

Relational leadership and governing: exploring the contributions of Clan leadership in the Somali diaspora

By

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Thesis Submitted

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2024

Acknowledgments:

With immense gratitude, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the faculty, staff, and administration of Canterbury Christ Church University for their unwavering support throughout my academic journey. Your guidance and encouragement have been invaluable, and I am deeply thankful. This work would not have been possible without the support and contributions of many individuals. I am profoundly grateful to all the participants who generously and openly shared their perspectives, fears, and hopes for their home country's future. Their willingness to contribute enriched this study, making it more meaningful. I also extend my sincere appreciation to the various agencies that took part in this research. Their participation, along with the provision of facilities and valuable materials, significantly enhanced the depth and quality of this study.

First and foremost, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors and mentors, Dr. Sheila MacNamee, Dr. Dan Wulff, and Dr. Sally St. George. Their guidance, dedication, and expertise have played a pivotal role in shaping both my academic and personal growth. Their support has been instrumental in preparing me for future challenges and opportunities. I am also profoundly grateful to my family—Aman and Hanad Adan—and my sister, Laila Abdi, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been the foundation of my achievements. To my friends, your belief in me has been a constant source of motivation, and I am forever thankful.

Finally, I acknowledge all those who, in one way or another, contributed to the completion of this work. This achievement is the result of collective effort, and I deeply appreciate each and every contribution. As I embark on the next phase of my journey, I carry with me the lessons and values instilled throughout this experience. I look forward to making a positive impact on society while upholding the principles of excellence and integrity that this accomplishment represents. Once again, thank you all for your support and guidance.

Thesis Summary:

This thesis presents a portfolio of research examining Somali diaspora perspectives on traditional clan leadership and governmental institutions. It explores similarities and differences between these governing structures, focusing on their relationships with the public and the qualities that define clan leadership. The study aims to understand how the Somali diaspora perceives clan and government institutions, assessing how each respond to its constituency in terms of leadership style and influence within adopted countries. The clan represents lineage and cultural identity for Somalis. According to Dirshe (2013, as cited in ITPCM, 2013), “Clans in Somalia are a consensual identity inherited from patriarchal ancestors, and clannism, as a political ideology, determines power, resource distribution, territorial expansion, and recruitment to influential positions” (p. 13). The government, conversely, represents the national governing authority. The study examines the diaspora's views in Canada, the United-States, and the United-Kingdom to understand each institution’s impact on Somali society. This thesis extends previous research on Somali society and its leadership by investigating the Somali diaspora community's dual experiences: (a) navigating life as dual citizens while raising children in their adopted countries and (b) perceiving Somali clan and government institutions.

The research explores cultural values and traditions in the diaspora, using a preliminary study of Somali families in Ottawa, Canada, to analyze intergenerational relations and challenges. The feasibility study was guided by Orsmond and Cohn’s (2015), Feasibility Framework; therefore, this study was to assessed whether the study could be conducted within the available time, budget, and logistical constraints, ensuring sustainable research execution. In addition, it was to evaluated the ability to coordinate research activities, including ethical considerations, language barriers, and data analysis procedures. Central to this inquiry was understanding the relationships within

families and how cultural values are transmitted across generations. Narrative inquiry with semi-structured interviews was conducted with 10 Somali male participants in Ottawa, supported by a local agency, to examine parental roles in family leadership and cultural continuity. Findings suggest that, while the diaspora is proud of Somali culture, there are challenges in transmitting these values to the next generation. The study also highlights the need for local agencies to engage with immigrants and provide cultural programs that facilitate smoother transitions for children. The literature review explores Somali clan leadership, which is deeply intertwined with individual Somali identities, examining the qualities used by clan leaders. Findings indicate that Somali clan leadership aligns with relational leadership styles, underscoring the complexity of Somali culture and the need for a holistic approach in international support, policies, and programs.

The Applied Research project engaged 10 Somali participants from Canada, the U.S., and the U.K., exploring their perspectives on Somali governance and clan relations. Participants expressed strong connections to their clan lineage and evaluated the roles of clan and national leaders. They supported clan leaders collaborating with national leaders to establish stable governance. The study suggests that Somali society's policies should incorporate traditional values to strengthen leadership restructuring and proposes that the Somali diaspora be given resources to support skills development, enabling them to contribute to Somalia's future. A case study of a local government-funded agency examined its engagement with the Somali community, analyzing strategic plans, program delivery, and decision-making practices. Findings demonstrate how the agency aligns its services with community needs, emphasizing cultural sensitivity and tailored programs. This research on Somali clan and government leadership is pertinent to Somalia's reconstruction, providing insights for policymakers and international stakeholders who seek to rebuild Somalia. The study contributes to the understanding of traditional Somali leadership,

offering lessons that may inform future leadership strategies and support the development of Somali society.

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and Applied Sciences In partnership with Professional
Development Foundation**

Chapter 1: Introduction

"Culture is a fundamental pillar for the reconstruction of the Somali social fabric. It can effectively contribute to the revival of the Somali identity and be a development opportunity for future generations" (Mohamed, 2013, p. vii)

Many African societies have long governed themselves through tribal or clan-based institutions, often without the centralized structures familiar in contemporary governance (Mamdani, 2018). Somalia is no exception. However, European colonization disrupted traditional Somali governance, undermining the clan system and its leadership's ability to serve its people (Hess, 1966; Lewis, 1961; Touval, 1963). Somalia, like many African nations in the pre- and post-colonial eras, inherited economic, social, and political dysfunction. Historically, multiple colonial powers—Britain, Italy, and France—competed for control over Somali territories, resulting in the arbitrary partitioning of the Somali people. According to Omar (2001), Somalia remains the only African nation whose territories were divided among multiple colonial rulers and later distributed among Ethiopia, Kenya, and Yemen. The legacy of colonial rule exacerbated Somalia's political and social fragmentation, leading to long-term governance challenges and civil unrest (Hagmann

& Hoehne, 2009), and as reflected in Lord Rennell's observation that if the world had been "sensible enough," Somalia might have remained a unified state rather than a fragmented region (Samatar, 1982, p. 190). Although the country initially embarked on a promising democratic process (Samatar, 2016), within a colonial framework, Somalia struggled to develop a locally constructed and sustainable democracy (Menkhaus, 2007). This struggle culminated in the country's disintegration and a protracted civil war, which has resulted in significant loss of life and widespread displacement. According to Issa-Salwe (1996), the Somali civil war claimed over 300,000 lives and displaced nearly four-fifths of its population. Decades later, the country remains politically fragile, grappling with weak institutions, leadership crises, and the influence of religious extremist groups seeking to impose Sharia law (Hansen, 2013).

The Somali government remains heavily dependent on international assistance for governance and security. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), composed of more than 20,000 troops from Uganda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Djibouti, primarily ensures the protection of the federal government and maintains security in key areas, particularly Mogadishu (Williams, 2018). Despite these efforts, Somalia continues to face critical challenges related to governance, rule of law, constitutional constraints, and unresolved national grievances (Abdi, 2014; Bryden, 2013). The persistent instability has hindered the establishment of strong governmental institutions capable of providing essential public services. To comprehend Somalia's present-day leadership, political climate and formulate viable solutions, it is essential to examine the nation's historical trajectory, spanning the pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial, civil war, and modern periods. The prolonged conflict has led to the mass displacement of Somalis, many of whom now constitute a significant diaspora across the globe. Canada, in particular, hosts a large Somali community, with many striving to maintain their cultural heritage while adapting to

new socio-political environments (Abdullahi, 2001). According to 2021, Statistics Canada, Ottawa's population is 1,017,449. It also states there are 10,500, Somalis living in Ottawa, Canada. This thesis presents a portfolio of research examining Somali diaspora perspectives on traditional clan leadership vs governmental institutions. It also examines whether relational leadership is evident in traditional Somali clan leadership and explores its potential benefits in fostering leadership reconstruction within Somalia.

Twenty-first-century expectations of leadership brought relational leading to the center stage and have sharply reduced the perceived value of a purely directive, top-down model of leadership. Leadership is viewed by many (Cunliffe, A. L., & Eriksen, M. 2011; Gill & Gergen, 2020; Komives, S. R., Lucas, N., & McMahon, T. R. 2013; Uhl-Bien, M., 2006) as a relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish positive change. Relational leading invites engagement with the world where leaders become morally accountable to others, where they facilitate a relational dialogue. Despite its strengths, relational leadership faces challenges in operationalization and measurement. Its theoretical underpinnings, rooted in social constructionism, may lack clarity in application, particularly in large-scale organizational or cross-cultural settings (Gill & Gergen, 2020). Traditional models, such as transformational leadership, often focus on achieving predefined goals or visions. The application of relational leadership to Somali clan structures offers a unique lens through which to understand traditional and modern leadership dynamics. The adaptability of relational leadership theory makes particularly pertinent the study of Somali clan structures, where leadership is inherently relational and embedded in cultural practices.

The Somali diaspora was chosen for this study because they present a unique and valuable perspectives on traditional clan leadership and governmental institutions due to several key

factors: a) Somalia has experienced decades of political instability, civil conflict, and governance challenges, leading to large-scale migration; b) Members of the Somali diaspora actively engage in political, economic, and social affairs in Somalia, including remittances, policy advocacy, and diplomatic efforts; c) Their views on traditional clan leadership and governmental institutions can influence decision-making and governance reforms both within Somalia and in diaspora communities; d) Living in countries with diverse political systems exposes diaspora communities to different governance models. This experience provides them with a comparative perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of Somalia's traditional and formal institutions, offering constructive critiques and alternative governance solutions. Studying their perspectives provides insights into how traditional and modern governance structures interact from their standpoint. Given these factors, the Somali diaspora is a critical population for understanding the interplay between traditional clan leadership and governmental institutions, making their perspectives essential to this study. It is important to note that, despite participants coming from various geographical locations, the study shows that the Somali diaspora's perspectives on clan and national government leadership remained consistent.

The research on the Somali diaspora in Canada reveals a strong desire to preserve traditional values and pass them on to younger generations, despite the challenges of assimilation (Opoku-Dapaah, 1995). Many Somali Canadians express feelings of nostalgia, loss, and guilt for those left behind, while also recognizing the difficulties in maintaining cultural continuity within a new and dominant Western context (Berns McGown, 1999). While leadership plays a vital role in shaping organizations, communities, and institutions, there is insufficient understanding of how leadership practices among the Somali diaspora evolve in response to shifting socio-cultural environments (Ismail, 2011). Leadership, as Alvesson and Sveningsson (2012) argue, should be redefined away

from leader-centric models and towards relational constructs that emphasize collective agency, cultural identity, and community-building. Despite the challenges, the Somali diaspora remains invested in strengthening community bonds and promoting cultural continuity. Furthermore, research on how government and community organizations engage with Somali newcomers remains sparse, with limited discourse on effective models for fostering integration while preserving cultural heritage (Abdulle, 2020).

Research questions:

- 1) How would you describe the historic clan and state governing leadership structure in Somalia based on your experience?
- 2) Do you think the clan cultural leadership structure differs from state leadership? Why or why not?
- 3) How would you describe the role clan cultural leadership plays in Somali contemporary governance?
- 4) Do you see clan leadership influencing the process of state building? How so?
- 5) What are the other leadership elements that can help the Somali culture and society?

Methodology Overview:

This thesis first explores how cultural upbringing and institutional governance influence the perception of values, both within Somali society and among the Somali diaspora in Canada. It examines how these cultural values are reflected and transmitted through the diaspora's child-rearing practices. Specifically, the research investigates two key areas: (a) the concept of relational leadership and its intersection with professional practice in a cross-cultural context, and (b) the Somali diaspora's perspectives on their interactions with local agencies and the services they provide. Secondly, the study employs qualitative narrative research and a case study

methodology. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 Somali individuals and one settlement and Integration program representative. A Settlement and Integration Program refers to government or community-driven initiatives designed to help immigrants, refugees, and newcomers adapt to life in a new country. These programs provide support to ease the transition, promote social inclusion, and ensure successful long-term integration from a local agency to identify the resources and barriers within the community and its relationship with the agency. Prior to the main study, a smaller pilot project was carried out to assess the community's views on their cultural values, and to evaluate the appropriateness and potential effectiveness of the recruitment protocol, interview schedule, data collection, and analysis methods employed in the larger study. Thematic analysis of the interview data and related documents was used to conduct a case study of a local agency, focusing on how the agency communicates and engages with the Somali community to provide the necessary services and resources.

This thesis is structured in six chapters. The introductory chapter outlines the research questions that guided the study, demonstrating how these questions influenced the methodological decisions and the framing of the research. It provides the rationale, context, and theoretical and philosophical positions underpinning the research. The preliminary study was pivotal in understanding the Somali diaspora's cultural outlook, particularly in relation to their values regarding child-rearing. The following four chapters present original research, in chronological order, culminating in the final reflective chapter, which synthesizes the findings of the study. Each chapter is accompanied by its own reference list and appendices.

Chapter Two: Presents a preliminary small-scale study (as noted in the summary) conducted in 2020 and later published in the *Journal of Social Encounters* in 2023. This study examines the experiences of the Somali diaspora in Ottawa, Canada, with a particular focus on how they

navigate the challenges of raising children in a Western society. The research investigates the difficulties they face, the underlying sociocultural and structural factors contributing to these challenges, and potential strategies for mitigation. Additionally, it explores how these challenges shape intergenerational relationships and the transmission of cultural values. The chapter also assesses the risks associated with cultural dissonance and potential solutions for fostering resilience within the community. The methodology for Chapter Two was a small-scale qualitative study using semi-structured interviews with Somali parents in Ottawa, Canada. This approach was chosen for its ability to provide in-depth insights into personal and communal experiences, particularly regarding the challenges of raising children in a cross-cultural context. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to express their experiences freely while enabling the researcher to probe specific areas of interest. Other methodologies, such as surveys or quantitative approaches, were not chosen for this chapter because they would not have captured the rich, narrative-based understanding of the participants' experiences and cultural complexities. The study's exploratory nature required a flexible and adaptive method to identify the key themes and challenges faced by the diaspora, which were later refined in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Three: Presents a comprehensive literature review that builds on the findings of the preliminary study. The evidence suggests that the Somali diaspora maintains a strong attachment to its cultural heritage, which informs an in-depth exploration of traditional Somali leadership structures. This chapter critically examines the Somali clan system, with a particular emphasis on its leadership style and governance mechanisms. A central research question is whether the Somali clan system can be understood as a form of relational leadership, and if so, how its principles compare with contemporary leadership theories. This literature review adopts a qualitative research methodology to allow for an in-depth, interpretative analysis of Somali

cultural values and leadership practices. This approach is particularly well-suited for exploring complex social phenomena, such as communal leadership, historical governance structures, and the evolution of clan-based leadership over time. Unlike quantitative methods, which prioritize numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research focuses on textual analysis, interpretation, and meaning-making. This is crucial for understanding the nuances of Somali leadership traditions across pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial contexts. By systematically analyzing historical texts, archived documents, and previous studies, the literature review offers a rich and contextually grounded perspective that contributes to the theoretical foundation of the research. This is essential for guiding subsequent empirical research and ensuring that new investigations build upon a well-established conceptual framework.

Chapter Four: Expands on the research through a large-scale applied qualitative study, offering an in-depth examination of the intersection between clan-based leadership and formal governmental institutions. This chapter represents the core empirical component of the project, involving the conceptualization, design, and implementation of a research methodology aimed at generating new knowledge. The study critically analyzes how members of the Somali diaspora conceptualize the relationship between clan structures and state institutions, highlighting tensions, overlaps, and potential areas for collaboration. This exploration contributes to broader debates on governance, identity, and the role of informal leadership structures in diaspora communities. This chapter employed in-depth qualitative narrative analysis rather than narrative inquiry due to its emphasis on systematic interpretation as opposed to relational immersion. While narrative inquiry focuses on understanding participants lived experiences through co-constructed storytelling, narrative analysis prioritizes the structured examination of recurring themes, patterns, and discourses within collected narratives. This distinction was critical for exploring the Somali

diaspora's conceptual beliefs about clan and government institutions, as the research aimed to analyze broader sociopolitical meanings rather than the personal, experiential dimensions typically emphasized in narrative inquiry.

To achieve this, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Key themes emerging from participants' perspectives were examined. This approach was chosen because it allowed for a nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between traditional clan structures and government systems, uncovering underlying ideologies, tensions, and intersections between informal and formal governance. A quantitative approach was not selected, as it would have lacked the depth necessary to capture the intricacies of clan and government relations. Similarly, a case study methodology was not suitable for this chapter because the focus was on examining broader conceptual beliefs across a diverse group of participants rather than analyzing a single organization, event, or localized phenomenon. By adopting qualitative narrative analysis, this study ensured a systematic, yet flexible, method for examining how collective narratives shape perceptions of governance within the Somali diaspora, contributing to a deeper theoretical and empirical understanding of clan-state dynamics.

Chapter Five: Adopts a case study approach, focusing on the role of a local agency that provides services to the Somali community in Ottawa. Previous research underscores the community's strong cultural identity and a desire for integrative services that reflect their values while also fostering connections to their homeland. This chapter investigates how culturally responsive social services can facilitate both integration and transnational engagement. Additionally, it explores the broader aspiration within the Somali diaspora to contribute to the reconstruction and development of Somalia, analyzing how local initiatives can support this goal through economic, educational, and political engagement. This chapter employed a case study

methodology to examine the services provided by a local agency to the Somali community in Ottawa. This approach was chosen because case studies are particularly effective for exploring real-world issues within specific, bounded contexts. By focusing on a single agency, this methodology allowed for an in-depth examination of its operations, cultural integration efforts, and the community's perceptions of its services. A thematic analysis was applied to analyze qualitative data gathered from interviews, agency reports, and community feedback.

This method was selected because it provided a structured yet flexible approach to identifying key themes related to service accessibility, cultural responsiveness, and areas for improvement. Thematic analysis enabled the research to systematically categorize community perspectives, highlighting both strengths and gaps in the agency's approach. Other methodologies, such as ethnography or action research, were not chosen because they require long-term immersion or direct intervention, which was beyond the scope of this study. While ethnography would have offered rich, participant-centered insights, it demands prolonged engagement in the field, which was not feasible. Similarly, action research, which involves active collaboration and iterative problem-solving, was not suitable as this study aimed to analyze existing services rather than implement changes in real-time. The case study approach, combined with thematic analysis, provided a manageable yet comprehensive framework for examining how the agency interacts with the Somali community. It facilitated a detailed exploration of institutional practices and community responses while offering actionable insights for improving culturally integrated service delivery.

Chapter Six: This chapter synthesizes the research findings, offering a critical reflection on the key insights gained from the preceding chapters. This chapter evaluates the study's methodological approaches, epistemological perspectives, and practical implications, assessing

their effectiveness in addressing the research objectives. By critically engaging with the strengths and limitations of the qualitative methods used, this reflection ensures a rigorous and well-contextualized understanding of the study's contributions. A key outcome of this chapter is the presentation of a model of online social support tailored to the Somali diaspora across Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. This model is designed to address social, cultural, and structural challenges by leveraging digital platforms to enhance community engagement, resilience, and transnational support networks. By linking the research findings back to the central research questions, this chapter demonstrates how the study contributes to both academic discourse and real-world solutions. It also outlines potential directions for future research and policy development, ensuring that the findings are transferable into practice and responsive to the evolving needs of the Somali diaspora.

Ultimately, this chapter bridges theory and application, highlighting how qualitative research can inform strategies for social integration, community empowerment, and policy innovation. Each chosen methodology reflects the specific aims and scope of the respective chapter while ensuring coherence across the thesis. By combining qualitative interviews, literature review, thematic analysis, and case studies, the research provides a comprehensive exploration of the Somali diaspora's cultural and social dynamics. This multi-method approach ensures depth, context, and applicability, while rejecting methods that would have compromised the research's richness or relevance.

Personal Background:

Several factors have shaped my decision to pursue a PhD, influencing both my research design and the questions that have guided my academic journey. I view PhD research as a transformative experience—one that not only deepens my understanding of research methodologies, contemporary issues, and advancements but also sharpens my critical thinking and approach to work. Higher education fosters fresh perspectives, and the perseverance required for a PhD will elevate my academic and professional growth. What sets a PhD apart is its potential to contribute meaningfully to the world—advancing research, refining interpretations, and shaping rigorous, impactful actions. I am deeply committed to the value of scholarly inquiry and the knowledge derived from constructing a thesis that integrates diverse viewpoints while offering insights with long-term benefits for humanity. My research interest centers on Somalia's clan structure and institutional governing leadership. As someone born into Somali society, I have observed its cultural complexity firsthand, which has fostered a deep curiosity about its social fabric. I have sought to understand the clan system, its hierarchical structure, and the strong intergenerational commitment that binds its members. Having left Somalia in my late teens and growing up in a household where clan identity was not emphasized, I lacked direct exposure to this system. However, this distance only heightened my curiosity about how individuals trace their lineage, why it holds such significance, and what leadership models have historically emerged within the system.

