital Mogadishu. Amalgamation of north and south as the Somali Republic. Capital Mogadishu.

1964   First war with Ethiopia over borders

1969   General Siad Barre becomes head of state after a Military coup. The state becomes Somali Democratic Republic and embraces scientific socialism with the assistance of the USSR.

1972   Introduction of Somali as a written language in Latin script, followed by a national literacy campaign.

1974   East African drought and famine crisis

1981   Foundation in the UK of Somali National Movement

1981   Popular insurgency in the North met with fierce government reprisals

1984   Severe drought

1988   Somali National Movement (SMN) capture Hargesia and Burao. Barre's retaliatory bombing raids raze northern towns and villages. Civilian population flees to Ethiopia or overseas. First substantial wave of refugees to the UK, chiefly from the north.

1989   Opposition to Barre intensifies. United Somali Congress (USC) insurgency moves from countryside to Mogadishu.Fall of Siad Barre. Split in USC. Fighting and chaos spreads over south. Devastation of Mogadishu generating thousands of refugees. North west declares independence as Somali land. Famine especially in south - central area.

1996   Successive peace plans fail to end factional conflict and restore civil society. In the UK Somalis try to consolidate families through reunion with members in the diaspora.

2002	A new international Somalia 'peace conference' was organised by the EC and United Nations, in Kenya. As a result of bribery and corruption a transitional federal government (TFG) was elected, Abdillahi Yusuf, a renowned guerrilla leader and warlord.
2005	The TFG) moved back to Somalia.
2006	Some stability achieved in Mogadishu as Islamic clerics ousted criminal warlords and re-established law and order. Overplaying their hand these Islamic groups threatened the Ethiopian installed TFG and the Ethiopians increased their military support for the TFG.
2007	The TFG moved into Mogadishu with overwhelming Ethiopian and US support, rekindling insurrection in southern Somalia. Hundreds of thousands of civilians fled Mogadishu.
2007	September - Opposition groups form a new alliance to campaign for a military and diplomatic solution to the Somali conflict. They meet in Asmara, Eritrea.
2007	October - Prime Minister Ghedi resigns. Aid agencies warn a catastrophe is unfolding in Somalia.
2007	November - Government shuts down Radio Shabelle, Radio Simba and Radio Banadir. UN special envoy Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah describes Somalia's humanitarian crisis the worst in Africa, suggests using international justice to curb the violence. Nur Hassan Hussein, also known as Nur Adde, sworn in as new prime minister. .
2008	January - Burundi becomes the second nation to contribute troops to the African Union peacekeeping force, sending 440 soldiers to Mogadishu.
2008	March - US launches missile strike on southern town of Dhoble targeting suspected al-Qaeda member wanted for 2002 bombing of Israeli-owned hotel in Kenya. Islamist-led insurgency continues to spread.
2008	April – European Union calls for international efforts to tackle piracy off the Somali coast after a series of hijackings and attacks on vessels. US air strike kills Aden Hashi Ayro, a leader of the Al-Shabab insurgent group.
2008	May - Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi says he will keep troops inside Somalia until "jihadists" are defeated. The UN Security Council unanimously votes to allow countries to send warships into Somalia's territorial waters to tackle pirates.
2008	July - Head of the UN Development Programme in Somalia, Osman Ali Ahmed, killed by gunmen in Mogadishu.

2008 September - Somali pirates' hijacking of a Ukrainian shtubobatteip carrying 33 tanks prompts widespread international concern. The US and other countries deploy navy ships to Somali waters.

2008 October - Nato agrees to despatch a naval force to patrol to waters off Somalia by the end of 2008, in an effort to control piracy. A wave of coordinated bombings across the self-governing and relatively peaceful regions of Somaliland and Puntland, in Somalia's north, kill at least 27 people. President Abdullahi Yusuf tries to sack Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein over his attempts to draw moderate Islamists into the government. Parliament declares the dismissal unconstitutional and passes a vote of confidence in Mr Nur. Mr Yusuf resigns.

2009 January - Ethiopia completes the withdrawal of its troops. Fighters from the radical Islamist al-Shabab militia take control of the town of Baidoa, formerly a key stronghold of the transitional government. Meeting in neighbouring Djibouti, Somalia's parliament swears in 149 new members from the main opposition Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia. It elects a moderate Islamist, Sheikh Sharif Ahmed president, and extends the transitional government's mandate for another two years.