This interest was further reinforced by my professional experiences as a program consultant, supporting local organizations to develop community programs and workshops. These engagements provided valuable insights into the cultural dynamics at play and deepened my desire to explore leadership and governance within Somali society. Listening to community

members share their challenges and triumphs left a lasting impression on me, shaping my academic trajectory and influencing the epistemological foundation of my research. A pivotal influence on my research was my postgraduate study on gender equality, specifically the psychosocial perspectives on girls' education in Somalia. This research exposed me to systemic disparities in educational opportunities for girls compared to boys. Upon completing my study, I co-founded a nonprofit organization dedicated to amplifying Somali women's voices in the diaspora and back home, providing a platform for discussions on political participation and social justice. In 2012, as Somalia drafted its constitution and prepared for indirect elections—where clan elders selected members of parliament, who then elected the president—my colleagues and I launched a campaign to increase women's representation in government. Our goal was to secure at least 30% of parliamentary seats for women and ensure this commitment was enshrined in the constitution. We soon realized that clan leaders wielded significant influence in the selection process, making their support crucial for achieving gender equity. Engaging directly with these leaders was a transformative experience, profoundly shaping my academic focus. For the first time, I recognized the structured leadership within the clan system, prompting questions about its operation, effectiveness, and enduring influence.

This realization intensified my interest in the leadership traditions of Somali clans and how Somalis, particularly in the diaspora, perceive their cultural history. Social values, identities, and beliefs are shaped by historical and societal forces, and over the years, I have come to appreciate the importance of cultural knowledge in shaping leadership perceptions. While standard literature provides an external perspective, I seek a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the clan system's role in governance.

My dissertation topic is deeply personal, rooted in my effort to comprehend a system that I was not directly immersed in while growing up. Having lived outside Somalia for over 30 years, I lacked firsthand experience of clan attachments and their complexities. However, this detachment has given me the advantage of approaching the subject with objectivity, allowing me to build trust with individuals willing to discuss this deeply personal topic. The more I learn, the more fascinated I become with its intricacies, further compelling me to uncover the leadership mechanisms within Somali society. The central question of this thesis explores Somali clan leadership in relation to state institutions and examines the perspectives of the Somali diaspora on leadership within these two contexts. Each of the following study's questions in table 1 stem from this primary inquiry.

Table 1

An Overview of the Thesis Portfolio

Thesis portfolios/ overview	Small scale research project	Literature review project	Applied research project	Report of professional project	Reflective project
Objective	This project examines the Somali diaspora community's intercultural understanding between their homeland and host country. It aims to assess the evolving dynamics within the contemporary Somali diaspora, focusing on shifts in cultural values, male leadership, family integration, cohesion, and the impact of these factors on intergenerational cultural transmission.	This research examines the distinctions between traditional leadership theories and contemporary visions of relational leadership. Using Somali clan structures as a lens, it draws parallels to relational leadership frameworks, arguing that Somali traditional practices embody relational leadership principles.	The objective of this research is to better understand and articulate the perspectives of the Somali diaspora community in Canada, the U.S., and the U.K., with a focus on the traditional leadership of clan vs state institutions.	This case study investigated how a community agency engages with the community it serves to understand how customized cultural services like the Settlement and Integration Program are created, facilitated, and potentially initiate dialogue with the community members in developing culturally sensitive programming.	The objective of this project is to provide an overarching synthesis and a description of how this research contributes to knowledge and its implications for professional practices.
Research questions	A. How do the male parents and elders view their role as transmitters of cultural values and	A. What might we learn about leadership and governance by exploring Somali's clan structure?	A. How would you describe the historic clan and state governing leadership	A. What, if any, role do community agencies play in the process of adopting customized services	N/A

	<p>leaders of their community and family?</p> <p>B. Do they see their role as central to cultural survival and stability?</p> <p>C. What values are transmitted, and how do these values facilitate or promote group and cultural care?</p> <p>D. Above all, what constraints or moderators are impeding the process of passing or sharing their cultural values?</p> <p>E. Do these changes have implications for how cultural values are conveyed to the young generations?</p>	<p>B. Is it possible to envision Somalia's clan structure as a form of relational leading?</p> <p>C. What impact or contribution might relational leading/clan structure have on the current state formation of a specific culture like Somalia?</p> <p>D. How have traditional forms of leadership and governance contributed to the ongoing conflict in Somalia and, by extension, any sociocultural conflict?</p>	<p>structure in Somalia based on your experience?</p> <p>B. Do you think the clan cultural leadership structure differs from state leadership? Why or why not?</p> <p>C. How would you describe the role clan cultural leadership plays in Somali contemporary governance?</p> <p>D. Do you see clan leadership influencing the process of state-building? How so?</p> <p>E. What are other leadership elements that can help the Somali culture and society?</p>	<p>that are culturally geared towards the Somali community's traditional values (e.g., cultural events, food, social connections)?</p> <p>B. In what ways, if any, do these services enable the community to have a connection in the wider Canadian society as well as build local community relations?</p> <p>C. How has the community's life context changed, if at all, since the arrival of the Somali diaspora in Canada? What seems to lead to this change?</p> <p>D. Are there any difficulties communicating key information that migrants need to form community contributions? If so, what are these difficulties?</p>	
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Unit of analysis	Diaspora community	N/A	Diaspora community	Local agency's program representative	N/A
Number of participants	10	N/A	10	1	N/A
Location	Ottawa, Canada	N/A	Ottawa, Canada	Ottawa, Canada	
Methods/analysis	Narrative inquiry	Qualitative design	Narrative analysis	Case study plus thematic analysis	N/A
Data collection	Semi-structured interviews	Research articles, books, and other published texts	Semi-structured interviews	Semi-structured interviews and organization's documents	N/A

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**School of Psychology, Politics and Sociology Faculty of Social
and Applied Sciences In partnership with Professional
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Chapter 2: Small Scale Research Project:

Sociocultural and Leadership Transmission of Somali Diaspora: Community Values, Family Unity and Patriarchal Leadership

Summary:

Socio-cultural integration is influenced by the degree to which ethnic minority groups assimilate into the receiving society or maintain cultural distinctiveness (Gijsberts & Dagevos, 2007). Scholars have historically measured socio-cultural integration through factors such as (a) the contacts migrants establish within the host society, (b) their sense of belonging to this society, (c) their proficiency in the host society's language, and (d) the host society's attitudes toward them (Ehrkamp, 2005; Gijsberts & Dagevos, 2007; Snel et al., 2006; Vancluysen et al., 2009). With these considerations, this project examines the Somali diaspora community's intercultural understanding between their homeland and host country. Diaspora communities, often referred to as expatriate or transnational groups, play a significant role in maximizing the developmental benefits of migration (Gijsberts & Dagevos, 2007). Through engagement with the Somali community and ongoing communication with its members over the past two decades in Ottawa, Canada, evidence of both change and continuity emerges.

This project thus aims to assess the evolving dynamics within the contemporary Somali diaspora, focusing on shifts in cultural values, male leadership, family integration, cohesion, and the impact of these factors on intergenerational cultural transmission. Male participants were selected for this study due to the patriarchal structure of Somali society, where men are traditionally regarded as heads of the family and primary transmitters of cultural values. Within Somali cultural frameworks, men play a central role in upholding and conveying social norms, customs, and practices across generations. This selection thus aligns with the study's aim to gain insights into how cultural values are maintained, adapted, and passed on, particularly through the perspectives of those considered cultural stewards within the community.

The study concludes that elder male Somali diaspora parents demonstrate a strong awareness of their cultural roles and a deep connection to their heritage. However, it finds that this awareness does not consistently translate into effective transmission of cultural values to the younger generation. Additionally, the study sheds light on several key aspects, including the complexities of clan relations, the dynamics of intergenerational interactions, and the structure of community organization. These insights reveal both the strengths and challenges faced by the Somali diaspora in preserving cultural identity and fostering continuity across generations.

KEYWORDS: Sociocultural transmission, Somalia, intergeneration, extended family, clan identity, cultural value.

Introduction:

“Sociocultural transmission is a necessary ingredient in societal stability, cohesion, and continuity” (Adjaye & Aborampah, 2008, p. 23). In Somali society, there is a strong tradition of respecting family leadership, primarily male, and valuing the wisdom of elders as custodians of traditions passed down through generations. Elders in Africa were considered to be living ancestors (Coe et al., 2013, p.117). Somali society is deeply patriarchal, positioning male leadership at the core of family and community structures. This structure is especially pronounced among nomadic communities, where the process of traditional skill acquisition is integral to cultural continuity. Patrilineal practices are particularly significant, as sons are expected to inherit and uphold the values, professions, and skills of their fathers. This patrilineal tradition reinforces the role of men as cultural transmitters and anchors of family heritage within Somali society. As Adjaye and Aborampah (2008) informed us “father-son dyad made possible the intergenerational cultural transmission values” (p. 23). Communities have privileged access to their own reality and are able to understand their world in ways that others outside that world cannot (Hosking & Morley, 2004). This small-scale study constitutes a component of a broader dissertation on professional development, aiming to examine the cultural perspectives of the Somali community

in Ottawa. The study seeks to deepen understanding of the enduring traditions and cultural values that the Somali diaspora has maintained across diverse contexts. This exploration aims to elucidate the "relational practices and social realities" that emerge within the community, offering insight into the cultural dynamics shaping their collective identity and interactions. Additionally, the study will address how the Somali diaspora navigates the role of tradition and cultural transmission while raising children in their adopted country, balancing heritage with adaptation to a new cultural environment. In the context of Somali social tradition, the nuclear family is central and important for solidarity and cohesion (Abdullahi, 2001).

According to Coe et al., 2013, “teaching, or education of the young, was a kinship obligation, with the elders being required to teach and lead, and the young being required to accept the influence of their elders, to learn from them and model their behavior (p.118). Somalis are inhabitants of the Horn of Africa, particularly in North-Eastern Africa. Most Somalis are described as a nomadic pastoral society whose “politics lie in kinship and are composed of men who trace descent through a common male ancestor from whom they take their corporate name” (Lewis, 1965, p. 4). Outside of the core family unity, there is kinship family that is linked through membership and leadership connection (Cassanelli, 1982; Issa-Salwe, 1994; Lewis, 1961, 1994; Luling, 2006; Mohamoud, 2006; Samatar, 1991; Touval, 1963). For close to last three decades, however, Somalia, as a state, has been under the eyeful watch of the international communities due to its unraveling status caused by civil strife. During the civil war in 1991, the Somali people confronted an uncontrollable level of armed conflict and became one of the most war-torn societies in the contemporary world. As Lyons and Samatar (1995) stated, Somalia experienced a “deeply rooted breakdown of institutions, interlinked deterioration of social structure, cultural constraints and failed political and leadership apparatus, which forced a mass displacement of

people and state fragmentation” (p. 8).

As a result, 1.1 million Somalis have become refugees, fleeing primarily to neighboring countries (Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen, and Djibouti), with another 1.1 million Somalis living as internally displaced persons (IDPs) with makeshift housing within Somalia’s border (UNHCR, 2015). There is also a sizable Somali diaspora that lives all over the world, including North and sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa, the Middle East, Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, etc. According to Zoppi (2021), “there are in fact at least two distinctive aspects of Somali politics that help explain why the diaspora plays a pervasive role in post-conflict Somalia. Firstly, the protracted relevance of the ‘clan’. And second, Somalis’ limited trust in their homeland state institutions” (p. 76). To understand the impact the Somali state disintegration has on its society’s identity and values, I sought answers within the Somali diaspora living in Ottawa Canada, to get their points of view on the transformation of their lives within their adopted countries and the views they hold on their past lives for cultural leadership as male head of the family and transmission of values.

The majority of study participants arrived in Canada primarily from Somalia, with some passing through refugee camps in Kenya. Participants include those who migrated in 1988, with most arriving after the civil war in 1991. An orientation towards the homeland, whether through tangible connections or nostalgic sentiments, is a common characteristic of diasporic communities, alongside a shared awareness of group identity (Butler, 2001). As noted in studies on Somali traditional literacies, Somali society is organized around clan-based lineages and connections. Since the diaspora represents a sample of the Somali population, examining their perspectives on clan affiliations, traditions, and the degree of connection they maintain will offer valuable insights. This aspect of the study aims to reveal how these cultural dimensions influence

the identity and community dynamics of Somalis in the diaspora. According to Zoppi (2021), “Clan relations are capable of determining how diaspora support is channeled, distributed and operationalized. However, clan politics comes with shortcomings, such as divisive politics and rivalries, and a lack of an inclusive, unitary national view” (p. 90).

This study explores the Somali community in Ottawa to gain their perspectives on how they perceive their own cultural value and tradition transmissions while dealing with dual cultural values. The study’s participants primarily consist of older male Somali-Canadians who hold dual citizenship in Somalia and Canada and are raising children in Canada. Of the ten participants, eight are raising children born in both Somalia and Canada, while two have children born exclusively in Canada. Participants offer perspectives on navigating cultural adaptability within the Canadian context while simultaneously preserving ties to their country of origin. This dual focus highlights the participants' efforts to balance the transmission of Somali cultural heritage with the realities of raising children in a Canadian environment, providing insight into how cultural identity is maintained and adapted across generations. That being said, the Somali community brings a unique cultural perspective regarding cultural transmission, clan identity, and leadership. This distinctiveness is marked by a high degree of homogeneity, as the majority of the community shares the same language, customs, and religion. According to Richards (2009)

Although some cite slight linguistic and cultural differences between the settled populations (Sag) and nomadic pastoralists (Samale), homogeneity amongst the Somali is largely recognized in relation to other African states: Somali society is not divided by ethnic, religious or significant cultural differences, and the Somali themselves often refer to the Somali race. (p. 92)

The community's emphasis on clan identity and traditional leadership further underscores the importance of these elements in shaping their collective experience and social structure. It is important to see how they perceive themselves in their adopted countries and if their own beliefs and values have changed.

The diaspora's viewpoint of their culture within their adopted country can vary based on their education, country of adoption and profession, according to Zoppi (2021), "in fact, diaspora engagement is diverse, plural, and significantly framed by the context of settlement they live in, and by the type of societal, state, market and community experiences they are exposed to in these places" (p. 81). This project is an attempt to articulate the different perspectives of this community and their concept of their traditional leadership (of their homeland) and that of their adopted countries. In other words, the aim is to see if there is a change in their notion of identity and the understanding of traditional values and of leadership.

Project aim:

The purpose of this small-scale research project is to explore cultural relations within the Somali diaspora in Ottawa by conducting interviews in collaboration with the Somali Centre of Family Services community organization. The goal is to facilitate group or individual sessions with community members to engage in discussions about cultural values, cultural integration, and intergenerational relations within the Somali community in Ottawa. The study aims to understand how cultural change is experienced by this group and how it affects the transmission of cultural values across generations. Cultural change occurs when shifts take place within the social environment, whether within a society itself or through interface with outside forces. The work of Adjaye and Aborampah (2008) on intergenerational cultural transmission among the Akan people in Ghana provides a valuable framework for examining these dynamics. Their study explored how cultural evolution and changing times impact the transmission of cultural values in the Akan community. The research raised important questions about the nature of cultural change and its transformative effect on intergenerational relationships and cultural continuity. In a similar vein, this research will ask the Somali diaspora in Ottawa the following key questions:

- A. How do the male parents and elders view their role as transmitters of cultural values and leaders of their community and family?
- B. Do they see their role as central to cultural survival and stability?
- C. What values are transmitted, and how do these values facilitate or promote group and cultural care?
- D. What of your own cultural values, if any, have changed since living and raising your family in Ottawa, Canada, and how does that affect the process of transmitting your own values to your children?

E. Above all, what constraints or moderators are impeding the process of passing or sharing your cultural values?

F. Do these changes have implications for how cultural values are conveyed to the young generations?

Pre-testing the questions:

To ensure the academic questions were suitable for a non-expert population, I conducted a pre-test phase aimed at evaluating the clarity, comprehensibility, and relevance of the questions for individuals without specialized knowledge in the subject area. I have taken the following steps: To simplify the process for participants whose first language is Somali, I made the questions bilingual; both English and Somali. I then asked two community members who were not experts in the academic field to participate in evaluating the questions, as they represented the broader non-expert group for whom the final questions were intended. Those participating in the pre-test of the interview questions were asked:

- a) To assess the clarity of how the questions were phrased;
- b) If there were any language terms or concepts needing simplification or clarification for a non-expert population; and
- c) If the questions were too challenging, too simple, or just right for the target audience.

Ultimately, by pre-testing the academic questions with a non-expert population, I ensured that the final set of questions would be accessible, understandable, and appropriate for individuals with varying levels of prior knowledge, thus improving the overall reliability and validity of the data collected. This approach ensured that the questions were both scientifically robust and practically useful for a broader, non-specialized population. The selected community members approved the

questions. In addition, it should be noted that the researcher speaks the same language as participants.

Methods and Project Design:

In order to develop a description of the community members' own experiences, the Small-Scale Research Project utilized a qualitative research methodology to collect data and further develop the main focus on cultural values, integration, and leadership as the community transitions from one culture to another. A qualitative method was used in this project in order to gain a holistic understanding of Somalis living in Ottawa and the cultural leadership method deployed in the past. Qualitative research seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves (Czarniawska, 2004). Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information regarding the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of populations. This methodology can be described as "an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected" (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 17). Under the broad umbrella of qualitative research, and as described by (Anderson et al., 2011), narrative research focuses on lives as stories with multiple parts. According to Polkinghorne (1988), the stories are fragmented parts needing to be pieced together to gain insight into the whole picture. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that "narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience" (p. 18).

This methodology was guided by interviews with all male selected participants who were identified as Somalis and met the criteria set forth to participate in the study. These criteria ensured that participants were (a) from the older generation of Somali diaspora who had lived in Somalia and are currently living in Ottawa with their families, (b) between the ages of 50 to 75, and (c) had immigrated to Canada either before, during, or after the Somali civil war. This

preliminary study focuses on Somali men of a specific age group for their unique perspective, given their experience growing up in Somalia and their familiarity with Somali culture, as well as their current role in raising children within a different cultural context in Canada. This research acknowledges that numerous mitigating factors affect immigrant families' integration and cultural transmission. Factors such as transnationalism and cultural identity (Levitt & Schiller, 2004), educational and language policies (Cummins, 2000), and structural barriers and systemic inequality (Portes & Zhou, 1993), among others play pivotal roles. These factors collectively influence immigrant experiences—whether they are raising children while negotiating a new culture and maintaining heritage traditions, or facing challenges such as discrimination, unemployment, and limited access to culturally appropriate services. The scope of this preliminary study; however, does not extend to examining the participants' length of stay in Canada or their employment status; instead, it centers on whether they are raising families in Canada and the cultural implications of this for both them and their children. The study explores their views on cultural values and leadership beliefs in the context of their new country. In Somali culture, men are traditionally regarded as the heads of their families, taking on a key role in transmitting cultural values. Therefore, understanding their perspective as members of the diaspora is essential to discerning how they interpret and fulfill this role and whether they continue to adhere to it within the Canadian cultural landscape. Any evidence of mindset changes of the younger generation of Somali diaspora, regarding political processes, clan affiliation and desire to move beyond it, will require new study.

This process was divided into four steps: collecting, analyzing, findings, and writing the project. I work in the community and, therefore, am in a unique position to act as a support for the community's own program development. I need to acknowledge for disclosure that I share the

same cultural background as the community researched. As a researcher and also part of the culture that I worked with, I had the advantage of being an insider to the Somali culture with the same reality of social constructs as the participants. I shared their cultural values, and I understood and possessed an awareness of the social dynamics at play. I was born and raised in Somalia until my late teens, which equipped me with a thorough cultural understanding of how relationships work and are built. However, my exposure to a constructionist ontology (Gergen, 1999) allowed me to take this search on a path that is relational and reflective.

Social constructionism views discourse about the world not as a map reflecting what is out there but as the product of communal interchange (Gergen, 1985). Charmaz (2006) explained that “constructivism assumes the relativism of social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward an interpretive understanding of subjects’ meanings” (p. 130). “The challenge is not to locate ‘the one best way,’ but to create the kinds of relationships in which we can collaboratively build our future” (Gergen & Gergen, 2004. p.84). My relational responsibility to participants allowed me to create the trust that would facilitate the kind of inquiry capable of privileging local interpretations of reality. Therefore, the result of my research project strengthens my knowledge about the community, as it will also contribute to academia by expanding the Somali culture and leadership literature. Chen and Boore (2010) considered the ability of a researcher to understand and speak the local language as important to taking a culturally nuanced approach, which in turn will determine the credibility of the researcher in the eyes of participants and the data obtained. Furthermore, while I work with the community organization, I did not have personal knowledge or relations with the primary participants selected. And as a researcher, I was vigilant of any assumption or bias during the interviews. I did not put myself into the discussions, nor did I share any opinion on the matter. I

informed the participants about my role as facilitator and that their views and perspectives are the only things that matter to this research.

The critical inquiry of this part depended on open-ended questions through one-on-one and focus group interviews with selected participants. “In much narrative research, as we have seen, the researcher not only provides the participant a means for self-expression, but acts as a vehicle for disseminating these expressions to a broader public” (Freeman et al., 2015, p. 7). The participants were selected from various backgrounds and identified through personal information, including education and gender. I identified and established contacts with active individuals, professionals, and elders, and I used the "snowballing" technique that led to communicating with more participants through the assistance of the pre-selected participants.

Project activity:

This Small-Scale research project received ethical approval from Canterbury Christ Church University (see Appendix A- Ethical form). I also had the support, collaboration, and approval of the Somali Centre for Family Services to recruit participants and use their facility for the interviews. I applied the principle and practice of informed consent. Participants were fully informed of the study’s goals, context, and methods. Furthermore, interviews, and document analysis were planned according to participants’ everyday schedules in order to avoid unnecessary strain on their time. Participants were informed about their choices to partake in a group setting or individual interview if they preferred anonymity. The anonymity of each participant is guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms and the removal of any identifying details (see Appendix B- Consent Letter). They were informed that their responses would be strictly confidential and that they had the right to refuse to participate and could withdraw from participation at any time during the study by contacting this researcher. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the names

used in this project are not the full names of the participants. For confidentiality, the names used are not the real names of the participants. All data collected will be securely stored in a locked file for two years. The data will be destroyed after this two-year period. Participants were also given the option to receive a summary report if needed.

Table 2

A Transitory Synopsis of the Age, Educational Background, and Location of the Participants

Pseudonym	Ages: 50-73	Education	Living in Ottawa
Abdul	50	College	Family with children
Sadiq	60	High School	Family with children
Abukar	56	University	Family with children
Abdirisaq	59	University	Family with children
Farah	55	University	Family with children
Abdullahi	58	University	Family with children
Abdirisak	61	High School	Family with children
Mohamoud	62	University	Family with children
Abdicasis	71	College	Family with children
Mohamed	73	University	Family with children

The first seven participants are between the ages of 50 and 61, two are between 62 and 71, and one participant is 73. All participants have families most are currently raising children in Ottawa. Most of the participants interviewed in this research came to Canada after the Somali Civil War in 1991 and lived in Ottawa, raising families. All the interviews took place in Ottawa in a span of five weeks. During this period, I conducted a series of interviews involving ten Somali

participants. Following each interview session, I transcribed the recordings on the same day they were completed and supplemented this process with detailed note-taking. Significant time was devoted to transcription, as well as to the iterative processes of reading and re-reading the notes and repeatedly listening to the audio recordings. To ensure a thorough analysis, I revisited the collected materials—both notes and audio recordings—multiple times, engaging in a re-evaluation process to identify consistent patterns and recurring themes within the data.

Data collection:

The research utilized both primary and secondary sources, employing a systematic approach to analyze and synthesize relevant data obtained from these materials. Secondary data were gathered from a range of resources, including books, academic journals, and other non-academic publications. The primary data collection was conducted through qualitative research interviews, providing in-depth insights into the subject matter. Kvale (1996) defines the qualitative research interview as “an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena” (p. 174). In this study, research participants were interviewed to explore their lived experiences and intercultural participation in Ottawa, Canada. The interviews specifically examined the Somali community’s perspectives on their interactions, cultural transmission, and leadership values during their time in Canada.

The interviews were conducted using semi-structured questions, which were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. To accommodate participants' linguistic preferences, the interviews were conducted in Somali. Although the interview questions were originally written in English, they were translated into Somali by the researcher to enhance clarity and ensure that participants—many of whom spoke English as a second language—fully understood the

questions, thereby minimizing potential ambiguities. Two rounds of qualitative interviews were conducted during the research process to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and perspectives.

- Group interview with open-ended questions.
- One-on-one interviews with open-ended questions.

This study aimed to explore cultural relations within the Somali diaspora in Ottawa, the lived experiences of participants in relation to their cultural understandings of value transmission and leadership, as well as their perceptions of associated advantages and disadvantages. Participants were selected based on the criteria outlined in the methodology section, ensuring a sample group capable of providing rich, relevant insights into the research questions. The findings from these interviews have the potential to offer a deeper understanding of the Somali diaspora's collective traditional values, leadership transmission practices, and their implications, or lack thereof, within the community.

The fieldwork was conducted in Ottawa, Ontario, between February 10 and March 15, 2020. During this period, a total of 10 male Somali participants were interviewed. Participants were given the flexibility to choose between group or individual interviews, as well as their preferred time and location for the sessions. While the planned duration for each interview was one to two hours, some extended to three hours or more, particularly in the context of group discussions, which allowed for more in-depth dialogue and exchange of perspectives. In the group interview, interactions and exchanges between individuals were facilitated to encourage open dialogue, allowing participants to share and compare their experiences. Using the same-open structured questions prompted participants to discuss their perspectives, while follow-up questions encouraged clarification and elaboration, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas. This setup

enabled participants to react to one another's comments, thus deepening insights into shared and contrasting viewpoints. The interactive format provided a space for collaborative reflection, where individuals could express agreement or respectfully challenge differing views, enhancing the depth of the collective discussion.

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim immediately following their completion. The use of audio recordings provided a wealth of detailed information that could not have been captured through note-taking alone, as noted by Kvale (1996). Additionally, the audio recordings enhanced the credibility of the research findings. However, a potential limitation of audio recordings lies in the risk of cultural expressions being misinterpreted or a lack of linguistic proficiency impacting the accuracy of data interpretation.

In this study, such limitations were mitigated as the researcher was fluent in the participants' language, allowing for a clear understanding of cultural nuances and enabling follow-up questions to clarify any possible miscommunications. This linguistic and cultural competence ensured the reliability and depth of the data collected.

The researcher's role was to facilitate conversations, whether in group or individual settings, and to document participants' experiences in a way that authentically represented their voices and stories. Ensuring that participants felt their contributions were valued and integral to the research process was paramount. This approach aligns with Charmaz's (2006) constructivist framework, which posits that "constructivism assumes the relativism of social realities, recognizes the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward an interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings" (p. 130). By fostering a collaborative and interpretive research environment, the study sought to honor the participants' lived experiences and contributions.

Data analysis:

The qualitative data collected from the academic literature were analyzed to examine the extent to which cultural values shape access to quality and transmission of the Somali diaspora's family cohesion. In the second stage of the research, primary data was collected through interviews conducted with participants in Ottawa. The data collected from face-to-face interviews provided a unique understanding of the behaviors, characteristics, and cultural contexts of Somali individuals who grew up in Somalia, especially regarding their perceptions of their native culture in contrast with the adopted culture in their new environment. This study examined the role of male parents within the diaspora, particularly their leadership within families, the significance and relevance of cultural values in their current contexts, and their perspectives on transmitting these values to the next generation. By employing qualitative methods, the study enabled Somali participants to articulate their lived experiences in their own words. The use of narrative inquiry enriched the study by offering deeper insights into the lives and cultural experiences of Somalis in the diaspora.

This is a preliminary study that primarily examined how the cultural relations within the Somali diaspora's lived experiences shape their sociocultural relationships and cultural identity. The analysis was framed by Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) theoretical model, which provides a flexible procedural guide for narrative inquiry. This framework departs from rigid, step-by-step methodologies and instead encourages an informal, topic-based approach to exploring participants' individual stories and experiences. The Somali diaspora narrative is structured within Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) "three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, which encompasses the personal and social (interaction), the temporal sequence of past, present, and future (continuity), and the specific context or place (situation)" (p. 73). Each of these dimensions is

woven throughout both group sessions and individual stories, as participants reflect on their past experiences, share insights into their current lives, and express hopes and aspirations for their homeland. This framework allows for a layered understanding of the diaspora's identity, capturing the dynamic interplay between individual and collective memories, temporal shifts, and the significance of cultural spaces in shaping their narratives.

This important small-scale study highlighted themes created after reading and re-reading the interview transcript many times and coding those themes until I pieced together the last themes. There were ten participants involved, and the themes were the result of probing through the participants' individual perceptions and interpretations relating to experiences and cultural transmission in their adopted country, which cannot be elicited readily through other data. This researcher remained neutral and did not pressure or influence participants in order to skew answers or responses, did not share my views on any topic, and acted strictly as a facilitator.

Discussions:

The primary objective of this research was to gain a deeper understanding the sociocultural identification processes of the Somali diaspora in Ottawa by qualitatively exploring community members' experiences. This study's discussion is organized around themes that illustrate how these identification processes develop and are expressed. However, according to Zoppi (2021),

In fact, diaspora engagement is diverse, plural, and significantly framed by the context of settlement they live in, and by the type of societal, state, market and community experiences they are exposed to in these places. Moreover, the Somali diaspora as many others is politically fragmented, and viewpoints may be different across groups, organizations, and individuals. (p. 81)

The narrative inquiry approach enabled an examination of how various identity configurations relate to individuals' well-being, going beyond merely gathering stories; it also structured how these stories were organized and interpreted to understand human experiences.

Qualitative narrative research, as Creswell (2013) notes, centers on emergent stories, acknowledging that everyone has stories to share. Sociocultural transmission, a critical factor for societal stability, cohesion, and continuity, plays a central role in this context. As Sinela Jurkova (2019) highlights, “Culture is a central concept in understanding cultural competence and transformative learning, where individuals learn who they are, how they construct meaning, and how they grow and develop through interactions with other socially and culturally situated individuals” (p. 15).

The themes highlighted in this study are as follows:

Theme 1—Somali diaspora’s views on Canada’s cultural values:

All participants interviewed emphasized the importance of their role as male parents, both within their families and in the broader community. They viewed this role as a fundamental cultural responsibility. However, when discussing the transmission of their cultural values to their children, all participants acknowledged that their efforts were insufficient. For instance, Mohamoud expressed:

As fathers, our value in this country changed because we struggle to feed and make home for our families, so our traditional role as fathers have taken a back seat.

Also, in Somalia we all had structured family roles; mothers had a role, the father had a role, and children had roles

The roles were not only clear to this participant but also simpler. He further explained that when his family immigrated to this country, those roles began to intersect, creating a

blurred line. Both mothers and fathers had to negotiate their roles within the family. Previously, the father was the sole decision-maker, but now they have learned to consult with one another for the stability of their family. While the participants expressed a strong sense of solidarity with their cultural values, they also revealed a conflict regarding the effectiveness of transmitting these values to their children. They viewed their own cultural values as steadfast, yet were uncertain about the extent of their influence on the younger generation.

This tension highlights a distinction in cultural loyalty, echoing Émile Durkheim's (1984) concept of solidarity as discussed in *The Division of Labor in Society*. Durkheim associated solidarity with social cohesion and collective consciousness, suggesting that functional societies rely on social institutions to maintain moral boundaries that reinforce shared values and a sense of belonging. In this context, the participants did not perceive the Canadian social structure as eroding their cultural identity. Instead, they attributed the challenges of cultural transmission to their own limitations. However, there were differing perspectives among participants; for instance, Abukar viewed the situation as follows:

Somali fathers have been raised in a different culture than the one they are raising on their children. Ours were that, as a father, I will have to take care of my children and family and in return my children will take care of me. However, this is not the case here in Canada and Western culture in general; children are not obligated to do anything and for me

He added the relationship of raising children here in Canada is different and worrisome. I do worry about my future survival and relations with my children. I do not have the same expectation of my children here, then I would have in Somalia. The Somali diaspora men

in Ottawa demonstrated a clear awareness of their roles as fathers and community elders, yet they expressed challenges in effectively transmitting their cultural values to the next generation.

To address this issue and ensure cultural survival, many participants emphasized the importance of building a strong and unified community. For instance, Sadiq suggested that “fostering cultural continuity could be achieved by creating venues that facilitate cultural storytelling and organize community events specifically designed for children”. Such initiatives, he argued, would help maintain and reinforce cultural values across generations. However, Sadiq also highlighted that “clan divisions within the community often undermine unity and cohesion, posing an additional barrier to achieving a collective cultural identity”.

Theme 2—Cultural survival and stability:

Somalis define themselves as a society with a nuanced perspective on politics and sociocultural matters. Many members of the Somali diaspora in Ottawa, as well as elsewhere globally, were displaced by civil unrest and forced to leave their homeland. Despite their efforts to rebuild their lives, they face significant challenges in instilling their cultural values in their children within the Canadian context. When participants were asked if they perceived themselves as the primary custodians of their cultural survival and stability, all responded affirmatively and with conviction. Central to their worldview is the belief that Somali cultural identity forms the foundation upon which all aspects of life are built. In this framework, the continuity of values and traditions is considered a family responsibility, predominantly shouldered by male members. As a father, Abdul described his role as a cultural educator in the following way:

Children's education is not only on public education, like schools, but a cultural education starts at the home front. For instance, speaking Somali language in the house and spending time with the children are the most important ways to continue one's culture. This responsibility falls on the fathers

Stability of cultural values is part of the long history of African survival, particularly the pastoral society where they have survived conflicts for centuries. In this case, it's the elders or traditional chiefs that facilitate conflict mediation and maintain cultural stability (Mamdani, 1996). Sadiq believes:

Fathers and mothers are the foundation of cultural survival, and if fathers do not play their leadership role, then the family will be lost. For example, good father with good leadership skills will raise healthy and well-rounded children, otherwise, he will lose them to crime and drugs. Also, the father's behavior affects his relationship with the mother, which can affect the health of the family

Somali fathers expressed a deep attachment to and pride in their culture; however, when it came to passing down these cultural values to their children, a sense of resignation was evident in their expressions. Abdicasis articulated this challenge in a particularly poignant way when he said:

Fathers struggled to come here from war, and some of us—we intentionally avoid telling our cultural stories to our children for our own sake because we avoid reliving the trauma of the past. So, we tell feel good stories to our children. We avoid the whole cultural issue and let the kids keep their culture here, so not to have a bad impression of ours

However, he added that to compensate for this shortcoming and instill in our children a sense of identity, strong values, and resilience, many of us place a strong emphasis on religion. While the Somali diaspora in Ottawa highly values its cultural identity and respects Canadian culture, many fathers find it challenging to reconcile their children's upbringing in Ottawa with their own cultural beliefs and practices.

This tension is often accompanied by a sense of frustration and uncertainty about how to balance these two worlds. It is possible that the unspoken trauma of the civil war, as Abdicasis revealed, may be influencing the participants' parenting styles, whether they are consciously acknowledging it, unaware of its effects, or resigned to the fact that this trauma is an inescapable part of their reality. In this context, Mohamad believes that:

Since we are dealing with a different culture in our adopted country, it is incumbent upon us that we do change and adapt to our new sociocultural situation. However, to preserve our community values, we need to structure better community programs that allow us to do better transmission of values to our children

The participants believe that the Somali community in Ottawa needs to reconnect with its cultural roots in order to foster social solidarity. They emphasize the importance of collaboration in finding solutions to the challenges they face, and maintaining their shared values and sense of belonging. By returning to these foundational principles, they hope to strengthen community cohesion and ensure the continued transmission of their cultural identity across generations.

Theme 3—Cultural transmission:

Social identity is understood as the set of culturally defined personality characteristics ascribed to social roles, such as being a father, mother, friend, employer, or employee (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Culture shapes how individuals identify themselves and position their identities

within or outside different cultural contexts. When it comes to facilitating and promoting cultural values, all participants in this study agreed on the importance of maintaining group cultural activities and encouraging bicultural interactions. Abdullahi suggested that one effective way to “facilitate the transmission of cultural values is through community events that provide spaces for children to meet”. He believed that when children gather, they learn from one another, and such interactions are essential for fostering cultural continuity. He emphasized the importance of creating a community that enables these types of gatherings. The more we align with the cultural values we profess, the more we become accustomed to hearing and internalizing certain discourses, which in turn construct our self-concept (Gergen & Gergen, 2004).

Most participants in this study viewed culture not only as a social pivot for cohesion and connection but also as the product of positive social relations. As Abdirisak aptly put it:

Cultural values can be transmitted by teaching children to respect each other, neighbors, and become contributing and responsible members of their society. Also respecting their parents’ culture and the one they are part of it here in Canada, whether they are born or grew up here. These values promote cultural appreciation, respecting diverse views, cultures, and faith, and it brings parents and children closer together

Individuals are forced to negotiate different cultural identities derived from their own belonging to different cultural groups. As Yampolsky et al. (2013) put it,

people who belong to more than one cultural group must navigate the diverse norms and values from each of their cultural affiliations. Faced with such diversity, multicultural individuals need to manage and organize their differences and possibly clashing with cultural identities within their general sense of self. (p. 1)

All participants acknowledged the challenge of raising their children in an environment that is significantly different from their own cultural context. They expressed a sense of struggle in the process of transmitting cultural values and leadership practices to their children, feeling somewhat lost in the complexities of navigating these two worlds." Sadiq captured this sentiment when he said:

I do not personally feel I have lost my cultural value, in fact, I become closer to my culture to feel whole. However, raising my children here in Canada is different than how I was raised, and it is hard to teach them my culture. I feel I am competing with a dominant culture and as the Somali proverb goes 'one finger cannot wash a whole face.' It is not like how I grew up where a whole village raises children with you

Many reflected nostalgically on a time when communal support was integral to child-rearing, where, as the saying goes, "it takes a village to raise a child. This sentiment was also echoed by Mohamoud, who said:

Raising children in Somalia, we had an extended family who could not only help with the household chores but take on the role as communicators of cultural values and traditions to our children. On the other hand, here in Canada, it is only me who needs to provide discipline and educate my children in all things which is very difficult. So, I adopted a survival method to keep the family together. I made sacrifices for my own cultural beliefs to facilitate peace in the family

Most of the participants expressed a pragmatic acceptance of cultural integration with their adopted country, recognizing its importance for maintaining harmony within their families and avoiding the imposition of conflicting messages on their children. This approach reflects a

delicate balancing act between preserving cultural heritage and adapting to the demands of a new social context. As Adjaye and Aborampah (2008) noted, "The older generation is caught between the decline in traditional values, on the one hand, and the absence of an adequate social security system, on the other" (p. 33).

The participants acknowledged the necessity of ensuring their children's stability and well-being in their new environment but were ambivalent about how to effectively transmit their cultural values. This ambivalence reflects the challenges they face in maintaining their cultural identity while adapting to the realities of life in Canada. According to Yampolsky et al. (2013), such complexity has implications for the subjective experiences of the individuals who belong to multiple cultural groups; these implications include their ability to integrate the threads of their diverse cultural experiences into a coherent, unified understanding of themselves and their lives. (p. 2)

The majority of participants agreed that they were not effectively transmitting cultural values to their children, and they expressed concerns that this gap in transmission could impact the cultural continuity of the younger generation. Abdul put it this way:

Lack of intergenerational cultural connection has an implication for youth because young people benefit from family guidance, particularly fathers. If there is no family value at home, then children will find a way to occupy their time with other things, like getting involved in gangs, drugs, and other criminal activities that will put them in the criminal justice system

A typical scenario involves immigrant parents adhering to their traditional cultural beliefs while their children embrace dominant Western values, often leading to a clash between the two (Ying & Chao, 1996).