2009 February - President Ahmed selects Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke as prime minister. Mr Sharmarke, a former diplomat, is widely seen as a bridge between Islamists within the Somali government and the international community.

2009 May - Islamist insurgents launch onslaught on Mogadishu.

2009 June - Somalia's security minister and more than 20 other people are killed in a suicide bombing at a hotel in Beledweyne, north of the capital Mogadishu.

President Ahmed declares a state of emergency as violence intensifies.

2009 September - Al-Shabab proclaims allegiance to Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden.

2009 October - Al-Shabab wins control over the southern port city of Kismayo after defeating the rival Hizbul-Islam Islamist militia, which withdraws to villages to the west. At least 20 are killed and 70 injured in fighting that threatens to spread to the rest of the Islamist-controlled south.

2009 November – Pirates seize a super tanker carrying oil from Saudi Arabia to the US, One of the largest ships captured off Somalia. The Greek owner Maran Centaurus was about 1,300km (800 miles) off Somalia when it was hijacked. Kidnappers released journalists Amanda Lindhout and Nigel Brennan after 15 months in captivity.

2009	December - Al-Shabab denies being behind suicide attack that killed 22 people in Mogadishu, including three ministers.
2010	January - UN's World Food Programme (WFP) withdraws from Al-Shabab-controlled areas of southern Somalia after threats to lives of its staff.
2010	February - Al-Shabab formally declares alliance with al-Qaeda, begins to concentrate troops in southern Mogadishu for a major offensive to capture the capital.
2010	March - Up to half of food aid being diverted to contractors, militants and local UN staff, says UN's Monitoring Group on Somalia. President Sharif dismisses the allegations.
2010	May - UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon calls on world to support current Somali government as best chance to stabilise the chaotic country.
2010	September - Prime Minister Sharmarke quits. He is replaced by Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed.
2011	January - Pirate attacks on ships worldwide hit seven-year high in 2010, with Somali pirates accounting for 49 of 52 ships seized. First government executions since 1991.
2011	February - Parliament votes to extend its mandate for another three years. Kenya closes border to Somalia after nearby fighting between Al-Shabab rebels and government-backed insurgents.
2011	April - Aid agencies sound alarm after rains fail for second year running, leading to complete crop failure in southern Somalia and rising levels of malnutrition.
2011	July - UN formally declares famine in two regions of southern Somalia. Aid agencies warn that millions face starvation, after drought, conflict and poverty combine to produce the necessary conditions for famine. Tens of thousands of Somalis flee to refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia. The UN estimates that a quarter of the population is either internally displaced or living outside the country. Al-Shabab partially lifts the ban it had imposed on foreign aid agencies in areas under its control.
2011	August - The UN warns famine has spread to more areas in southern Somalia and that it is likely to continue into 2012. Thousands of cases of cholera/acute watery diarrhoea reported in Mogadishu amid warnings that the caseload may increase to 100,000 countrywide.
2011	December – Fighting continues in Somalia which is still without a government.
2012	January - Al-Shabab bans Red Cross one of the few aid agencies still operating in Somalia from providing famine relief.

2012   February **–** Al-Shabab (youth off shoot of the Islamic Courts Union, describes itself as waging jihad against 'enemies' of Islam) announces merger with al Qaeda (the militant Islamist group).

Appendix Two: Entitlements to National Health Service Treatment (DH 2009)

TABLE OF ENTITLEMENT TO NHS TREATMENT (Correct as of April 2009)		
The Department of Health appealed a High Court ruling, which found that, in certain circumstances, failed asylum seekers can pass the ordinary residence test that confers an automatic right to free NHS hospital treatment or, alternatively, be exempt from charges for hospital treatment after having spent one year in the UK. In a judgement issued on 30 March 2009, the Court of Appeal found that failed asylum seekers cannot be considered to pass the ordinary residence test, nor can they be considered exempt from charges by virtue of spending one year in the UK. This is now the law. The Court of Appeal also found that Trusts have the discretion to withhold treatment pending payment and also the discretion to provide treatment where there is no prospect of paying for it. Trusts should take account of DH guidance when applying this discretion.		
Status	**Primary Care**	**Secondary Care**
Asylum Seeker	A person who has formally applied for asylum is entitled to NHS treatment without charge for as long as their application (including appeals) is under consideration. They will have to pay certain statutory NHS charges (e.g. prescription charges) unless they also qualify for exemption from these (see notes section), and will go on waiting lists. Since asylum seekers are entitled to free NHS treatment, they can apply to a general practitioner to register as a patient. Asylum seekers are exempt from charges for NHS hospital treatment.	A person who has formally applied for asylum is entitled to NHS treatment without charge for as long as their application (including appeals) is under consideration. They will have to pay certain statutory NHS charges (e.g. prescription charges) unless they also qualify for exemption from these (see notes section), and will go on waiting lists. Since asylum seekers are entitled to free NHS treatment, they can apply to a general practitioner to register as a patient. Asylum seekers are exempt from charges for NHS hospital treatment.
Asylum Seeker refused but appealing decision.	Access to **primary care** without charge. As for Asylum Seeker	Access to **secondary care** without charge As for Asylum Seeker.
Asylum Seeker denied support under Section 55 of the 2002 Act, but still claiming asylum.	Access to **primary care** without charge. As for Asylum Seeker	Access to **secondary care** without charge As for Asylum Seeker.
Failed asylum seekers – including those getting Border & Immigration Agency (BIA) Section 4 support while awaiting departure from the UK	GP practices have the discretion to accept such people as registered NHS patients. In cooperation with the Home Office, DH will review access to NHS healthcare by foreign nationals this year. The review will include access to both primary and secondary care and will look at a range of issues relating to immigration and asylum arrangements, particularly the eligibility of failed asylum seekers and the status of children, whether accompanied or unaccompanied, as well as public health issues. Emergencies or treatment which is immediately necessary should continue to be provided free of charge within primary care to anyone, where in the clinical opinion of a health care professional this is required. N.B. The judicial review ruling has had no effect on Primary Care.	For secondary care, failed asylum seekers are not eligible for free hospital treatment. However, any course of hospital treatment already underway at the time when the asylum seeker's claim, including any appeals, is finally rejected should remain free of charge until completion. It will be a matter for clinical judgement as to when a particular course of treatment has been completed. Immediately necessary treatment to save life or prevent a condition from becoming life-threatening should always be given to failed asylum seekers without delay, irrespective of their eligibility for free treatment or ability to pay. However if they are found to be chargeable, the charge will still apply, and recovery should be pursued as far as the trust considers reasonable. Treatment which is not immediately necessary, but which is urgent and a clinician considers cannot wait until the person returns home must also be given, even if deposits cannot be secured. In making the decision as to whether the treatment is urgent, it will be necessary for the clinician to know when the patient is likely to return home to assess if this is a medically

		acceptable wait. Any new course of treatment, begun after the asylum claim is finally rejected, will be chargeable (unless the treatment itself is exempt under the provisions of the NHS (Charges to Overseas Visitors) Regulations 1989, as amended, e.g. TB).

Overseas Visitors Hospital Charging Regulations - Guidance for NHS Trust Hospitals in England" for advice on how and when to make the charge in these cases.

It is also very important that Trusts read the letter of 2 April 2009 from David Flory as it contains important interim advice. See Link at :

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/Dearcolleagueletters/DH_097384

In cooperation with the Home Office, DH is currently reviewing access to NHS healthcare by foreign nationals. The review includes access to both primary and secondary care and looks at a range of issues relating to immigration and asylum arrangements, particularly the eligibility of failed asylum seekers and the status of children, whether accompanied or unaccompanied, as well as public health issues.

Given Refugee Status (successful asylum seeker or, arriving in the country through a Government initiative, i.e. Refugee Gateway Scheme)	Access to **primary care** without charge. As for Asylum Seeker.	Access to **secondary care** without charge As for Asylum Seeker.
Given Discretionary Leave to Remain	Access to **primary care** without charge As for Asylum Seeker.	Access to **secondary care** without charge As for Asylum Seeker
Given Humanitarian Protection	Access to **primary care** without charge As for Asylum Seeker.	Access to **secondary care** without charge As for Asylum Seeker.