This frustration with cultural messaging was clearly expressed by the participants in this study, particularly in relation to their perceived inability to pass on their cultural values to their children within the context of the dominant Canadian culture. Abdul emphasized that Somali tradition places the responsibility for maintaining family values squarely on the shoulders of fathers. He stated:

The thing that constrains the passing of the cultural values is the time parents spend with children. For example, a father who is working more than one job may not have enough time to spend with children. Parents that lack of resources may not provide their children the means to pay for extra curriculum activities, which could support parent and child relations

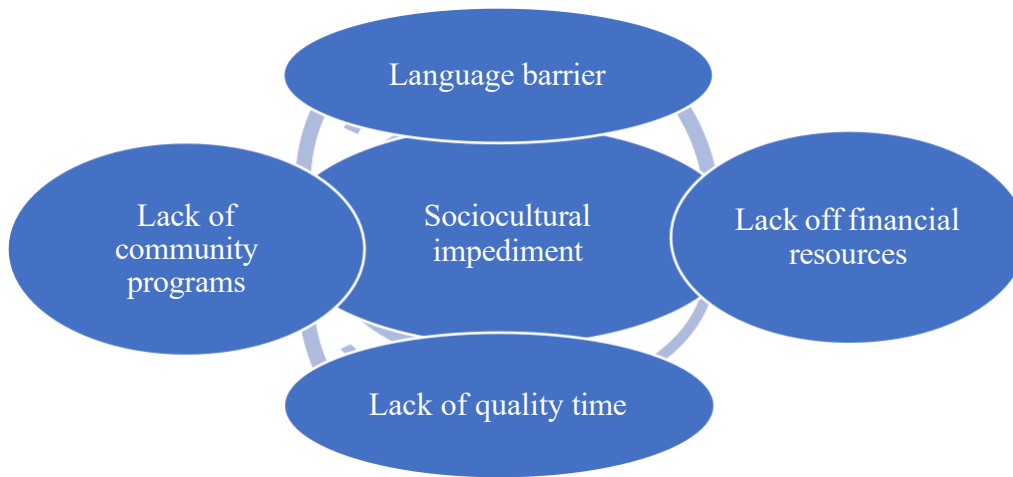
The majority of participants, both in group and individual settings, agreed that changes are needed in the way their community is structured and the services it provides. They emphasized the impact that the lack of targeted programming has on their community, particularly how it undermines their efforts to transmit cultural values to their children.

This raises the critical question: to what extent does cultural change affect the Somali diaspora community, and how does it influence their ability to pass on their cultural values? The findings of this research confirm that these cultural changes have affected the Somali diaspora community in several significant ways, including altering family dynamics, weakening community cohesion, and challenging the process of cultural transmission to the younger generation. These shifts have created new obstacles for Somali parents who strive to maintain their cultural heritage while navigating the complexities of life in Canada.

Theme 4—Sociocultural impediment for cultural value transmission:

Figure 1

Sociocultural impediment for cultural value transmission



Note: This figure shows what the Somali diaspora community articulated in regard to their sociocultural impediments.

Somali society works well with their cultural values and considers these values as a sacred duty to uphold, including clan lineage and religion. Cassanelli (1982) described the Somali cultural loyalty this way, “A person gives political loyalty first to his immediate family, then to his immediate lineage, then to the clan of his lineage, then to his tribe, and ultimately to the nation” (p. 21). As McNamee (2015) pointed out, “Our tradition informs us that a system of moral principles, comprises what comes to be deemed as ethical. The implications of this traditional view are significant for they demand generalized approaches to nuanced daily interchanges” (p. 442). While Somalis identified that their lineage significantly impacts their social relations and interactions, the participants of this study have shown that they can adapt to a new environment that holds different cultural values than their own.

Community's Cultural Programs and Maintenance:

The participants in this study display a strong attachment to their traditional values, including respecting the wisdom of the elders, lineage, and community connectivity, as well as family unity. The participants unanimously agreed about the importance of their tradition and their role as transmitters. They all expressed that it is crucial that they maintain their cultural relevance in their adopted country. Some have said because of the dominant culture of their adopted country; they have grown closer to their own culture and faith than they would have otherwise for cultural survival. The participants felt that it was important to them that they pass on their cultural values to their children, even though they acknowledged the challenges. The participants in this study demonstrated a strong attachment to their traditional values, including a deep respect for the wisdom of elders, the importance of lineage, community connectivity, and family unity. They unanimously agreed on the significance of these traditions and their role as cultural transmitters. All participants emphasized the necessity of maintaining their cultural relevance in their adopted country, with some noting that, in response to the dominant culture, they have become even more deeply connected to their own culture and faith as a means of cultural survival.

Despite acknowledging the challenges, they expressed a strong desire to pass on their cultural values to their children. As Sinela Jurkova (2019) explained, "Culture involves intergenerational attitude, values, beliefs, rituals/customs, and behavioral patterns in which people are born, but that is also created and maintained by people's ongoing actions" (p. 15). The participants demonstrated a firm commitment to their cultural identity, but also voiced frustration over the lack of structured community events that could help foster cultural pride. The majority of participants raised their children in Ottawa, with some having arrived in Canada with children born in Somalia, while others had children born in Ottawa. One participant, reflecting on the cultural

differences, stated that he treated his children differently depending on the culture they were born into. Mohamoud articulated this perspective by saying:

I treat my older children who were born in Somalia different than their siblings who were born here. The reason is the older ones remember Somali cultural and expected values, and I wanted to strengthen that, while the young ones do not know any other culture, but the one here, which has different expectations; so, I navigate through all these competing expectations while I love my children equally

What Mohamoud expressed about his older children's understanding of him resonates with the perspective shared by Adjaye and Aborampah (2008) regarding the Akan tradition: "Growing children acquired this knowledge through training, socialization, and education that was provided by the elders" (p. 24).

This is a core element of Somali culture as well, where fathers and grandparents traditionally pass down knowledge to each generation, playing a crucial role in maintaining the community's cultural continuity. However, the Somali diaspora in Ottawa found it challenging to effectively uphold these traditions in the face of their new environment. Farah articulated this difficulty by saying:

The younger generation develops its own Somali identity as a way to belong and communicates among themselves, even if they do not learn much at home. As a community, we need to take inspiration from other communities, such as South Asians, who bring their grandparents to live with them and help teach their children the culture and language that parents may struggle to pass on

As Noels et al. (1996) noted, people often adapt to their environment by shifting from one set of behaviors to another, depending on the context, as a way to manage their different

cultural identities. This was a common theme among the participants in this study, all of whom agreed that their cultural background significantly influences their approach to fatherhood and their perspective on what is best for their children.

While they acknowledged the challenges of managing dual cultural approaches, they also saw cultural value transmission as an important responsibility that shapes their children's understanding of traditional norms and expectations. The majority of participants viewed their role as helping their children maintain cultural continuity, often by enrolling them in cultural and religious classes. However, many expressed feelings of guilt for not doing enough to ensure their culture thrives, citing a lack of community resources and the demands of earning a living. This often meant they did not spend enough quality time with their children, relying on religious schools to provide what they felt they couldn't—values and faith. Despite this, some participants expressed concerns about the limitations of relying solely on religious schools for cultural transmission. Abdicasis expanded on this challenge, stating:

We parents try to take our children to religion settings to give us the help we cannot give to our children under the circumstance, but sometimes I found what they teach or introduce our children [to] are different cultural perspectives, particularly Arab culture hiding behind religion, and that can present its own problem.

What Abdicasis and some of the other participants shared highlights an important challenge in cultural value transmission—namely, that some religious schools they send their children to may interpret the teachings of the Kitab (holy book) based on their own cultural interpretations or values. This means that, at times, these teachings could be seen as inconsistent with the original text, leading to potential misunderstandings or conflicts in conveying cultural values.

The majority of participants in this study expressed a strong desire to be positive role models for their children within their adopted community. They saw it as their responsibility to preserve and share the best aspects of their own culture, such as teachings on respect, love, human dignity, and trust, while also helping their children to become good citizens who can interact respectfully with the dominant culture. By doing so, they hoped to bridge the gap between their traditional values and the realities of life in Canada. However, the participants also acknowledged a significant challenge—the lack of adequate community events where traditional values could be celebrated. They viewed this as a major barrier to effective intergenerational cultural transmission and expressed a strong need for more opportunities to support and foster these traditions in their community.

Language barriers:

Another significant obstacle to cultural value transmission identified by the participants was the language barrier within the household. Many of the participants acknowledged that a considerable number of parents in the Somali community do not speak adequate English, and yet they have opted to speak broken English at home with their children, rather than reinforcing their mother tongue. Participants attributed this language shift to the community's fear of the Canadian educational system. When the Somali community first arrived, they were under the impression that if their children did not speak English by the time they reached school age, the school system would view this as a disadvantage, potentially causing their children to fall behind their peers. This fear led to a language gap between the parents and children, with parents feeling compelled to speak English at home, even if it was not their strongest language. Some participants noted that, in a sense, parents were using their children as a way to learn English, which is one of the reasons they spoke limited English at home. This phenomenon, while helping parents to improve their

language skills, inadvertently hindered the transmission of the Somali language and, by extension, the cultural values tied to it.

The lack of time:

The lack of time spent with children, due to the pressures of working multiple jobs or participating in the gig economy for survival, was particularly challenging for these participants. Many expressed feelings of guilt, acknowledging that they were not spending enough quality time with their children. This absence of parental presence made it more difficult to transmit cultural values effectively, as the parents struggled to balance the demands of work with their desire to maintain their cultural practices and teachings.

Lack of resources:

Another significant barrier to cultural value transmission within the Somali diaspora in Ottawa is the lack of resources. The majority of participants believed that if they had more financial means, they would have been able to take their children back home to Somalia more frequently, to expose them to their cultural heritage firsthand. Some participants noted that this was already part of their approach, and they observed positive changes in their children's behavior after these trips. They reported that their children demonstrated increased respect for others and a deeper understanding of their family's cultural background, suggesting that direct exposure to their roots could play a key role in reinforcing cultural values.

A surprising outcome of this research was the discussion surrounding clan dynamics within the Somali diaspora in Ottawa. While all participants inherently valued clan lineage and expressed strong bonds with their clan members, whether in Ottawa or back in Somalia, only three participants acknowledged that clan divisions could hinder cultural transmission. These three individuals noted that clan divisions often create barriers to social cohesion within the community.

They also pointed out that these divisions can affect intermarriage, with some clans refusing to accept marriages between different clans.

Despite this, these three participants, along with the majority of the others, agreed that the issues related to clan divisions were secondary to broader community concerns. This was an unexpected finding, as clan identity is traditionally seen as a central, overriding element of Somali culture. While participants did acknowledge the existence of private clan and sub-clan gatherings, they emphasized that when it came to community-wide issues, they supported one another and worked together. This reflects a shift in thinking, where collective concerns about cultural preservation and intergenerational transmission of values take precedence over clan loyalty in the context of life in Ottawa.

Somalis typically identify deeply with their clan families, which are further subdivided into smaller clans, lineages, and sub-lineages, all the way down to the individual family (Abdullahi, 2001; Cassanelli, 1982; Clapham, 2017; Issa-Salwe, 1994(b); Lewis, 1961; Salah, 2011). However, the research confirmed that, in Ottawa, while clan affiliation remains strong, the Somali diaspora is increasingly focused on broader community issues that affect their cultural survival, particularly the transmission of cultural values and leadership to the younger generation.

This study also confirmed that cultural value and leadership transmission are deeply important to the Somali diaspora in Ottawa, as these practices are seen as essential for maintaining an emotional attachment to their children and preserving their identity. However, participants also noted that intergenerational cultural transmission is inadequate within the diaspora community in Ottawa. This inadequacy was attributed to several factors, including financial constraints, the lack of structured community programs focused on cultural education, language barriers, and the lack of quality time between parents and children.

Conclusion:

This research has provided a valuable insight into the perceptions of the Somali diaspora in Ottawa, Canada, concerning sociocultural and leadership transmission. The study demonstrates that traditional cultural value transmission is highly valued by the Somali diaspora community, with a strong recognition of the intercultural dynamics between their original culture and the adopted Canadian society. Somali males and elders in the diaspora view their roles as central to cultural value transmission and have shown resilience in upholding their traditional beliefs. However, the study also highlighted a significant gap between the elders' attachment to their culture, traditions, and norms, and the younger generation's connection to these same values. Despite the Somali diaspora's strong cultural attachment, the younger generation seems less engaged with these traditions, posing challenges to intergenerational cultural transmission. It is important to note that the sample size for this study was small, and the results should therefore be considered preliminary.

Implications:

The findings of this study point to several areas that warrant further research. Future studies could explore the perspectives of Somali women on raising children in an adopted country and their roles in intergenerational cultural transmission. Understanding how women perceive these challenges and contribute to cultural continuity would provide a more holistic view of the family's role in this process. Additionally, further exploration of the younger generation's perspectives on cultural transmission could offer valuable insights into how they navigate the balance between their heritage and the dominant culture in Canada. This would help address the gap in understanding the experiences and values of the younger members of the Somali diaspora.

Another key area for future research is the role of clan interaction in the diaspora community. While clan identity remains important, the study found that participants viewed broader community concerns as more pressing. Expanding on how clan dynamics evolve within the diaspora context could shed light on how these affiliations influence social cohesion and cultural transmission.

Preliminary Policy Implications:

Based on the findings, there are several policy implications for supporting Somali diaspora families in Ottawa. Community organizations could play a crucial role in facilitating cultural education programs, such as parent-child storytelling initiatives, that foster intergenerational communication and strengthen the transmission of cultural values. These programs would help elders pass on their knowledge and create a stronger sense of cultural continuity within the community. Furthermore, it would be beneficial for community organizations to create safe and supportive environments where members can share their stories of past, present, and future experiences. This could also serve as a form of cultural therapy, addressing the trauma many members of the diaspora may have experienced due to displacement and conflict.

Finally, public policies should prioritize funding for community education programs that encourage bicultural learning and understanding. By supporting such initiatives, the Canadian government could help ensure that immigrant communities, like the Somali diaspora, can preserve their cultural heritage while integrating into Canadian society. This study highlights the importance of cultural value transmission within the Somali diaspora in Ottawa and the challenges they face in preserving these values across generations. Future research and supportive community policies will be essential to bridging the gaps in cultural continuity and ensuring the

younger generation maintains a connection to their heritage while navigating their identity in a multicultural society.

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Appendix A: Ethical release form

Small Scale Research Project – Level 8

All candidates are required to complete this Ethics Release Form and to submit it to their Supervisory Team and then to PDF prior to commencing the investigation.

Please note the following:

You must demonstrate an understanding of ethical considerations central to planning and conducting your research.

Approval to carry out research does not exempt you from the specific approval from institutions within which you may be planning to conduct the research, e.g. organizations, hospitals etc.

Please answer all of the following questions: by highlighting your answer

1. Has a research proposal been completed and submitted to the supervisory team?

YES*

NO

2. Will the research involve either or both of the following:
 - a) A survey of human participants

YES*

NO

- b) Intervention with a cohort of human participants, and/or an evaluation of outcome of an intervention?

YES

NO*

3. Is there any risk of physical or psychological harm to participants (in either a control or experimental group)? **At the onset of the interview, participants will be reminded the possibility of recalling a difficult memory during the interview. For example, the**

death of a family member, families left behind, or loss of personal assets. They will be provided community services such as weekly community group support and free individual counselling services as well.

YES*

NO

4. Will all participants receive an information sheet describing the aims, procedure and possible risks, in easily understood language? (Attach a copy of the participant's information sheet)

YES*

NO

5. Will any person's treatment or care be in any way prejudiced if they choose not to participate in the study?

YES

NO*

6. Will all participants be required to sign a consent form, stating that they understand the purpose of the study and possible risks, i.e. will informed consent be given?

YES*

NO

7. Can participants freely withdraw from the study at any stage without risk or harm of prejudice?

YES*

NO

8. Will the study involve working with or studying minors (i.e. <16 years)?

YES ☐

NO*

9. If yes, will signed parental or in loco-parentis consent be obtained?

YES

NO*

10. Are any questions or procedures likely to be considered in any way offensive or indecent?

YES

NO*

11. Will all necessary steps be taken to protect the privacy of participants and the need for anonymity? **Participants will have the choice to take part in group setting or a private interview, if they prefer anonymity. Anonymity of each participant is guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms and removal of any identifying details.**

YES*

12. Is there provision for the safe-keeping of video/audio recordings of participants?

YES*

NO

13. If applicable, is there provision for de-briefing participants after the intervention or study?

Debriefing will take place at the close of both group and private interviews. During this debriefing, participants will have the opportunity to express whether or not they would like to know the results of this research. If they would like to be informed of the results, they will be asked to provide contact information and a separate meeting will be arranged to discuss the outcomes of the research.

YES*

NO

14. If psychometric instruments are to be employed, will their use be controlled

and supervised by a qualified psychologist?

15. Have all necessary permissions and requirements of professional or regulatory bodies within your jurisdiction been obtained?

16. If you have selected a YES or NO box marked *

I have the support, collaboration, and approval of the Somali Centre for Family Services to recruit participants and use their facility for the interviews.

Please provide further information on a separate sheet.

Candidate: Supervisor Name's: Sheila McNamee, Dan Wulff, Sally St George

Programme Name: PhD in Professional Practice: Psychological Perspectives

Sociocultural and leadership transmission within the Somali diaspora: community's value, family unity and patriarchic leadership.

Appendix B: Letter of Invitation

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH STUDY

RESEARCHER AND TITLE OF STUDY

My name is Farhia Abdi. I am a doctoral student in the Canterbury Christ Church University/Professional Development Foundation Ph.D. program in Professional Practice: Psychological Perspectives. I will be conducting a research study as part of the requirements to obtain my Ph.D. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. The title of my dissertation is: Sociocultural and leadership transmission within the Somali diaspora: Community values, family unity and patriarchal leadership.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The purpose of this study is to better understand and articulate the perspectives of the Somali community in Ottawa, with particular focus on the Somali concept of traditional leadership. I am interested in exploring how the Somali tradition of clan leadership has been transferred (or not) into the adopted country (Canada). In other words, the aim is to see if there is a change in the notion of identity and the understanding of leadership since moving to Ottawa, Canada. It is important to see how you perceive yourselves in your adopted country and if your own beliefs and values have changed.

WHAT DOES YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY INVOLVE?

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to attend interview sessions. As participants for this research, you will be asked to take part in one or two group interviews as well as a one-on-one session with the researcher. The sessions will take 1-2 hours and will take place over a period of 2-3 weeks. You may be contacted beyond the specified timeframe of this study, if needed.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS OR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

It is possible the interview could recall a difficult memory, as you discuss your past life in Somalia. You will also be free to stop the interview at any time you are not comfortable. Resources like the community weekly group supports and other counselling services will be provided to you if needed.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

By answering the interview questions, you will likely become aware of your role in the process of the cultural transmission of values and the impact of these values on you and your own family.

You may come to understand the intercultural differences between your original country and your adopted country.

You may also share your inside awareness of this topic with the community in general.

DO YOU HAVE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY?

Taking part in this research study is voluntary.

CAN YOU WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY?

Participating in the study is voluntary. You can choose to withdraw your participation at any time.

You can also decide not to answer any question(s) that you are not comfortable answering.

Further, if you withdraw from this study, you may choose whether or not the researcher can use the information collected from you.

HOW WILL THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF YOUR RECORDS BE PROTECTED?

The interviews will take place at a mutually agreed-upon time and place, and will last between one and two hours. The interview will be audio-taped and the tapes will be reviewed, transcribed, and analyzed by only myself and reviewed by my doctoral supervisors. The tapes and transcripts will be kept a secure, locked file for two years. They will be destroyed after this two-year period.

We hope, with your contribution and participation in this study, that you and the community/society in general will benefit by my analysis and the result of these stories.

Participation in this research is confidential and all information provided will be kept in a secure location. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

WHOM TO CONTACT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS STUDY?

CCCU/PDF Advisors: Sheila McNamee, Dan Wulff and Sally St. George.

I, _____ CONSENT/AGREE to participate in this research study.

_____ ,

Appendix C: Interview Guiding Questions:

Name:

Gender: • Female • Male

Age: • 50-61 • 62 -70 and older

Education level: • Informal education • Intermediate • Elementary • Secondary

• Post-secondary: College diploma or University degree

A) How do male parents and elders view their role as transmitters of Somali cultural values, and as leaders of their community and family?

i) Aabbayaasha iyo odayadu sidee bay u arkaan kaalintooda ah in ay tahiin kuwa fidinaya dhaqanka wanaagsan iyo hoggaanka bulshada iyo qoyska?

B) Do you see your role as parent being central to cultural survival and stability?

ii) Kaalintaada waalidnimo ma u aragtaa in ay udubdhexaad u tahay jiritaanka iyo xasilloonida dhaqanka?

C) What values are transmitted and how do these values facilitate or promote group and cultural care?

iii) Maxay yihiin dhaqanka wanaagsan ee la fidinayo, sidee buuna u fududeeyaa ama u horumariyaa daryeelka dhaqanka iyo bulshada?

D) What of your own cultural values, if any, have changed since living and raising your family in Ottawa, Canada and how does that affect the process of transmitting your own values to your children?

iv) Maxaa iska bedelay aragtidaada dhaqan ahaan sidii aad wadankan u timid, maxayse ka bedeshay sida aad caruurtaada ula dhaqanto ama aad u barto dhaqankaaga.

E) Above all, what constraints or moderators are impeding the process of passing or sharing your cultural values?

- v) Guud ahaan, maxay yihiin waxyaabaha hor istaagi kara gudbinta ama wadaaggga dhaqanka wanaagsan?
- F) Do these changes have implications for how cultural values are conveyed to the young generations?
- v) Isbeddelladan raad ma ku leeyihiin sida dhaqanwanagga loogu gudbiyo da'yarta?