Appendix Three: **Biographical Details of Interviewed Participants (All names are pseudonyms)**

No	Participant	Age	Arrival in UK	No of children	Marital Status
1	Aswaaq	40	2002	2 with her	Divorced
2	Yasmin	32	2001	1 with her	Separated husband believed to be living in Kenya
3	Saida	24	2001	0	Single
4	Safia	32	2000	3 with her	Married
5	Salima	24	2002	2	Married
6	Zeinab	35	2004	2 aged 2 and 14	Married husband is believed to be living in Kenya.
7	Idil	23	2000	0	Single
8	Jehan	40	2002	3 grown up	Married but does not know where husband is
9	Nadiya	44	2000	3 grown up 2 living with her, the eldest missing	Widowed
11	Fatima	19	2001	0	Single lives with mother and brother
12	Sara	33	2000	3	Divorced
13	Ladaan	35	1996	3	Divorced
14	Shakri	27	2002	0	Single
15	Mariam	34	2000	4	Divorced
16	Waris	24	2002	0	Single

17	Nadifo	33	2002	1 with her	Divorced
18	Nasra	49	2001	8 most grown up	Separated
19	Katima	38	2002	5	Seperated

Appendix Four: Focus Group Topic Guide

- Can you tell me about your country Somalia before the war started?

- Please describe to me the conditions that led to you leaving Somalia

- Can you describe in as much detail as possible where you went and what the conditions were like there?

- Tell me about all the different places you have stayed at since leaving Somalia
  Prompt - How were you treated
  Prompt - What was good and not so good about your stay

- Tell me about your journey to the UK.
  Prompt - How did you get here, who helped you?

- What happened when you first arrived?
  Prompt – How were you treated?
  Prompt – What were you told?
  Prompt - Did anyone tell you about health care and health services.

- Tell me about the contact you had with the health care services?

- Tell me about your contact with other agencies / services?

  Prompt - What was good / not so good

- What could be done to make things better for you?

- Can you tell me about the things that are helping you to rebuild your life now?

- What things are still dififcult or challenging for you?

- Would you like more information about the health care services?
  If yes, would you like this information on audio tape, CD Rom or in writing in English or Somali?

- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about?

Appendix Five: Interview Questions

- Can you describe in as much detail as you can what your life was like when you lived in Somalia (your family, what you enjoyed doing, if you worked outside the home)?

- Can you describe to me what made you leave Somalia? Describe to me how you left (did you leave suddenly, if so why; or were you able to plan your departure, if so what did you have to do)?.

- Can you describe to me what your journey was like, where did you go when you left your home, and how did you get there? Did anyone help you, if so who and what did they do? Where there any major problems, if so how were they dealt with?

- Can you describe in as much detail as possible what your life was like when you went to another country? What can you remember about your arrival there? What was good / difficult? Where did you stay? What were the conditions like? Did anyone help you? If yes who and what did they do?

- Can you describe in as much detail as you can how you came to the UK? What did you do? Did anyone help you? If yes who and what did they do?

- Can you describe to me what happened to you when you arrived? How were you treated? Who helped you? What did they do? Where did you go?

- Can you tell me what your life is like now that you are living here?
  Tell me about what you like about living in the UK? What things are not so good for you and your family? Tell me about anything that you think would be helpful in making life better for you here?

- Describe to me the health services that you know about?
  Who told you? How did you find out?

- What contact have you had with the health care services?
  What is good about the services you contact?
  Did you have any problems?

- What could be done to make things better for you?

  What is helping you to rebuild your life here?

- Tell me about the things that are difficult for you?

- Would you like more information about the health care services?

  If yes, would you like this information on audio tape in English or Somali, or in writing in English or Somali?

- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about?

APPENDIX SIX: Ethics Committee Approval Letter (UCE now renamed Birmingham City University)

Faculty of Health and Community Care

Ravensbury House, Westbourne Road
Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3TN

Professor Stewart Buchanan Cert Ed, BA, MSc
Dean of Faculty

Faculty Registrar

Direct Line: 0121 331 7128
Fax: 0121 331 7156

UCE
Birmingham

18th February 2005

Ms Hepburn
36 Hinton Avenue
Alvechurch
Birmingham
B48 7LY

Dear Ms Hepburn

Somali Voices: An Exploration of Women's Experiences of Forced Migration and the Challenges faced in Accessing Health Care.

Thank you for submitting your research proposal on the above subject which was reviewed by the Faculty Ethics Committee at its meeting on 7th February 2005.

I am pleased to report that that the committee has given approval for the project to proceed without the need for amendment.

However, the Committee recommends that you give further consideration to the following points:

- Using your home address and telephone number as contact information
- Revising the letter introducing the study so it is presented in simpler language to individuals whose first language is not English.
- The importance of cultural awareness in interpreting non-verbal communication
- The selection criteria to be used in identifying the women who would participate in the study

Yours sincerely

pp Professor David Cox
Faculty Ethics Committee (Chair)

APPENDIX SEVEN: Participant Information English

Barbara Hepburn (Now Barbara Howard-Hunt)
Academic Development Coordinator
Personal Development Centre
University of Central England (Now Birmingham City University)
Westbourne Road
Edgbaston
Birmingham, B15 3TN.

Tel: 0121 331 7011

The Migration Experiences of Somali Women

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide if you would like to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve.   Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you or not you wish to take part.

The Purpose of the Study

There are many women living in the United Kingdom who have migrated in the last few years. However health care workers know very little about the health needs of Somali women and the things that they would like to improve the healthcare services that they use. In order to do this research is needed where the women tell the researcher about their lives and the things they like and dislike about the health care services. The researcher is studying for a doctorate and successful completion of the study will lead to the award of a PhD.

Why have I been chosen?

You are invited to partake in the study because you are a Somali women who has migrated to the United Kingdom within the last few years. It is expected that between thirty and forty women will partake in the focus groups, each group will consist of between four and 6 women, the interpreter and the researcher. Of these women a minimum of fifteen and a maximum of thirty women will be interviewed on an individual basis. The study is expected to take between four and five years.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign or make your mark on a consent form.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to attend a group interview with between three and five other Somali women. At this session there will also be an interpreter and the researcher. You will be asked to talk about your experiences of migrating to England. You will also be asked about your knowledge of and experience of using the health care services. Some women will be asked if they would be willing to speak to the researcher on their own. An interpreter will also be present and you may wish to have a relative or friend with you. At this interview the researcher will ask you specific questions about some of the issues raised in the group interview. Individual interviews will not last any longer than 45 minutes to an hour. The researcher may ask to speak again to a few women if she is unsure about something that was said.

What do I have to do?

You will need to attend the group interview at the time and place agreed with you in advance. You may wish to bring a friend or relative with you but they will not be invited to take part in the discussion and may be asked to wait in another room if the other women who are taking part in the discussion feel more comfortable with this. Light refreshments will be provided and an interpreter will help to ask questions and tell the researcher what is being discussed. You will again be asked to give your consent to taking part and will be asked if you agree to the discussion being tape recorded. The process will be the same for the individual interview/s except that you will be the only person to be asked questions and only the interpreter (if needed) and the researcher will be present, unless you decide to have a friend or relative with you.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part

It is possible that you will remember issues that are painful and upsetting. This means that you may become distressed during or after the interviews. You will be given information to help you to access appropriate support and advice, if you should wish to discuss anything that you find upsetting or distressful.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It is hoped that the information that you give will help us to better understand how migration has affected your health and lifestyle as well as highlighting whether or not the health care services provided are appropriate for the needs of Somali women. This information may be used to inform the provision of appropriate services for refugee and asylum seeking Somali women.

What if something goes wrong?

If you become very distressed during the interviews, the researcher may stop the interview and ask you if you wish to postpone the interview or withdraw from the study. If you choose to withdraw from the study any data collected will be destroyed and will not be used.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information, which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Your personal details will not be revealed to anyone apart from the researcher and the interpreter.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research study will be written up as part of a doctoral thesis. A report outlining the main findings and listing the key recommendations will be written up and published in the form of a short report. The summary of the report will be distributed to any woman who has participated in the study and wishes to receive a copy. This information will be printed in Somali as well as in English and a shortened version will be made available on audio cassette. No individual will be identified in any report or subsequent publication.

Who is organising and funding the study?

The study is being carried out under the guidance of a supervisory panel based at Birmingham City University where the researcher is a member of academic staff. Presently no external funding is available for the study.

Who has reviewed the study?

The study is being reviewed by the Ethics Committee at Birmingham City University.

Contact for Further Information

Barbara Howard-Hunt; Personal Development Centre, Birmingham City University, Westbourne Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 3TN. Telephone: 0121 331 7011. Email: barbara.howardhunt@bcu.ac.uk

Participant Information Somali

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khibrada naagta somaliyeed aysoomartay markii soo haajirtay.