**School of Psychology, Politics and Sociology Faculty of Social
and Applied Sciences In partnership with Professional
Development Foundation**

Chapter 3—Literature Review:

Relational Leadership and Governing: Somali Clan Cultural Leadership

Abstract:

This research examines the distinctions between traditional leadership theories and contemporary visions of relational leadership. Using Somali clan structures as a lens, it draws parallels to relational leadership frameworks (Uhl-Bien, 2006), arguing that Somali traditional practices embody relational leadership principles. These practices offer valuable insights into leadership models that transcend individualistic and hierarchical paradigms. By investigating clan politics and state formation across historical periods (pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial), the study evaluates the interplay between clan leadership and political competition in Somalia. Employing an exploratory scoping review methodology, the research maps connections across disciplines and contexts without strict evaluation of evidence quality. This approach broadens relational leadership perspectives, demonstrating its potential to inspire cultural transformation and adaptive governance.

Keywords: Tradition, culture, clan, leadership. theory.

Introduction:

Leadership is a growing field tied to many academic disciplines, and the study of leadership is continually evolving. Leadership intertwines with culture, and the concept of culture has different meanings to different societies. However, within these differences, there is a constructed reality that influences the practice of each society. Thus, the differences matter only when one compares the social beliefs and practices of one group to another, which means “our claims to truth are invariably wedded to tradition and value” (Gergen & Gergen, 2003, p. 20), and that differences become evident and these differences are of a cultural nature. The conceptual framework for this study will be developed from the literature review of academic journals, books, and archived documents. Qualitative research is used as a design strategy. This qualitative study seeks to extend the theoretical debate about leadership, particularly relational leading.

There are arguably thousands of books and articles written about leadership and management; even academic journals like *The Leadership Quarterly* and *The Journal of Leadership* are dedicated to this subject. They all examine the complexity and challenge that leadership presents and the solutions it will require. Yet, it is still a source of contention with no resolution as to what is good and effective leadership. Academic and public debates have emerged from theories of leadership by traits, skills, and style. Traits is a theory of leadership in that it was one of the first systematic and extensively researched attempts to understand what made great leaders great, with an exclusive focus on the leader (Bass & Bass, 2008; Kotze & Venter, 2011; Stogdill, 1949). Skills is an approach where individual skills of leaders are assessed in a manner to understand the “nature of effective leadership” in a descriptive manner (Schein, 2010; Zaccaro, 2007). Styles is an approach that is more concerned with what leaders do, i.e., a study of behavior rather than personal traits reflecting who the leaders are (Blake & Mouton, 1985; Blanchard et al., 2013).

The leadership suitability or quality of leaders within a society cuts across cultures, and many societies use these approaches to select their leaders, whether it's through ballot boxes or traditional cultural selection. One school of thought that identifies leadership as inherently biological is the Great Man theory (Carlyle, 1888). This theory accepts a leader's capacity for leadership is inherent and that great leaders are born, not made. Historian Thomas Carlyle (1888), who had an influence on this theory of leadership, at one point stated that "the history of the world is but the biography of great men" (p. 14). According to Carlyle, effective leaders are those gifted with divine inspiration and the right characteristics. According to the great man theory, leaders are God's gift to humanity. While Carlyle thinks that you either possess the leadership trait or you don't due to the notion that it is passed down through family genes, sociologist Herbert Spencer (1892) disagreed and suggested that leaders are products of the society in which they live. He argued that "you must admit that the genesis of a great man depends on the long series of complex influences that has produced the race in which he appears, and the social state into which that race has slowly grown" (p. 76). In other words, society makes the man, and social evolution will contradict the great man theory because a long series of complex influences shape a great personality. The idea that "society makes the man" reflects a critique of the Great Man Theory, emphasizing the role of social and cultural contexts in shaping individuals and their achievements. Sociologist Herbert Spencer (1892) articulated this perspective, arguing that leaders are products of their environments rather than innate traits. Western-centric perspectives, failing to account for the role of context, culture, and social interactions in shaping leadership. Their emphasis on inherent traits is largely incompatible with contemporary views that recognize leadership as a skill that can be developed (Spencer, 1892).

This view aligns with broader sociological and anthropological theories, which suggest that individuals are deeply influenced by their social interactions, historical contexts, and cultural environments (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). It contrasts with the individual-centric focus of the Great Man Theory, instead proposing that leadership emerges from dynamic social processes and collective experiences. This approach complements modern relational leadership theories, which also emphasize the co-construction of leadership through social interaction and contextual factors (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Both perspectives highlight the inadequacy of attributing leadership solely to inherent traits without accounting for the broader societal and relational frameworks that influence individual development.

Leadership operates as a dynamic construct influenced by various cultural, social, and organizational factors. In cross-cultural settings and contexts of cultural change, conceptual frameworks provide structures to understand how leadership adapts, promotes, or adjusts to these dynamics (Tsai, 2022). The other theories shift away from the notion that leaders are such due to individual-centric traits. For example, transformational leadership theory assumes that there is a general interdependence among both leaders and followers who share mutual interests in support of their organization (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Bass, 1995, 1997; Burns, 2012). Bass & Avolio (1993) suggested that in transformational leadership, “leaders and followers share mutual interests and a sense of shared facts and interdependence” (p. 116). Transformational leaders inspire change by fostering a shared vision and motivating followers to align with new cultural paradigms (Bass, 1997). They emphasize idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration to address resistance to change. However, the critic is that the theory assumes that all followers respond positively to inspirational and participative styles, which may not align with hierarchical or collectivist cultures. There are pressures of

conformity or inefficiency in decision-making, particularly in contexts where authority is valued more than group input (Huang et al., 2009). Still another theory, like contingency theory, says no single leadership style is appropriate in all situations, and success depends upon several variables, including leadership style, qualities of followers and situational features (Charry, 2012).

Contingency theories prioritize the match between leadership style and situational factors, while relational leadership emphasizes ongoing relationship-building as a central leadership function, regardless of context culturally contingent, assertiveness or autonomy may vary in desirability depending on culture. This framework helps leaders identify and adapt their behaviors to meet cultural expectations (House et al., 2004)

In situational theory, however, a leader is expected to be the most knowledgeable and experienced member of a group. There are four levels of follower performance readiness that are effective in situational leadership styles: telling, selling, participating, and delegating (Blanchard et al., 2013). According to Jago and Vroom (2007), there are three distinct roles where situations have an impact on the leadership process: “organizational effectiveness, leader behavior, and how situations influence the consequences of leader behavior” (p. 17). By referring to leadership as a process, Jago and Vroom made the same admonition noted by Northouse (2013) in that leadership as process is not a trait or characteristic; rather, it is a transactional event that occurs between leaders and followers. In behavioral theory, people can learn to become leaders through training and observation (Naylor, 1999). These theories, while emphasizing observable actions, often oversimplify the complexity of leadership. They fail to address the deeper relational and contextual dimensions essential for understanding effective leadership in diverse settings (Naylor, 1999).

Participative theory suggests that the ideal leadership style is one that takes the input of others into account. Participative leaders encourage participation and contributions from group members and help group members feel relevant and committed to the decision-making process (Lamb, 2013). Constraints for Participative leadership are that it may not align well with hierarchical or collectivist cultures where employees expect leaders to take directive roles. This limits its applicability across diverse organizational or cultural settings (Bass, 1990).

Transactional/management theory, which is also known as management theory, focuses on the role of supervision, organization, group performance, and the exchanges that take place between leaders and followers. These theories base leadership on a system of rewards and punishments (Charry, 2012). Its focus on reward-punishment mechanisms can undermine intrinsic motivation and adaptability, while relational leadership emphasizes emotional and social connections, moving beyond mere transactions to foster deeper engagement.

Relationship/transformational theory is the process by which a person engages with others and can create a connection that results in increased motivation and morality in both followers and leaders (Lamb, 2013). Servant leadership theory moves leadership closer to a relational leading theory in that the institutional power and control of leadership are no longer assumed to be found only in a leadership hierarchy; it is now dispersed to those being led (Fields & Hale, 2007; Greenleaf, 2002; Spears, 1995). Greenleaf's servant leadership model focuses on empowering followers during times of change by prioritizing their needs and building a sense of community (Greenleaf, 2002). This model aligns well with cultural contexts emphasizing collective well-being and inclusivity. The critique is the principles of servant leadership may not align with all cultural contexts, especially in cultures with hierarchical or authoritarian leadership norms. For

instance, in some cultures, leaders are expected to command respect through authority rather than humility or service.

Relational leadership:

Relational leadership, on the other hand, while it is a relatively new concept in the study of leadership literature (Uhl-Bien, 2006), it has been historically the hallmark of many traditional cultures. Yet, ironically, in a global attempt to modernize the relational leadership styles in many traditional cultures, contemporary modern state leadership has replaced the traditional relational style. Relational leadership is a newer concept in academia, and its meaning is still being debated by scholars (Brower et al., 2000; Drath, 2001; Murrell, 1997; Uhl-Bien, 2003, 2005). However, according to Uhl-Bien (2006), “relational leading is not entity-based but a perspective that focuses on identifying attributes of individuals as they engage in interpersonal relationships” (p. 654). It is a view that sees leadership as emerging from social processes and relationships among people.

A key assumption of relational leadership is that leadership is co-constructed in the social and historical context. As Ospina and Uhl-Bien (2012b) claimed, relational leadership “serves as an umbrella term for research that studies leadership as something that is generated in social processes and relationships among people” (p. 570). Relational leading emerged from the social constructionist perspective. Social constructionism has roots in symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934; Schutz, 1970) and phenomenology, yet it was with Berger and Luckman’s (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality* that constructionism was extended and galvanized. This view aligns with broader suggestion that individuals are deeply influenced by their social interactions, historical contexts, and cultural environments (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). More than four decades later, there is a considerable amount of theory and research subscribing to the basic tenet that people make their social and cultural worlds at the same time these worlds make them

(Berger & Luckman, 1966; Burr, 2003; Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 1999, 2001; Hacking, 1999; Harre, 1986; Latour & Woolgar, 1979; Shotter 1993, as cited in Fairhurst & Grant, 2010). In recent years, scholars have deepened the exploration of how reality is socially constructed through communication, media, and sociocultural processes. For example, Hepp and Couldry (2023), discuss the evolving interplay between communication, social construction, and material realities, and there is no contradiction between constructivism and realism, suggesting that social constructionism remains crucial in understanding modern social dynamics. Knoblauch (2020) has further elaborated on the communicative construction of reality, emphasizing how social constructs are continuously negotiated in public discourse and media environments. And, how it does not replace modern society, but complements it in a manner that continually results in conflicts leading to the refiguration of society. His work highlights the ongoing relevance of social constructionism in analyzing contemporary issues related to identity, power, and social change.

Relational leading fosters a positive change that brings spirit to an organization and communities worldwide. According to Mary Uhl-Bien (2006),

Relational leadership theory is offered as an overarching framework for the study of the relational dynamics that are involved in the generation and functioning of leadership. Contrary to other studies of leadership, which have focused primarily on the study of leadership effectiveness, Relational Leadership Theory focuses on the relational processes by which leadership is produced and enabled. (p. 667).

Twenty-first-century expectations of leadership brought relational leading to the center stage and have sharply reduced the perceived value of a purely directive, top-down model of leadership. Leadership is viewed by many (Cunliffe, A. L., & Eriksen, M. 2011; Gill & Gergen, 2020; Komives, S. R., Lucas, N., & McMahon, T. R. 2013; Uhl-Bien, M. (2006) as a relational and

ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish positive change. Relational leading invites a way to engage the world and for leaders to be morally accountable to others, where they facilitate a relational dialogue. Despite its strengths, relational leadership faces challenges in operationalization and measurement. Its theoretical underpinnings, rooted in social constructionism, may lack clarity in application, particularly in large-scale organizational or cross-cultural settings (Gill & Gergen, 2020). Further empirical studies are needed to validate its principles across diverse contexts. Traditional models, such as transformational leadership, often focus on achieving predefined goals or visions.

Relevance to Somali Clan Structures:

The application of relational leadership to Somali clan structures offers a unique lens through which to understand traditional and modern leadership dynamics. The adaptability of relational leadership theory makes particularly pertinent to the study of Somali clan structures, where leadership is inherently relational and embedded in cultural practices. Traditional Somali clan governance emphasizes collective decision-making and mutual accountability, aligning well with relational leadership models. However, the colonial and postcolonial transitions introduced state-centric models that often clashed with traditional systems. Exploring relational leadership within this context allows for an analysis of how leadership practices rooted in social interactions and clan affiliations influence contemporary governance. Few studies have examined leadership, particularly the type of leadership practiced by Somali clans within Somali society, highlighting a significant research gap. This study seeks to bridge this gap by analyzing the interplay between relational leadership principles and Somali clan structures, with implications for state-building and governance. Understanding these dynamics can inform policymakers and scholars seeking culturally relevant leadership models.

Further the reviewed leadership theories collectively offer valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of leadership. Theory and trait approaches are criticized for their rigidity and cultural insensitivity (Bass & Avolio, 1993; Burns, 2012). However, their applicability varies across cultural and contextual settings. Relational leadership stand out for its inclusivity and alignment with modern cultural expectations. Conversely, relational leadership theory offers a more dynamic framework, yet its application remains underexplored in non-Western contexts, like Somalia, where traditional leadership practices offer rich insights into relational and community-based governance. This research is expected to add a needed knowledge of the Somali clan structure and the assumption or attitudes that shape governing in Somalia. The study underscores the importance of contextualizing leadership theories. Relational leadership's emphasis on co-construction and mutual engagement aligns with Somali clan governance, yet its potential remains largely theoretical. By focusing on the intersections of relational leadership and Somali culture, this study contributes to the growing body of literature advocating for culturally informed leadership models.

Understanding the history, in particular, the gradual deterioration and the ultimate collapse of the state, as well as the factors supporting the society's resilience in attempting to govern in this period, can contribute to the search for a future Somalia state. Since Somalia is a culture that has transitioned from clan leadership to state leadership to integration of clan and state leadership, we can gain insight into the contemporary understandings of leadership.

Definition of the problem/research questions:

- a) What might we learn about leadership and governance by exploring Somali's clan structure?
- b) Is it possible to envision Somalia's clan structure as a form of relational leading?

- c) What impact or contribution might relational leading/clan structure have on the current state formation of a specific culture like Somalia?
- d) How have traditional forms of leadership and governance contributed to the ongoing conflict in Somalia and, by extension, any sociocultural conflict?

Qualitative Methodology in Literature Review:

This literature review adopts a qualitative research methodology to gather and analyze data, focusing on cultural values and communal leadership practices that transcend cultural boundaries. The qualitative approach is employed to achieve a comprehensive understanding of Somali clan leadership methods during pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. The historical context is drawn from pre-colonial literature, colonial-era books, and archived documents. The rationale for utilizing a qualitative research methodology in this literature review is grounded in its effectiveness for exploring complex cultural phenomena and understanding the historical and social contexts of Somali clan leadership. Here's an analytical justification for this choice:

A. Alignment with the Research Focus:

This study examines the cultural values and communal leadership within the Somali clan system across pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. Qualitative research is ideally suited for such inquiries, as it allows for a deep exploration of culturally specific values, practices, and social dynamics. Czarniawska's (2004) observation that qualitative research is particularly effective in capturing culturally specific information further supports this methodological choice.

B. Historical and Narrative Exploration:

The research involves analyzing pre-colonial and colonial literature, including books and archived documents, to uncover leadership methods and cultural values over time. Qualitative

research's emphasis on narrative and chronological connections, as described by Czarniawska (2004), enables a coherent analysis of historical developments and their impact on contemporary leadership practices.

C. Holistic Understanding of Cultural Phenomena:

The aim of the study is to gain a comprehensive understanding of Somali clan leadership, a system deeply embedded in social relationships and cultural traditions. A qualitative approach allows for a holistic analysis that integrates diverse sources and perspectives, capturing the nuances and complexities of the clan system.

D. Insider Perspective and Reflexivity:

The researcher's personal background as a Somali offers unique insights into the cultural and social dynamics under study. Qualitative research methodologies value the researcher's positionality and reflexivity, allowing for an informed and empathetic interpretation of the data. This insider perspective enhances the depth and authenticity of the analysis, particularly in understanding the subtleties of relationships and communal leadership.

E. Exploratory Nature of the Study:

The principal objective is to explore the role of clan leadership culture in shaping state leadership and to propose recommendations for reconstituting leadership practices. Qualitative research is well-suited for exploratory studies, as it emphasizes open-ended inquiry and the discovery of patterns and themes within the data.

F. Methodological Rigor and Structure:

The three-step process of collecting data, analyzing findings, and writing the project demonstrates a structured yet flexible approach consistent with qualitative research. This iterative process allows for the integration of historical sources and cultural insights into a cohesive

analysis. The use of a qualitative methodology in this literature review is justified by its alignment with the study's objectives, its ability to handle culturally specific and historical data, and its compatibility with the researcher's insider perspective. This approach enables a thorough, nuanced exploration of Somali clan leadership, providing valuable insights into its role in state leadership and informing practical recommendations for future leadership practices.

Overview of Somali history and culture:

“Of all the races of Africa there cannot be one better to live among than the most difficult, the proudest, the bravest, the vainest, the most merciless, the friendliest; the Somalis.” - Gerald Hanley (1971).

This chapter is structured into three key sections. The first section provides an overview of Somalia's historical background, focusing on its clan culture, traditional institutional leadership, and social structure. The subsequent sections delve into the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial legacies, exploring their influence on Somalia's persistent political and clan conflicts. This introduction to Somalia's complex history and ongoing efforts in nation and state-building positions the country as a significant empirical case study. Somalia is geographically situated at the easternmost tip of Africa, bordered by the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden. The Somali Peninsula, also known as the Horn of Africa, extends across Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, eastern Ethiopia, and northeastern Kenya (Hess, 1966; Lewis, 1965; Touval, 1963). Linguistic and cultural analyses suggest that Somali origins are linked to the Eastern Cushitic ethnic group, with connections to people from the Arabian Peninsula, as evidenced by shared traditions and social systems (Cassanelli, 1982; Issa-Salwe, 1994a; Laitin & Samatar, 1987; Touval, 1963).

Figure 2
Somali Pre-after Colonial Map



Note: Full map of Somalia shows before and after colonial split; from nouahsark.com

The earliest historical references to the Somali coast appear in ancient Egyptian inscriptions, describing it as "Punt, the Land of Aromatics," renowned for its incense and spices. Evidence of this connection includes Queen Hatshepsut's expedition to Punt (circa 1480 BCE). Subsequent Greek and Roman sources referred to the region as Barboroi (Berbera) and the "Land of Milk and Myrrh" (Abdullahi, 2001; Cassanelli, 1982; Hess, 1966; Laitin & Samatar, 1987). Archaeological findings indicate that Punt, inhabited since the 3rd millennium BCE, was a center of advanced civilization with organized governance and trade networks (Touval, 1963). African societies historically exhibited diverse governance structures, ranging from stateless systems to centralized kingdoms, typically based on principles of communalism and collective participation (Clapham, 2017; Mamdani, 2018). In Somalia, citizenship and lineage are deeply rooted in ancestral ties, particularly among nomadic clans, which Hoehne (2010) describes as embodying a "descent model of citizenship" (p. 34). However, interpretations of these bonds vary across Somali communities.

Somalia's predominantly arid environment, encompassing savannas rather than true deserts, has significantly influenced its social and economic structures. The region's unreliable rainfall and ecological conditions have shaped Somali pastoralist traditions (Laitin & Samatar, 1987; Touval, 1963). Despite being a culturally homogeneous society united by language, religion, and traditions, Somalia's unity has been undermined by colonial legacies and prolonged internal conflicts stemming from military regime and clan rivalries.

Analysis: Pre-Colonial Somali Clan Structure and Traditional Institutions

Pre-Colonial Statelessness and Global Engagement:

Pre-colonial Somalia exemplified a stateless society, defined as "a political organization where no formal centralized polity exists, but which maintains social order and stability through moral, material, and social sanctions" (Mohamoud, 2006, p. 18). Somali society, composed of independent clans and kinship groups, operated without a unitary government. Despite this decentralized structure, Somalis engaged extensively with external civilizations, including Arab traders, Egyptians, Turks, Omanis, and Zanzibarians, long before European colonial involvement (Hess, 1966; Lewis, 1961). Trade networks facilitated the exchange of goods and services through Somali ports, with sultans and clan leaders negotiating agreements as sovereign representatives of their territories (Hess, 1966). Kingdoms and sultanates emerged in various regions, serving as hubs of governance and commerce. Arab traders often leased Somali ports, where they exercised limited sovereignty. The ports of Banaadir, for example, were renowned for their wealth and strategic importance. Ibn Battuta's fourteenth-century account described Mogadishu as a prosperous sultanate of significant commercial influence (Hess, 1966). Foreign traders, while managing their commercial enterprises, did not interfere in local traditional affairs. This autonomy

underscores the resilience of Somali sociopolitical structures, which preserved their identity and governance mechanisms even amidst external interactions.