Waxan rajaynaynaa in aad ka so qaybgashid cilmi baadhista. in tii aanan goaanka gaadhin haddii aad ka soo qaybgashid waxaa muhiim ah in aad fahantid waxan ay cilmi baadhista tahay. Aniga i waydii wixii aanad fahmid ama macluumaad aah ee aad rabtid. Waqti qaado in aad ka soo qaybgashid ama aanad ka soo qaybgelin.

Sababta cilmi barista

Waxa jira dumar somaliyed oo u soo haajiray united kingdom sannadihii ugu dambeeyey. Si kasta oo shaqaaly cafimaadku garanaya wax yar oo ku saabsan naagta somaliyed cafimaadkeda iyo arrimaha hagaajinaya.
Si losameeyo cilmi baarista waxa lo bahanyahay iney naagta sheegtoo sheeko ku saabsan qofka nolashisa iyo waxyaabaha laga helen cisbataalka.
qofka sameenaya cilmi baarista waxo raba enu barto shahaadada ugu sarraysa ee jaamacadda PHD.

Waayo aniga la o doortay in aan ka qayb qaato cilmi baarista.

Saababto ah waxaad tahay naag somaliyed oo u soo haajirtay united kingdom sannadihii ugudam beeyey waxaan rajaynayna in aad nagalasoo qayb gashid cimi baarista dhexdhexaad ah soddon iyo lixdan dumara, koox kala qaybin.
koox kastaba waxay ka kooban tahay afar iyo lix dumara iyo turjumaan iyo qofka sameenaya cilmi baarista., mid kastaba waxa lala yeelanayaa waraysi qofahaan.
cilmi baarista waxy qaadanaysa dhexdhexaad afar ama shan sano.

Ma waxa ay tahay in aad ka qaybgalo

adiga baa xor ah haddi aad ka qaybgelaysid cilmi baarista. Haddii aad ka soo qayb gashid waxaa lagu siin macluumaad. waxaa kale oo lagu waydiisanayaa ogolaansho hadal ahaan ah. cajaladna waa lagaa duubayaa ama saxeex.

Maxa ugu dhacaya haddii aan ka qayb galo cilmi baarista

waxa logu waydiinaya in aad kaqayb ghashid koox waraysi dhexdhexaad ah saddex iyo shan oo dumar somaliad kale. waxa kale oo jooga turjumaan iyo qofka sameenaya cilmi baarista. waxa logu waydiinayaa in lagaa waraysto waxa ku saabsan waxad soo martay markad kasoo baxday somaliya ee aad timi united kingdom.

waxa logu waydiinayaa kale side aad oo helid khibrad caafimaad oo ku saabsan cisbitaalka united kingdom oo aad baahan tahay iyo haddii adigo citiqaadid inu qibrad caafimaadka ku wanaag siin yahay. waxad u sheegaysaa qofka sameenaya cilmi baarista. wax ku saabsan walba dhibaato kuheshay markad tagtid isbataalka iyo side uu ku caawin karo mustaqbalka.

waxa la waydiinayaa nagaha hadii ay raban in ay hadlan qofka sameenaya cilmi baarista keligii.

Turjumaan ba joogidoona hadii aad rabted wad keensan saaxiib ama qaraabadada ku turjuma.qofka sameenaya cilmi baarista waxo ku waydiin in ku celiyo suaal hadii uu baahdo.

Maxaan Sameeyaa?

waxaad ubaahan tahay in aad ka soo qayb gasho wada hadal kooxeed. Haddii aad rabtid saaxiibadaada ama qaraabadada waad soo kaxaysan kartaa. laakiinse haddii ay diidaan dumarka laga qaadayo waraysiga waxay fadhiisan karan qolkale.

Waxad meesha ka heli kartaan cunto fudud iyo cabitaan Waxaana jooga turjumaan idinka ku caawinaya suaalaha uu idin waydiinayo qofka cilmi barista samaynaya. Waxan laydin waydiinaya markale in aad saxeexdaan in aad ogoshihiin in laydin ka duubo cajalad.

Waxaa jooga adiga iyo qofka cilmi baarista samaynaya iyo turjumaanka keliya haddii aad cid rabtid sokaxisated waa laguu ogal yahay.

Maxaa dhibaato ah oo imanaya haddii aan cilmi baarista ka qaybaqato?