Table 3

Kingdoms and Sultanates

Name of the Sultanates	Period of Existence (centuries)	Geographic Coverage
Adal	14-16th	North-western Somalia, Harar and parts of Abyssinia. Capital: Zeila
Ajuran	13-17th	Southern and south-western Somalia including the entire inter-river area. Capital: Ghandershe
Geledi	17-20th	The Geledi Sultanate's rule covered the lower reaches of Shabelle River and the upper reaches of Juba River before its dissolution by the Italians. Capital: Afgoye
Majerteen	16-20th	The entire eastern coast of the Somal Peninsula better known as the Horn of Africa and surrounding hinterland Capital: Bargal/Alula
Obbia (Hobyo)	19-20th	Central Somalia and southern parts of the Somali Region of Ethiopia. Capital: Obbia
Warsangeli	13-20th	North-eastern Somali coast and the surrounding hinterlands. Capital: las Khereh

Kinship and Identity:

Somali identity in the pre-colonial era was deeply rooted in kinship and lineage. As Cassanelli (1982) notes, "political division into distinct kinship groups and the formation and breaking of alliances among these groups" significantly shaped Somali political history (p. 17). The clans trace their lineage to two ancestral brothers, Samaale and Sab. Samaale's descendants include the Hawiye, Darood, and Dir (including Isaq), while Sab's descendants consist of the Digil and Mirifle clans (Abdullahi, 2001; Lewis, 1988, 1994). Additionally, minority groups such as Reer Hamar, Wa-mbalazi, and Bantu communities contributed to the cultural diversity of Somali society (Issa-Salwe, 1994b).

Traditional Leadership and Institutions:

Traditional clan leadership played a vital role in preserving social order and addressing ecological challenges. Elders and chiefs, while not authoritative, facilitated consensus-based governance. Their leadership ensured the well-being of their communities by mediating conflicts, presiding over assemblies where adult males deliberated on collective treaties, and managing resources within the arid Somali landscape (Lewis, 1961). In the context of leadership structure, traditional chiefs of communities consult with other respected community members such as Nabadoono or peace-seekers, religious groups, and warriors (Lewis, 1960). Traditional institutions govern their members by a form of leadership (Sultan, Garaad, Ugaas, Malla, Imaam, Islaan, Beeldaage, etc.). These assemblies exemplified democratic principles, with judgments shaped by customary law (*Heer*), which regulated disputes and upheld communal norms.

Somali Customary Law (*Heer*):

The Somali customary law, known as *Heer*, is a traditional system of governance and conflict resolution that has been central to Somali society for centuries. It functions as an unwritten social

contract, that continuously adapted to address the needs of nomadic and pastoral communities. Flexible and adaptive, *Heer* outlined collective responsibilities, rights, and obligations, fostering interdependence and inclusiveness. According to Lewis (1961), it "binds people of the same treaty together in relation to internal dialogue and defines their collective responsibility in external relations" (p. 162). According to Sentongo & Bartoli, (2012),

In Africa, conflicts have been a part of the state formation process as polities incorporated in a plurality of groups (especially ethnic and religious ones) express themselves at the national level. Yet the effectiveness of the political participation of these groups as well as the capacity of the state to authentically relate and respond to needs at the communal level varies enormously (p. 13).

Unlike hierarchical systems elsewhere in Africa, Somali governance emphasized patrilineal kinship rather than centralized authority. It is considered a democratic system and its key features include,

Conflict Resolution and Social Cohesion:

Heer was designed to mediate conflicts and foster social cohesion among kinship groups. According to Samatar (1992), it is "a social contract democratically constructed to check the occasional conflicts between individuals and communities" (p. 260). This customary law emphasizes collective responsibility, which is vital in maintaining order within the decentralized clan structure.

Inclusiveness and Flexibility:

Lewis (1961) describes *Heer* as "a body of explicitly formulated obligations, rights, and duties" that binds individuals and groups into a cohesive unit (p. 162). Its adaptability allowed it

to evolve with the changing needs of Somali society, particularly in the face of ecological and resource challenges.

Democratic Principles:

The *Heer* system operates through assemblies where adult males of the community participate in decision-making. Leadership under *Heer* is non-authoritarian, relying on consensus rather than hierarchical authority. As noted by Lyons and Samatar (1995), *Heer* embodies "common wisdom" and constitutes a pan-Somali code of conduct that values interdependence and inclusiveness (p. 10).

Justice and Compensation:

A unique aspect of *Heer* is the *dia*-paying system (blood compensation). Members of a *dia*-paying group share collective responsibility for compensating victims of crimes committed by any of their members. Lewis (1961) explains that this mechanism ensures "solidarity and enforces accountability within kinship groups" (p. 6).

Kinship lineages and dia-paying or blood compensation:

In pre-colonial Somalia, the base of a kinship lineage system was comprised of a political stand of compensation paid to a victim or *dia*-paying groups. According to Lewis (1961), "the *dia*-paying group is essentially a corporate agnatic group whose members are united in joint responsibility towards outsiders... *Dia* (originating from Arabic), or *Mag* (Somali word), means compensation payment to a victim" (p. 6). *Dia* paying is a culturally shared concept; however, at the individual level, membership in a *dia*-paying group delineates two important factors in Somalia's social governance structure. First, it provides personal identity for individual members, which means the *dia* paying member usually keep their livestock within a roughly defined territory and share maintained wells, grazing land, and other communal resources. Second,

economic cooperation and political solidarity, sanctioned by the force of kinship, are most pronounced in the corporate *dia*-paying unit (Lewis, 1961; PDRC, 2002; Salah, 2011). What distinguishes a clan-based structure from a Western European political structure, such as a party, is the cohesive power of membership. A party or a political formation in the West has its cohesive power centered on an idea, a programme, and a social class, while a clan is an expression of strong kinship ties (Tripodi, 1999).

Challenges and Critiques of *Heer*:

Despite its strengths, the *Heer* system has notable shortcomings. The collective responsibility imposed by *dia*-paying groups often undermined individual accountability for crimes (Gundel, 2006). Furthermore, the exclusion of women, minorities, and younger men from decision-making assemblies reveals significant inequities. Women's exclusion based on gender, and minorities' marginalization due to social status, entrenched systemic inequalities (Lewis, 1960; Salah, 2011). Leadership within traditional Somali communities is consultative and collective. Decision-making within these institutions is highly inclusive. Elders adjudicate disputes in assemblies where all adult males have the right to speak. Such gatherings formulate treaties that bind all members to abide by agreed-upon terms. As Lewis (1961) observes, "all adult males have the right to speak, and to assemble to promulgate a common treaty by whose terms they bind themselves to abide" (p. 176). While these leaders oversee clan affairs and inter-clan relations, they do not claim sovereign authority over their members (Issa-Salwe, 1994a).

Pre-colonial Somali society's clan structure demonstrated and functioned as a cohesive and adaptable system of decentralized governance, showcasing how stateless societies can maintain order and engage with external powers. The clan structure also managed a complex and diverse society. Its emphasis on consensus, kinship solidarity, and adaptive customs challenges

conventional narratives that equate statehood with political stability. These insights are critical for understanding the resilience of Somali culture and its implications for contemporary governance and conflict resolution. However, the systemic exclusion of marginalized groups and challenges of resource-based conflicts highlight areas where traditional institutions struggled to achieve inclusivity, equality, and representation.

Significant Contribution to the Field:

This study enriches the discourse on decentralized governance and indigenous legal systems by showcasing the Somali experience as a model of resilience and adaptability. Its insights into clan-based social organization provide valuable lessons for conflict resolution, community leadership, and the integration of customary practices into modern governance frameworks. Moreover, it contributes to the broader fields of anthropology, sociology, and political science by illustrating the interplay between tradition, identity, and socio-political order in a stateless society. In psychology, it underscores the role of collective identity and shared norms in fostering communal resilience and cohesion, offering a cultural lens to explore the psychological dynamics of group behavior and leadership.

Colonial Legacy and Its Influence on Somali Culture:

Colonialism fundamentally altered Somalia's cultural, social, and political dynamics. The partition of Somali territories among colonial powers disrupted traditional governance, clan systems, and cultural cohesion. This analysis critically examines the colonial legacy's impact on Somali society, integrating psychological and socio-political perspectives to contextualize its enduring influence on Somali identity and resistance movements.

Partition and Its Impact on Somali Identity:

The division of Somali territories by European colonial powers—Italy, Britain, and France—created arbitrary boundaries that disregarded traditional clan-based systems and unity (Cassanelli,

1982; Lewis, 1961; Isse-Salwe, 1994a; Lewis, 1961; Touval, 1963). This partition was a psychological disruption, fracturing the collective identity of Somalis into fragmented units subjected to differing colonial administrations. The psychological theory of identity formation highlights the adverse effects of such division, where external imposition of boundaries conflicts with intrinsic cultural values, leading to identity crises (Côté & Levine, 2002). For Somalis, whose identity is deeply rooted in clan lineage and pastoral autonomy, colonial boundaries imposed artificial separations that persist in modern Somali politics (Issa-Salwe, 1994a; Salah, 2011).

Interference with Traditional Systems:

Colonial authorities systematically undermined Somalia's traditional governance by transforming elders and clan leaders into salaried administrators. Abdullahi (2001) observes that this shift disrupted the fluid and consensus-based leadership of Somali clans, turning respected leaders into extensions of colonial power. This practice eroded trust within communities and sowed seeds of long-term discontent. From a psychological perspective, this interference can be analyzed through the lens of cultural dissonance (Sue, 1981). Traditional Somali leaders were pressured to conform to colonial structures that conflicted with indigenous values, leading to loss of social cohesion and widespread resistance. The inability to reconcile traditional roles with imposed colonial expectations contributed to societal fragmentation.

Resistance and the Role of Sayyid Mohammed Abdille Hassan:

Resistance to colonialism in Somalia, exemplified by the Darwish movement under the leadership of Sayyid Mohammed Abdille Hassan, highlights the intricate interplay of culture, religion, and nationalism. Sayyid Mohammed's leadership was deeply influenced by his Islamic scholarship and pastoral upbringing, which he adeptly used to mobilize Somali resistance against

European colonial powers (Issa-Salwe, 2020). The Darwish movement can be critically analyzed through psychological theories of group dynamics and leadership. Sayyid Mohammed successfully united fragmented Somali clans under a shared religious and cultural mission, fostering a sense of collective identity and purpose. However, his authoritarian methods, which included indiscriminate raids and internal suppression, underscore the duality of charismatic leadership: it can inspire unity while simultaneously exacerbating internal divisions (Irons, 2013; Issa-Salwe, 1994b). He was often described as brutally cruel, especially towards those who questioned his claim to be the “messiah or savior of Islam and the Somalis alike” (Irons, 2013, p. 39).

The protracted war between Sayyid Mohammed and the British forces lasted over two decades and exacted a heavy toll, with most of the casualties being Somalis. The conflict culminated in 1920 when the British employed aeroplanes—a newly invented and lethal weapon—to launch simultaneous attacks on key Darwish strongholds in Taleh and Mirashi on January 21 (Issa-Salwe, 2020, p. 91). These operations concluded on February 3, 1920 with the capture of these bases. Following his defeat, Sayyid Mohammed succumbed to an influenza outbreak and passed away on December 21, 1920, in the territory of his paternal clansmen in Ethiopia (Issa-Salwe, 2020). Despite his controversial legacy, marked by both resilience and tyranny, he remains a pivotal figure in Somali history. As Issa-Salwe observes, “long years of adversity gave vitality to Sayyid Mohammed’s personality,” although “his tyranny was directed towards a noble end” (Issa-Salwe, 2020, p. 86).

Colonialism’s Socioeconomic and Psychological Legacies:

Colonialism’s impact extended beyond political fragmentation, introducing centralized governance that marginalized traditional institutions and neglected social development. Hess

(1966) and Issa-Salwe (1994a), argue that colonial policies prioritized resource extraction over infrastructure development, leaving Somalia with widespread poverty and dependency on foreign aid. The psychological consequences of this neglect include collective trauma and dependency syndrome (Hirschberger, 2018), wherein Somali society struggles with self-reliance due to decades of imposed external control. The Euro-Christian colonization also created deep-seated suspicions toward Western systems, particularly education, as reflected in Somali resistance to missionary schools.

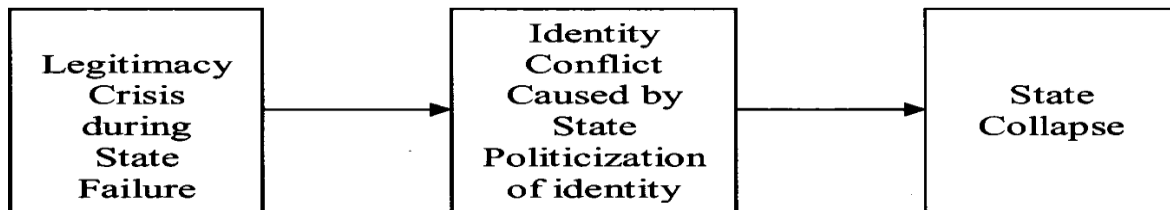
Contributions to Field and Practice:

This analysis contributes to the understanding of colonialism's psychological and sociopolitical impact on Somali culture and identity. It highlights the importance of addressing historical trauma and cultural dissonance in nation-building and reconciliation processes. For psychologists and sociologists, the Somali experience underscores the role of cultural resilience and the complexities of collective memory in shaping post-colonial societies. From a practical perspective, integrating traditional Somali systems such as *Heer* with modern governance can foster inclusivity and cultural alignment, addressing colonial-era disruptions. The Sayyid's legacy also illustrates the need to balance charismatic leadership with democratic principles to avoid internal divisions while pursuing collective goals. Colonialism profoundly altered Somali society, disrupting its traditional governance, fragmenting its identity, and fostering resistance movements like the Darwish. The legacy of colonial interference continues to shape Somalia's cultural and psychological landscape, offering valuable insights for both historical scholarship and contemporary nation-building efforts.

The Civil Strife, State Revival, and Clan Impact on Leadership:

In 1991, Somalia descended into anarchy, driven by clan rivalries and the collapse of an authoritarian regime. Neither state authorities, politicians, intellectuals, traditional leaders, nor the international community were able to avert or mitigate the catastrophic aftermath (Salah, 2011). The civil war exacerbated pre-existing clan feuds, with clans gaining access to weapons and recruiting heavily armed, unemployed combat veterans from insurgent forces (Perlez, 1992). According to Perlez, the objectives of the clans evolved into hegemonic pursuits, altering the demographics and capabilities of the militias. Today, millions of Somalis live in poverty, a condition worsened by recurrent droughts and famines exacerbated by climate change. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1998) estimated that over 60% of Somalia's population lives in severe poverty, with nearly three-quarters in or near poverty. While a Human Development Index (HDI) for Somalia is unavailable due to insufficient data, evidence suggests the country ranks among the lowest-performing nations in Africa. Somalia's efforts toward state revival are hindered by a lack of social cohesion and the entrenched influence of clan identity. As Smith (2007) argues:

“Once the legitimacy crisis is well underway, regimes that begin or have been practicing identity politics increase incentives...this conflict, regardless of proximal cause, is what leads the state into collapse, rendering resurrection difficult, if not impossible, once the regime has been removed from power” (p. 13).

Figure 3*Legitimacy Crisis*

Note: From *State collapse and politicized identity: Somalia and Sudan* [Doctoral dissertation, Florida International University] by Justin L. Smith, 2007, ProQuest.

<https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/dissertations/AAI1451690/>

The prolonged civil conflict has caused Somalis to lose not only institutions but also social and cultural identity. Nearly three decades have passed without a stable Somali state, the longest period of statelessness recorded globally (Salah, 2011). While Somalia currently has a government, it remains fragile, plagued by corruption and clan divisions. Historically, Somali society managed its pastoralist traditions without a centralized government; however, today's political culture is marked by dysfunction and elite opportunism (Menkhaus, 2007). Overcoming these challenges requires inclusive strategies that integrate traditional clan structures into a modern conception of Somali national identity (Issa-Salwe, 2002; Johnson, 2011).

The literature reviewed for this research encompasses academic and non-academic books, journal articles, and archives on Somali culture, clans, and leadership. Synthesizing qualitative data from these sources highlights the role of relational leadership practices within Somali clan leadership and state governance. Somali society, predominantly nomadic or semi-nomadic, is characterized by a strong connection to clan lineage, which shapes social identity, unity, and

relationships. Pre-colonial Somali society operated under a decentralized clan leadership structure governed by consensus. Leaders such as sultans, boqor, ugaas, and chiefs were selected by clan members and commanded respect. This governance, resembling democratic principles, functioned without centralized state structures. While pre-colonial Somali society exhibited internal cohesion, colonial powers disrupted this system by imposing foreign governance models. Colonial administrations institutionalized clan leadership by providing salaries to leaders, undermining their traditional authority and fostering intra-clan rivalries. The decline of traditional clan leadership continued through the post-colonial period and was further eroded during the civil war. Lewis (1988) notes:

“Like many African states, the decolonization of Africa had an effect on how society formed. With the exception of the Somali Democratic Republic, Botswana, and Lesotho, sub-Saharan Africa’s traditional nations and tribes are not autonomous but encapsulated in multi-national states formed haphazardly and without regard to ethnic boundaries” (p. ix)

Despite these challenges, in parts of Somalia, particularly in the northern regions, clan leaders regained legitimacy during and after the civil war. Their efforts were instrumental in conflict resolution and community building. Gundel (2006) highlights:

The status and legitimacy of the elders underwent a renaissance during and after the civil war, and with that, a renewed respect derived from their successes in solving conflicts and managing clan affairs...the elders’ efforts in Somaliland and Puntland to come together and lift crisis resolution to the higher level of regional and national peace was successful (p. iii)

Florence Ssereo (2003) similarly asserts that “clan-democracy in Somalia is reappraised as a concept and framework for conflict resolution and achieving political stability in the 21st century” (p. 25).

The literature indicates that Somali traditional clan leadership embodies elements of relational leadership, emphasizing participation, dialogue, and collaborative goals.

According to Coe, et al. (2013),

Social relationships are important and methods to protect and repair such relationships can be found in traditional, kinship-based groups, where conflict can have serious and escalating effects. Certain traditions favored the formation and continuation of extended networks of cooperating kin, including those typically referred to by anthropologists as lineages and clans (p.123)

Relational leadership involves leaders and participants working collectively to enact change, a principle evident in Somalia’s pre-colonial governance (Stavros & Torres, 2006). However, colonial intervention disrupted this cohesion, and it has yet to be fully restored. Clan-based relational leadership, deeply tied to Somali identity and social organization, may offer a pathway toward state revival. Culture, as McNamee & Hosking (2012) describe, “forms values and patterns of influence, and from the very simple process of coordinating we develop local-cultural norms and values which, in turn, serve as common-sense justification for future coordination” (p. 40). Given Somalia’s complex clan-based structure, re-evaluating and integrating relational clan leadership into national frameworks could provide a viable approach to overcoming the enduring challenges of state revival. According to Sentongo & Bartoli, (2012), “state and traditional systems can work together cooperatively, complementing one another. However, this would

require a fundamental re-orientation towards mutual respect and understanding, away from hostility and neglect” (p.36).

Conclusion:

This literature review has examined the distinctions between various theories of leadership and contemporary approaches to relational leadership. It also contextualized Somalia's historical background, emphasizing the role of clan culture, traditional institutions, and social structures, while addressing the impacts of colonial, pre-colonial, and post-colonial legacies. The analysis highlighted the enduring trust and loyalty between Somali clans and their leaders, despite shifts in governance and leadership styles over time. Somalia's pre-colonial history demonstrated a decentralized and participatory leadership model distinct from the more fragmented post-colonial governance.

As Abdi Samatar (2016) observed, the broader African experience, including Somalia's, has often been overlooked, with many assuming that post-colonial Africa lacked democratic traditions or governance models worthy of emulation. Despite such assumptions, Somalia's traditional institutions have shown resilience, adapting to colonial and post-colonial challenges while remaining relevant.

However, contemporary Somalia faces significant leadership challenges, including power struggles, regional secession movements, clan-based rivalries, and the rise of religious extremism. Further research is needed to deepen understanding of the connections between Somali clan leadership and state institutions, as this could strengthen the relationship between governance structures and clan dynamics. Additionally, investigating how cultural identity shapes the leadership styles of contemporary Somali leaders—many of whom lack experience with a functional state or positive traditional

leadership models—would provide valuable insights for Somalia’s political and social reconstruction.