Waxaa laga yaabbaa in aad murugooti marka aad xusuusato waxayaalihii kuso maray. Haddii aad murugooti waxaad helikartaa qof ku caawiya.

Maxan ka faa idayaa haddii aan cilmi baarista ka qayb qaatoo?

waxaan rajaynaynaa in aanu fahamno sida ee hajrada usamaysay noolashada iyo caafimaadkaaga. iyo gabadha soomaliyeed waxa ay dhakhtarka ugu baahan tahay.

Haddii khalad dhaco maxaa iman kara?

Haddii aad murugooti waxan joojinayaa waraysiga. Haaddii aad rabtid in aad ka baxdo cilmi baarista waad kabixi kartaa . Wixii laga dubay waa la tuurayaa.

Haddii aan cilmi barista ka qaybqaato ma nogonaysaa sir?
Ha waa sir waxaynaa ka dhaxaysaa adiga iyo qofka cilmi baarista samaynaya iyo turjumanka.

Maxaa dhacaya natijada cilmi baarista ?
natiijadu waxa ay noqonaysaa warbixin ku saabsan wixii muhiima ahaa ee laga helay cilmi baarista. waxaana la qorayaa warbiximo yar yar. oo loo qaybiyo uru ru doonaya ine oogaadaan nolosha iyo caafimaad dumarka soomaliyeed.

War bixintaa waxaa la sinnayaa ku wii ka so qayb galay waxaan lagu qoraya Somali iyo English.
Cidna ma garanayso dumarka kaso qayb galay cilmi barista.

Ayaa kharashka bixinaya ?
Waxaa bixinaya University Of Central England oo raba Qofka cilmi barista samanayaya uu qaatoo PHD. Ka cilmi baarista samaynaya Waxu macalin kayahay university of central England.
Qofka cilmi baarista samaynayaa wuxu Qaataa lacag yar oo uu ka qaatoo University Of Central England oo uu ku bixiyo cajaladaha iyo warqadaha iyo cabitaanka.

Haddii aad u baaha to war bixin dheer numberkan nagala so xidhidh
Barbara Hepburn
Personal Development Centre, Birmingham City University, Westbourne Road Edgbaston, Birmingham, B 15 3 TN. Telephone : 01213317011

APPENDIX EIGHT: Consent Form English

Research into the Migration Experiences of Somali Women

Name of researcher: Barbara Hepburn (Now Barbara Howard-Hunt)

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I agree to assist in the above research by participating in a focus group and understand that I may also be asked to participate in a follow up individual interview.

I understand that there will be no more than six women at the focus group and that this should not last any longer than one to one and a half hours. Individual interviews should last no longer than 45 minutes to one hour and will take place either in my home or another place that is suitable to me.

I give my consent to participating in the focus group and answering questions in the individual interview.

I acknowledge that I have a right, to withdraw from the focus group or the interview at any time and that I have a right to refrain from answering any or all of the questions.

I understand that any data collected will be stored according to strict ethical guidelines and that no personal details will be included in the research report.

Name   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

Date   ………………………………….

Please make your mark in this box

Consent Form Somali

Cilmi baarista laga samenayo hewenka somaliyed

Magaca samenaya cilmi baarista : Barbara Hepburn

Saxexa inan gebgato cilmi baarista ango grub a iyo anigo kaligay la iwaresanayo

anigu waxan cadenaya inan akhriyeye iyo an fahamay macluumadka ku yaala waraqda.

Waxan ogaladay inan cawiyo qofka cilmi barista sameynaya guurub ahan iyo inu i waresto kaligaya. waxan fahan sanahay gurubku inu ka badnanin lix dumar warisigu wuxu qadanaya sacad ama sacad iyo badh .

marka kaligay la i waresanayo 45 midhid ka ma badnaneyso sacad. waresiga wax la ku sameynaya gurigega ama meshad dontid.

waxan fahamay hadan rabo inan ka inan ka baxo cilmi barista wan ka bixi kara. waxan fahamay hadi an ka baxo wixi la iga dubay wa la turaya.

Name …………………………………………………………………………………

Date…………………………………………………………………………..

Fadlan magacaga kuqor meeshaan

Waxan laydin waydiinaya markale in aad saxeexdan in aad ogoshihiin in laydin ka duubo cajalada