Implications for Research and Practice:

This research does not address Somalia’s current political situation but focuses on the role of traditional clan leadership and institutions during the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. It also explores the effects of these historical phases on the Somali state and seeks to identify strategies for rebuilding state leadership. The findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge on Somali clan structures and governance, offering a foundation for future research in this area. The study may inspire further academic inquiry into Somali clan leadership and governance, encouraging researchers to expand the literature in this field. Additionally, the findings provide practical insights for policymakers, helping them understand Somalia's social structure and its implications for state reconstruction. By integrating traditional clan dynamics into contemporary governance models, policymakers can better address the challenges of rebuilding a cohesive and functional Somali state.

Table 4

Overview of some of the cultural and leadership books/articles within the Literature Review

Author/Year	Publication type	Design/ Methodology	Sampling	Objective/Findings
H. H. Brower, D. Schoorman., & H. H. Tan (2000)	Journal	Integrated model	Theoretical Sampling	This study presents a model of relational leadership based on a review of leader-member exchange (LMX) and interpersonal trust.
H. A. Bulhan, (2008).	Book	Unspecified	Purposive	This book examines Somali history over the past one hundred years-a tumultuous period which began with colonial rule, followed by independence and a false start, replaced by military dictatorship that promised revolution but unleashed a reign of terror. It finds:
J. Gundel (2006)	Book	Qualitative design analysis of meeting documents	Purposive	This study provides a critical assessment of the historical and current role of traditional structures in providing security and in the development process, and analyses how the Somali traditional structures can interlink and be matched with formal governmental structures and principles of good governance (incl. human rights & international humanitarian law).
Issa-Salwe (1996)	Book	Qualitative design: single case analysis of public documents	Purposive	This book examines the Somali politico-historical perspective, and the impact of the colonial legacy on the political, social, and economic life of the Somali nation, and posits that it is

				one of the main factors which led to the collapse of the modern Somali state in the early 1990s.
Issa-Salwe (2020)	Book Chapter	Unspecified	Purposive	This book chapter examines how the resistance led by Sayyid Mohammed Abdullah was motivated by religious and cultural principles. His objective was to establish his sovereignty over the whole of the Somali territory.
S. Jurkova (2019)	Journal	Qualitative design with 21 face-to-face interviews, two focus groups, observation, and document analysis	Purposive	This thesis examines the process of acquiring transcultural competence by adult learners and how transcultural skills and knowledge empower personal growth and foster societal inclusion.
I. M. Lewis (1961)	Book	Qualitative design ethnography and analysis	Purposive	This study by a social anthropologist describes the political system of the Northern Somali nomads.
I. M. Lewis (2008)	Book	Qualitative design ethnography and analysis	Purposive	In this study the author emphasises the pervasive influence in the contemporary Somali world of the traditional nomadic background and its extremely de-centralised character.
V. Luling (2006)	Journal	Unspecified	Purposive	This study looks at the conception of genealogy that the Somalis have inherited from their past

				and examines the ways in which it has been rejected, manipulated and theorized in recent times, especially since the civil war.
A. Samatar (2016)	Book	Qualitative Design Case study interviews/documents	Purposive	This book describes the waves of political struggles of the Somali people in the republic through the work of the two men and their visions, achievements, and failures in a world dominated by the Cold War and in the context of liberation and postcolonial nationalist politics.
M. Uhl-Bien (2006)	Journal	Social construction	Purposive	This study describes two perspectives of relational leadership: an <i>entity</i> perspective that focuses on identifying attributes of individuals as they engage in interpersonal relationships, and a <i>relational</i> perspective that views leadership as a <i>process of social construction</i> through which certain understandings of leadership come about and are given privileged ontology.

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Chapter Four: Applied Research Project:

Leadership: Somali clan culture vs state institutions

Abstract:

This research aims to investigate the distinctions between Somalia's clan-based leadership and its relationship with governmental leadership structures. To achieve this, the study examines the traditional Somali clan system and identifies parallels between clan leadership and contemporary governance models. As Iwowo (2015) notes, "The subject of leadership in Africa is an increasingly pertinent one that has been approached from various standpoints" (p. 2). Somali clan traditions, with their relational and collective approach to leadership, align closely with the current literature on relational leadership, offering insights into leadership paradigms that transcend individualistic and hierarchical frameworks. The research delves into the leadership dynamics of clans and government institutions within the broader context of political competition in post independent Somalia.

The study contributes conceptually to the ongoing discourse on Somali clan and governmental institutions by shifting the focus from theoretical considerations of clan structures to practical questions regarding leadership capacity building within Somali institutions. By articulating the parallels between leadership in various contexts—community, societal, or cultural—the study highlights the relevance of traditional systems to modern governance challenges. This argument is substantiated through a detailed analysis of clan politics, leadership practices, and state formation, using Somalia as a case study. In doing so, the research not only enriches our understanding of Somali socio-political structures but also offers practical

implications for developing leadership strategies that bridge traditional and contemporary governance frameworks.

Definition of the problem/research questions:

This research also aims to broaden the discourse by exploring a more pragmatic approach to leadership-capacity-building in contemporary Somali governing. By exploring Somalia and its clan structure and clan-based political leadership in post-colonial periods, this research offers an expanded understanding of clan and governing leadership and its benefits for social and cultural transformation. The following questions are posed to Somali diaspora community members living in England, the United States, and Canada.

- How would you describe the historic clan and state governing leadership structure in Somalia based on your experience?
- Do you think the clan cultural leadership structure differs from state leadership? Why or why not?
- How would you describe the role clan cultural leadership plays in Somali contemporary governance?
- Do you see clan leadership influencing the process of state-building? How so?
- What are other leadership elements that can help the Somali culture and society?

Introduction:

Background to the research objective:

The purpose of this study is to analyze and articulate the perspectives of the Somali diaspora community in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, with a specific focus on the traditional leadership structures of Somali clan and state institutions. This investigation will examine the perceived advantages and disadvantages of these institutions. The complexity of this research necessitates an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on historical, sociological, and political frameworks. The study also spans multiple historical periods, reflecting the necessity of understanding Somalia's cultural and historical context to situate its current governance challenges. By focusing on the leadership structures within Somali clan and state institutions, this research acknowledges that varied viewpoints will emerge, shaped by participants' lived experiences and the socio-political constructs influencing their perspectives. Leadership, as Wren (1995) describes, is fundamentally "a process: a series of actions and interactions among leaders and followers which lead to the attainment of group goals" (p. 325). To investigate the interplay between historical state and traditional clan leadership dynamics, this study will employ interviews with members of the Somali diaspora. It seeks to address the existing gap in scholarly literature concerning the connections between traditional clan-based leadership and modern state formation, focusing on Somalia's post-independence era (1960–1991).

Conceptual Framework:

Leadership is inherently relational and communal, emphasizing the cultivation of relationships and ethical engagement to achieve collective goals. Wheatley (1992) argues, "Leadership is always dependent on the context, but the context is established by the relationships we value; therefore, leadership is a relational and ethical process of people together attempting to

accomplish positive change" (p. 144). Similarly, Uhl-Bien (2006) posits that relational leadership "focuses on identifying attributes of individuals as they engage in interpersonal relationships" (p. 654). This study explores the contrast between traditional, individualist leadership models and relational leadership paradigms, particularly within Somali clan and state structures.

Relational leadership, while a relatively recent concept in Western academic discourse (Brower et al., 2000; Drath, 2001; Murrell, 1997; Uhl-Bien, 2006), is deeply embedded in the social processes of non-Western societies. For instance, Somali clan leadership, as revealed through the literature, has evolved from pre-colonial social structures grounded in relationships and communal decision-making. The intricate dynamics between traditional clan leadership and government institutions merit further exploration to understand their implications for Somalia's governance.

Methodology and Scope:

Participants in this study will be asked to share their perspectives on the nature of leadership within Somali clan and state institutions and their aspirations for Somalia's future governance. Somalia's historical trajectory—including colonialism, post-independence nation-building, civil war, and post-conflict recovery—has profoundly influenced its political and leadership challenges (Lewis, 1993). Traditional clan-based governance remains a central organizing principle in Somali society (Cassanelli, 1982; Gundel, 2006; Issa-Salwe, 1996; Lewis, 1961; Samatar, 1992). The study focuses exclusively on Somalia, analyzing its clan and state leadership structures and their interrelations.

Clan Leadership and Social Structure:

Clan leadership traditionally involves a council of elders who mediate disputes, ensure justice, and make collective decisions. These councils both advise and constrain the powers of

clan chiefs, fostering a system of accountability (Nweke, 2014). Chiefs, known as "Isimo" or "peace-seekers," earn legitimacy through lineage or through their active contributions to the community, such as mediation and resource sharing (Salah, 2011). The authority of clan elders is widely respected, reinforcing their role as key actors in Somali governance. However, critics argue that traditional clan governance prioritizes collective clan interests over individual liberties, often limiting personal autonomy (Abdullahi, 2001). Additionally, the ecological pressures of Somalia's arid landscape and frequent inter-clan disputes pose ongoing challenges to traditional institutions (Lyons & Samatar, 2010).

Significance of the Study:

This research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the relationship between Somalia's traditional clan governance and modern state institutions. By examining historical and contemporary leadership structures, the study contributes to filling the gap in scholarly literature on Somali governance. The findings are expected to inform policymakers, offering insights into Somalia's social structures and the bases of influence that shape state formation. Ultimately, this research seeks to support the development of governance models that align with the needs and aspirations of the Somali people. The focus on leadership structures within Somali clan and state institutions highlights a critical tension in Somalia's governance: the intersection of traditional, kinship-based governance and modern state structures. While clan-based leadership emphasizes relational and communal processes, the modern state often relies on hierarchical and bureaucratic systems, creating inherent challenges in harmonizing these two models.

Leadership as a Relational Process:

The conceptualization of leadership as relational and communal is particularly relevant in the Somali context. As Wheatley (1992) and Uhl-Bien (2006) assert, leadership is fundamentally a

social construct that emerges from interaction and shared values. This aligns with Somali clan leadership, which is deeply rooted in kinship networks and collective decision-making processes. Traditional Somali leadership fosters cohesion within clans through deliberative councils and consensus-building mechanisms. Such structures exemplify what Uhl-Bien (2006) terms "relational leadership," where the emphasis is on building trust and maintaining community bonds. However, the relational nature of Somali clan leadership can also present challenges. Scholars such as Lyons and Samatar (2010) and Abdullahi (2001) argue that the prioritization of collective clan interests over individual autonomy can stifle innovation and limit governance flexibility. Additionally, the emphasis on consensus can lead to prolonged decision-making processes, which may be ill-suited for addressing urgent national challenges.

Interplay Between Clan and State Leadership:

The relationship between clan leadership and state governance in Somalia has historically been marked by tension and mistrust. The colonial and post-colonial state sought to centralize authority, often at the expense of traditional clan structures (Issa-Salwe, 1996; Lewis, 1960). This centralization disrupted the relational and localized governance mechanisms that had sustained Somali society for centuries. The post-independence period (1960–1991) further highlighted these tensions as successive governments struggled to integrate clan leaders into a unified national framework. Recent studies have emphasized the need to bridge the gap between these systems. For instance, Menkhaus (2018) underscores the importance of hybrid governance models that combine the relational strengths of clan leadership with the institutional stability of modern state systems. Such models recognize the legitimacy of clan leaders while establishing frameworks for accountability and inclusivity.

Contemporary Perspectives and Challenges:

Contemporary Somali governance continues to grapple with the legacy of its dual systems. While clan elders remain influential in mediating local conflicts and maintaining social order, the lack of alignment between clan and state structures perpetuates political instability. For example, Gundel (2006) notes that traditional clan governance often operates parallel to formal state institutions, creating fragmented authority and undermining national cohesion. Moreover, the diaspora's role in Somali governance has become increasingly significant. Members of the diaspora often bring diverse perspectives shaped by their experiences in Western democracies, influencing their views on leadership and governance. However, as Hansen (2020) observes, these perspectives can sometimes clash with traditional norms, leading to further fragmentation. Engaging the diaspora in meaningful dialogue, as proposed in this study, is crucial for fostering a shared vision for Somalia's future.

Relational Leadership in the Somali Context:

Relational leadership, while a relatively new academic concept, resonates deeply with Somali traditions. Unlike individualist models that prioritize personal ambition and hierarchical authority, relational leadership emphasizes shared goals and mutual accountability. This framework is especially applicable in Somalia, where leadership frequently involves collaborative decision-making and consultation processes. When discussing dialogue, it is essential to consider the multi-faceted nature of both human relationships and reality itself (Mouse Iye, 2023). However, the practical application of relational leadership faces several obstacles. The fragmentation of Somali society along clan lines has often led to exclusionary practices, where leadership is confined to dominant clans. To address this, scholars such as Kaplan (2021) advocate for inclusive governance frameworks that ensure minority clans have a voice in

decision-making processes.

Implications for Governance and Policy:

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on hybrid or collaborative governance by exploring how relational leadership principles can inform Somalia's state-building efforts. The findings are expected to provide actionable insights for policymakers, highlighting the need to integrate traditional and modern governance models. Good governance represents the ideal form of civil administration. Its foundation lies in the unique dynamics of specific communities, encompassing citizens' associations shaped by the cultural heritage and values of a given social order (Afyare, 2024). By acknowledging the relational and communal foundations of Somali society, policymakers can design governance structures that reflect local realities while addressing national challenges.

Recent research by Elmi and Barise (2022) emphasizes that sustainable governance in Somalia requires a bottom-up approach that builds on existing clan structures. This aligns with the relational leadership paradigm, which prioritizes community engagement and shared responsibility. However, achieving this will require addressing entrenched power dynamics and fostering a culture of accountability. The interaction between Somali clan and state leadership structures highlights a complex relationship influenced by historical, cultural, and social factors. This study explores this dynamic through the perspective of relational leadership, aiming to offer a deeper understanding of Somali governance. It further highlights the importance of collaboration between traditional and modern leadership models to address the challenges of state formation and promote sustainable development. Future research should continue to explore how collaborative and/or hybrid governance models can leverage the strengths of both systems while mitigating their limitations.

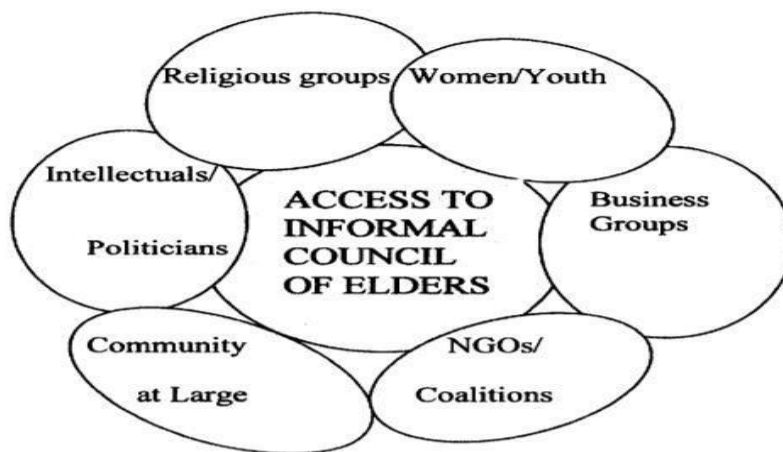
Population and Cultural Dynamics:

Somalia's population, estimated at 15–16 million, primarily consists of ethnic Somalis who share a strong cultural homogeneity, including the Somali language, classified as a Cushitic branch of Afro-Asiatic languages (World Population Review, 2021). Modern Somalis, unlike almost every other modern sub-Saharan African state, are virtually homogeneous (Lewis, 1960a; Touval & Harvard University Center for International Affairs, 1963). And, as noted in the introduction, Somalis identify with clan family lineage, and each clan-family is further divided into sub-lineages until the individual family is reached (Issa-Salwe, 1994; Cassanelli, 1982; Clapham, 2017; Abdullahi, 2001; Kapteijns, 2001; Lewis, 1960a; Omar, 2001). For example, Hawiye is one of the majority Somalia clans, and it has many sub-clan members—Habargidir, for instance, is one of its sub-clans, and it is divided into four subclans. Each of these sub-clans is further divided into sub-sub-clan and so on.

Figure 4

Informal Council of Elders

Social Structures and Community Access to Free Services of Elders



Nomadic pastoralism dominates the Somali economy, with traditional clan structures playing a pivotal role in regulating access to scarce resources and mediating disputes

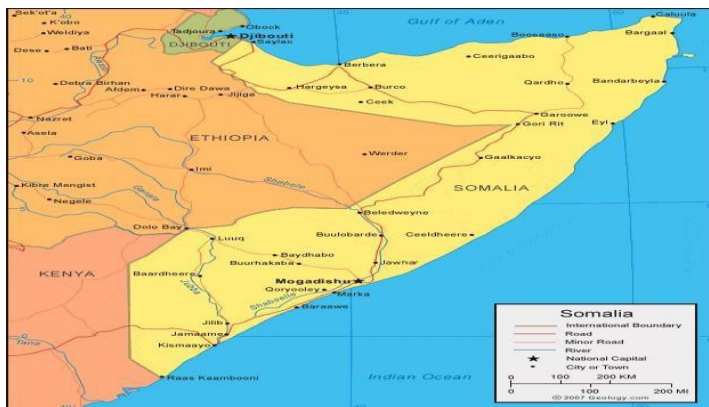
(Cassanelli, 1982). However, this system has been criticized for prioritizing collective clan interests over individual freedoms.

State Collapse & Contemporary Challenges:

The military coup installed Mohamed Siyad Barre as leader, ushering in two decades of authoritarianism characterized by centralized control, human rights abuses, and the exploitation of clan divisions (Kapteijns, 2012). Barre's regime severely weakened Somali state institutions and exacerbated societal fragmentation. By the time of his ousting in 1991, the Somali state had effectively collapsed, plunging the country into decades of conflict and humanitarian crises.

Figure 5

Current Somali General Map



Note: From Geology.com.

State collapse, defined as the disintegration of political authority, law, and legitimate power, left a vacuum filled by traditional clan systems and non-state actors (Lyons & Samatar, 2010). This power vacuum has fueled ongoing violence, piracy, and religious extremism, further undermining efforts to rebuild the state. While traditional clan structures have provided a measure of stability in the absence of centralized governance, they have also perpetuated divisions and

hindered national unity. Critics argue that the emphasis on clan loyalty undermines broader state-building efforts, as individual and collective interests often clash (Lewis, 1994).

Debates on Governance and Clan Politics:

Scholarly debates on Somalia's collapse highlight divergent perspectives. Traditionalist scholars, such as I.M. Lewis, attribute the state's failure to the persistence of clan-based politics, which they argue is incompatible with modern statehood (Lewis, 1994). Conversely, transformationist perspectives emphasize external factors, including colonial disruptions and geopolitical interventions, as primary contributors to Somalia's instability (Salah, 2011). Both schools of thought underscore the need to reconcile traditional governance mechanisms with contemporary political frameworks. Integrating traditional systems with inclusive governance models, Somalia may navigate its path toward sustainable peace and development. Any dialogue concerning governance is particularly challenging to understand, as it varies based on who is discussing it, their perspective, and their underlying intentions (Mouse Iye, 2023).

Study Aims:

This study aims to explore the concept of Somali clan leadership in relation to state institutions and examine the Somali diaspora's perspectives of leadership within these two contexts. While there is a substantial body of scholarly and non-academic literature on Somali history and its clan system, limited attention has been paid to the specific leadership practices within the Somali clan system and how these differ from leadership within government institutions. Furthermore, few studies have engaged directly with Somalis to document their perspectives on clan and institutional leadership in their country. This research seeks to address these gaps by offering an in-depth understanding of Somalia's transformation from its traditional self-governance rooted in organic clan culture to its current post-conflict state. To investigate

these issues, narrative analysis was selected as the research methodology. This approach focuses on the systematic interpretation of stories shared by participants, enabling the researcher to explore the structure, meaning, and broader implications of their narratives. As Riessman (2008) emphasized, effective narrative analysis encourages readers “to think beyond the surface of a text” and facilitates broader commentary (p. 13). This study explores participants' personal perspectives through storytelling, enabling the researcher to reveal how they construct and express their understanding of leadership.

The research seeks to provide a nuanced and complex description of the Somali diaspora’s “direct experience of an event” (Riessman, 2008), specifically focusing on their roles as government or private-sector employees and as members of clan lineages. Using phone interviews as the primary data collection method, the study delves into how participants construct their narratives about clan and government institutional leadership within Somali society. Key questions include: What are the relationships between clan members and leaders, and how are these relationships conceptualized? What meanings do clan membership and leadership hold for Somali individuals, and how do these intersect with national governance? Additionally, the research seeks to analyze the perceived impact of clan loyalty on governance, as expressed by members of the Somali diaspora.

Ultimately, this study aims to document and analyze the ~~stories and~~ perspectives of the Somali diaspora, highlighting the significance of kinship and the distinctions between clan-based and government leadership. This research contributes to existing academic and professional literature by uncovering new insights into the Somali clan system and its implications for governance. It also provides valuable guidance for policymakers by enhancing their awareness of Somalia’s social structure and its influence on state formation. Furthermore, narrative analysis

serves as a potential resource for understanding similar complex clan leadership systems in other countries. By critically reflecting on Somalia's contemporary state-building processes, this study encourages dialogue on alternative perspectives and solutions to leadership and governance challenges, as articulated by the Somali diaspora.

Contextualizing the Narrative Analysis Method:

Narrative analysis is a qualitative research approach that examines the stories individuals tell to uncover their meanings, structures, and connections to broader social, cultural, and historical contexts. While narrative inquiry emphasizes relational engagement and co-construction of meaning between researchers and participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004), narrative analysis prioritizes the systematic interpretation of stories as data. This approach focuses on the content, structure, and purpose of narratives to explore how individuals construct and communicate their experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) described narratives as a way of understanding experience, highlighting their temporal and contextual nature. While narrative inquiry seeks to immerse the researcher within the relational and lived experiences of participants, narrative analysis provides a framework for deconstructing these stories to identify patterns, themes, and insights. Polkinghorne (1988) emphasized that narrative analysis involves piecing together fragmented elements of stories to create a cohesive understanding of participants' experiences. It views narratives as both a process—how people construct and tell their stories—and a product that reflects their understanding of events and interactions (Kramp, 2003). Similarly, Bradbury (2017) and Andrews et al. (2013), underscored the role of narrative analysis in connecting individual stories to larger socio-political and cultural frameworks.

This study adopts narrative analysis over narrative inquiry due to its focus on systematic interpretation rather than relational immersion. While narrative inquiry relies on collaboration and

participation in the ongoing lives of participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004), this research focuses on analyzing the stories shared by the Somali diaspora to explore their perceptions of clan and government leadership. Narrative analysis allows for an in-depth examination of how participants articulate their experiences and connect them to broader cultural and institutional contexts. Narrative analysis offers a deeper comprehension of participants' self-expression and the cultural meanings embedded in their stories (Bradbury, 2017; Freeman, 2015). Andrews, (2014, p.1, as cited in Phoenix, 2022), suggests that “narrative and imagination are integrally tied to one another” and that the importance of narrative imagination cannot be overstated for “our elevated thoughts about the world as it might be, but also in the very minutiae of our daily lives”.

Recent advancements in narrative analysis, such as those discussed by Phoenix, (2022), highlight its ability to address complex themes of identity, power, and agency within narratives. By employing narrative analysis, this study investigates the structural and thematic elements of the diaspora's narratives to understand the intersections of Somali clan-based leadership and modern governance systems. This approach aligns with the goal of uncovering how participants' language and storytelling reflect their temporal, cultural, and relational realities (Bradbury, 2017). Clandinin and Connelly (2004) also stressed the importance of attending to the socio-political dimensions of narratives, which is critical for this research. The Somali diaspora's narratives provide valuable insights into the interplay between traditional clan leadership and national governance structures. Through systematic analysis, this study identifies recurring themes, such as the tensions between loyalty to clan lineage and the demands of institutional governance, revealing how these dynamics shape leadership practices and perceptions.

Narrative analysis focus on storytelling. It centers on how participants construct and convey their experiences, allowing the study to analyze not just what is said but how it is said. For

example, a participant's narrative might detail how their allegiance to clan leadership conflicts with their role in a government institution. Narrative analysis enables the researcher to examine the chronology, metaphors, and cultural references in their story, revealing tensions between traditional and modern governance. Other methods, such as thematic analysis or grounded theory, might identify the conflict but would lack the tools to explore the story's structure or the cultural underpinnings shaping the participant's perspective. By choosing narrative analysis, this research ensures a comprehensive exploration of the Somali diaspora's perspectives, preserving the integrity of their stories while uncovering insights into the interplay between cultural heritage and institutional frameworks. Therefore, narrative analysis offers a robust methodological framework for this research. It moves beyond the relational emphasis of narrative inquiry to critically examine the structure, themes, and meanings within participants' stories.

This approach enables the study to uncover deep insights into the Somali diaspora's perspectives on leadership, contributing to a richer understanding of the cultural and institutional dynamics within Somali society. By integrating narrative analysis, the research generates valuable knowledge for academic discourse and policymaking, particularly in contexts where traditional and modern leadership systems intersect. Further, this study moves beyond merely documenting participants' stories to critically examining how these narratives reflect and shape their understanding of leadership. For instance, the analysis explores how participants use language and structure their stories to express tensions between traditional clan loyalties and modern governance challenges.

Advantages: Narrative research offers numerous advantages and benefits. As Aarikka-Stenroos (2010) notes, "The interesting point in narratives is that they provide vital types of understanding" (p. 1). Events in narratives are typically structured in a particular order, with

Western culture often relying on a linear, temporal framework (Gergen, 1994). Temporality, or chronology, is widely regarded as a central feature of narrative form (Elliott, 2005). Bruner (2004) distinguishes between narrative cognition and paradigmatic cognition, explaining that the former is not based on logical propositions or clearly defined classifications, but instead seeks to understand and convey meaning through storytelling. In this way, narratives offer a unique mode of cognition, contrasting with the aim of paradigmatic cognition, which focuses on affirming conceptual truths.

Challenges: There are challenges and criticisms associated with the narrative approach, particularly regarding ethical concerns about anonymity and confidentiality due to its informal nature. One critical perspective is that the narrative approach encourages participants to become more active in the research process, allowing for multiple voices and perspectives to emerge in the findings. However, this can complicate confidentiality. Elliott (2005) highlights the ethical dilemma, stating:

It is a key ethical principle that the anonymity and privacy of informants is respected. However, once attributes and experiences are ascribed to a particular case in a research report, it becomes difficult to ensure that the case does not become identifiable (p. 150)

Another challenge in using the narrative approach is that researchers must collect detailed information about participants and carefully analyze the source material to accurately capture individual experiences. As Creswell and Creswell (2013) note, "Narrative research is a challenging approach to use, and the researcher must collect information about the participant and be attentive to identifying the source material that gathers particular stories to capture the individual's experience" (p. 76).

While narrative methods allow informants to express their views and experiences in their own words and at their own pace, which can make sensitive issues easier to articulate (Aarikka-Stenroos, 2010), these advantages are balanced by the ethical challenges. In this research, the narrative approach will be employed transparently and openly. Efforts to address these challenges will include safeguarding participants' privacy and ensuring confidentiality. Data will be stored securely, as outlined in the ethical consent forms and information sheets shared with participants.

Methodology Design:

In the following, I detail the methods used in this research. This section details the decisions made concerning the participants, interviews, and interpretations, ensuring quality research, reflexivity, and data storage. This section aims to provide a transparent and open approach to the data collection.

Selection of Participants:

A total of ten participants were recruited through connections established with several Somali community organizations in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These organizations included the Somali Centre for Family Services (Ottawa, Canada), Midaynta Community Services (Toronto, Canada), Barnet Somali Community Group (London, United Kingdom), and Somali American Parent Association (Minneapolis, United States). Letters of approval for collaboration and accessibility were obtained from the selected communities (see Appendix 3 for community approval letters). This study included diaspora communities from various countries to explore potential differences in their perceptions and responses to leadership in traditional and governmental institutions, providing a comprehensive understanding of leadership dynamics across cultural contexts.

Participants who received information about the research through community centers or word of mouth subsequently contacted the researcher via email or phone to express their interest in participating. Upon initial contact, the researcher followed up by sending an email with a consent form (see Appendix 1) and an outline of the interview's objectives and schedule. If the participant agreed to the proposed schedule and mutually agreed upon a time, interviews were arranged. Participants were informed that the interview would last between 1–2 hours, with breaks provided as needed (see Appendix 2 for the participants' information sheets regarding the research). Out of 22 potential contacts, ten participants were selected based on availability and willingness to participate (see Table 5 for further details). The participants included three individuals from Canada, three from United States, and four from the United Kingdom, and None of the participants in this study were involved in the preliminary small-scale study.

In qualitative research, determining sample size can be complex, as there are no set rules regarding sample size (Patton, 2002). The sample size is contingent on various factors, including the research questions, theoretical framework, type of data collected, and practical considerations such as resources and time (Merriam et al., 2009; Patton, 2002). In this study, the sample size was constrained by both geographic distance and limited accessibility due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Inclusion Criteria:

The ten participants in this study were members of the Somali diaspora residing in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom (UK). They were between the ages of 60 and 80 years and were willing to participate in the research.

Exclusion Criteria:

Participants under the age of 60 were excluded from the study. This age group was deemed outside the scope of the research, as the study focuses on the colonial and post-independence

periods in Somalia. Participants in the younger cohort were considered to lack the direct experience and historical knowledge required to provide meaningful insights relevant to the research questions.

Table 5

Synopsis of the Participants' Backgrounds

Pseudonym	Demographic information:
Mohamed	He is a 78-year-old author, retired, and currently lives in London, UK. He was a staff member on the Somalia National Assembly as an interpreter. He completed a post-graduate degree.
Ali	He is an 80-year-old retired marine living in London, UK. In 1955, he became a member of the Somali Marines, a job he retired from in 2003. He completed a high school equivalence diploma.
Hirsi	He is 75 years old, retired, and living in London, UK, with his family. He studied abroad and returned to Somalia and led projects as a civil servant in the military government. He completed post-graduate degrees. He left Somalia in 1978 for the UK and did not return.
Abdulqadir	He is 78 years old, retired, and living with his family in Minneapolis, US. He was a member of a guard called Horseed to protect the Somali Youth League (SYL) during the Somali independence. He later joined the military but left to become an entrepreneur. He ran his business until the collapse of the Somali Central Government. He completed a college equivalence diploma.

Mohamud	He is an 80-year-old retired economist living in Ottawa, Canada, with his family. He worked for the Civilian government as a young man but built his career during the Military regime as a director for the Ministry of Finance. He held various positions within the Ministry. He completed a bachelor's degree.
Hassan	He is 76 years old, retired, and living in Ottawa, Canada, with his family. He was part of the National Police Force and later became a revenue officer. He completed a post-graduate degree.
Asha	She is 73 years old, retired, and living with her family in London, UK. She was a student during the Civilian Government. She taught linguistics at Somali University. She completed a post-graduate degree.
Fatuma	She is 78 years old, retired, and living in Minneapolis, US. She was a musician. In 1960, she became the first Somali woman to join the newly minted Somalia theatre and later became a radio host. She completed high school equivalence education.
Ahmed	He is 80 years old and currently living in Minneapolis, US. He taught at a Somali university during the military government years. He was in Somalia during the collapse of the Somali government. He completed a post-graduate degree.
Bashir	He is 76 years old, retired, and currently living in Toronto, Canada, with his family. He worked at the Somalia House of Representatives during the civilian government. He also worked in various international agencies. He completed a post-graduate degree.

Note: This synopsis allows insight into participants' stories as relating to their experiences with clan and state leadership.

The day before the interviews, I contacted each participant to confirm that they had reviewed the consent form. For those who had not yet done so, I reminded them to review it prior to the scheduled interviews. Additionally, I informed all participants that they could access the completed thesis by contacting the Canterbury Christ Church University Archives or by reaching out directly to the researcher at fa190@Canterbury.ac.uk. Alternatively, participants could also contact the researcher's supervisory committee at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) for further inquiries. Sheila McNamee- Dan Wulff/Sally St. George.

Introducing the participants:

Each of the ten participants brought their own unique stories and experiences to the study. They were asked to share their perspectives on the Somali clan vs. state leadership structure, as well as the dynamics between these two institutions and their potential implications for future state governance. Although the participants were living in different countries, their responses to the research questions revealed shared insights. Women were not the original targeted group, but since they applied to participate, the researcher became curious about their contributions. However, they do not specifically represent Somali women; instead, they provide general insights as educated women with relevant experiences. To protect their confidentiality, the participants' backgrounds and pseudonyms are presented in Table 5.

Interviews:

This section outlines the methodology employed in the interview process and its development. A qualitative approach was selected, using semi-structured questions to explore participants' perspectives. The interview consisted of five main questions: (a) How would you describe the historic clan and state governing leadership structure in Somalia based on your experience? (b) Do you think the clan cultural leadership structure differs from state leadership?

Why or why not? (c) How would you describe the role of clan cultural leadership in contemporary Somali governance? (d) Do you see clan leadership influencing the process of state-building?

How so? (e) What other leadership elements could benefit Somali culture and society?

Qualitative interviews are focused on exploring individuals' meanings and interpretations (Kvale, 1996). The narrative interview approach has been widely used across various disciplines to gain deeper insights into culture, historical experiences, identity, and lifestyle (Lieblich et al., 1998). This approach involves inquiry directed at human experience narratives, resulting in data that is presented in narrative form (Hoshmand, 2005). Narrative data can be collected through interviews, oral histories, or autobiographies and biographies (Hoshmand, 2005). A total of ten interviews were conducted and audio-recorded for this study.

The semi-structured interview format was designed to ensure consistency in the types of information gathered from each participant while allowing flexibility to explore individual responses (Houston & McNamara, 1999; Kvale, 2007). Interviews are particularly effective for uncovering the personal stories behind participants' experiences. The interview questions were crafted to foster dialogue, beginning with broad questions about participants' backgrounds. For example, asking "Tell me about yourself and your professional background" helped participants feel at ease and encouraged them to share their life journeys openly. Many participants reflected on their personal histories with enthusiasm and expressed their perspectives on how their experiences shaped their current views on leadership. Language plays a vital role in this process, not only as a tool for communication but as a carrier of values, beliefs, and cultural, social, and political meanings that cannot be easily conveyed through translation (Temple & Edwards, 2002). The interview format aimed to create an open environment conducive to storytelling, encouraging participants to share significant life events within their social contexts (Jovchelovitch & Bauer,

2000). Throughout the interview, participants were free to respond to the semi-structured questions, with additional probing questions such as "Why or why not?" and "Please explain." To ensure clarity and avoid assumptions, I followed up with questions like, "Can you give an example?" or "Can you elaborate more on that?" As Gergen (1994) noted, narrative research is not solely the product of an individual but reflects relationships, cultural contexts, and social roles such as gender and age (p. 280). Ultimately, each interview was designed to build rapport, encourage dialogue, and maintain a flexible structure, avoiding a rigid checklist approach (Kvale, 2007; Roulston, 2010).

Telephone interviews:

Telephone interview was chosen for this project because it was (a) practical with participants in various locations, (b) compliant with Covid 19 restrictions, (c) cost-efficient, and (d) less stressful for the participants. During the time of this research, Covid 19 was rampant, and participants felt that telephone interview was the best option. Further, due to the participants' geographical scattering, the telephone interview was deemed useful, but also in case other methods were interrupted either due to lack of Wi-Fi availability, lack of computers, etc. Telephone interviews have practical and administrative advantages over face-to-face interviews, particularly if the respondents are scattered over a wide area (Colombotos, 1969). Others have also suggested that telephone interviews provide a "structure and communication" (McIntosh & Morse, 2015) that "remove[s] any barriers" related to the interviewer's appearance (Tull & Albaum, 1973).

Telephone interviews also can potentially remove social motives. For instance, the interviewees may be explicit in answering the questions or follow-ups rather than relying on an assumption based on the interviewer's body language or desirable answers. Telephone interviews

are also cost efficient and reduce the money spent by interviewers in traveling from one respondent to another, especially if the respondents are busy, not at home, or otherwise unavailable (Colombotos, 1969; McIntosh & Morse, 2015). There are others (Lansing & Morgan, 1971) who suggest that because of the greater anonymity in telephone interviews, more valid responses, or at least more admission of less socially desirable behaviors or attitudes may be obtained in these telephone surveys.

Telephone interviews can be viewed as a less attractive alternative to face-to-face interviewing. For example, the absence of visual cues via telephone is thought to result in the loss of contextual and nonverbal data and to compromise rapport, probing, and interpretation of responses (Novick, 2008). Telephone interviews are shorter than personal interviews. Some of the other disadvantages are that some people may not have telephones. People often dislike the intrusion of a call into their home. Telephone interviews need to be relatively short, or people feel imposed upon.

To strengthen the interview, I took notes while participants were speaking; the notes were taken in case there was an audio issue or unclear words. In addition, the participants encouraged this researcher to write down their thoughts; they would say, "Write this down; it's important," despite the fact that the interview was being audio recorded. The participants were reassured that their points or views would be written down later while the discussion was still fresh in this researcher's mind, and they understood that. The perceived advantage of telephone interviews noted by (Chapple, 1999; Irvine et al., 2013; Stephens, 2007; Sweet, 2002) was the ability to take notes unobserved by the interviewee, thus reducing distraction and disruption of the interview process.

Data Collection:

Data for this study were collected in two stages: a literature review and participant interviews. The first stage involved a review of existing literature on clan and state governance structures, with data drawn from a variety of sources including books, academic journals, and official documents. The second stage focused on primary data collection through interviews with participants based in Ottawa and Toronto, Canada; London, United Kingdom; and Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States.

Fieldwork Experience:

Primary data collection was a crucial component of this research. As Emerson (2001) described, field research involves studying people in their natural environments to gain firsthand insight into their lives, behaviors, and experiences:

In its most inclusive sense, field research is the study of people acting in the natural courses of their daily lives. The fieldworker ventures into the worlds of others to learn firsthand about how they live, how they talk and behave, and what captivates and distresses them (p. 1).

My role as the researcher was to facilitate these conversations, record the participants' voices, and interpret their stories accurately. Conducting fieldwork also posed several challenges, such as carefully navigating others' perceptions, observing their behaviors, and understanding the cultural meaning embedded in their language (Madut, 2012). As Grills (1998) noted, social objects such as ideas, language, actions, and symbols do not carry intrinsic meaning; researchers must understand the participants' perspectives on their own world in order to interpret these elements correctly. To ensure comprehensive data collection, interview questions were designed to generate responses that would contribute

to developing themes for the thesis. Some participants elaborated on specific areas based on their personal experiences, while other questions elicited less detailed responses. Interviews were conducted in Somali, based on participants' preferences, although the questions were originally written in English. I provided verbal translations to ensure that the meaning of each question was clear and that participants whose first language was Somali felt more comfortable. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes, was audiotaped, and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis:

The qualitative data collected from the literature review were analyzed to explore the extent to which clan culture shapes social behavior and to identify other potential social determinants, such as faith, that may influence perceptions of clan and governing leadership structures. The objective was to identify commonalities and gaps within the existing literature related to the research questions. In addition to the literature review, data were collected through telephone interviews, which provided unique insights into the behaviors, characteristics, and experiences of Somali diaspora participants who had grown up in Somalia. These interviews focused on participants' perceptions of clan culture and its interaction with governing leadership structures. The goal was to examine the role and relationship between clan and government leadership, the meaning of clan culture to the participants, and the role of the clan in the context of state formation and leadership. As Clandinin and Connelly (1990) noted, “An inquirer composing a research text looks for the patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within or across an individual’s experience and in the social setting” (p. 132). By identifying these patterns and

themes, the analysis sought to minimize ambiguity and highlight the core ideas emerging from the data.

All recorded interviews were transcribed and translated from Somali into English. The researcher carefully re-read and listened to the audio recordings multiple times during the transcription process to ensure the accuracy of the translations and to capture the participants' intended meanings. Initial memos were developed during this process to track observations and reflections. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), listening attentively and writing memos are crucial parts of the transcription process, helping to ground the analysis in the data.

The data were analyzed using NVivo (12-Pro) software, which facilitated the identification of patterns and the interpretation of the meanings embedded in the participants' stories. During the coding process, each interview was read and re-read, and codes were assigned to relevant themes and patterns. This initial line-by-line coding generated over 200 codes. These codes were then reviewed, refined, and merged, eliminating duplicates and codes that did not seem relevant to the research questions.

After refining the codes, a smaller set of approximately 70 codes was generated. These were grouped into categories based on their similarity and relevance to the research questions. This categorization resulted in five initial themes. Subsequent rounds of analysis focused on these themes, identifying those that were most prevalent and directly addressed the research questions.

This iterative process resulted in the emergence of three major superordinate themes.

The analyzed data were examined and synthesized, with equal attention given to each participant's account, in order to ensure the integrity of the themes. The final set of themes was evaluated for quality, and themes that did not align with the data or the study's aims were

excluded (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The sub-themes derived from the primary themes were also identified, labeled, and defined. The final themes and sub-themes are discussed in the following section.

Findings:

Disclosure:

As a researcher with the same cultural background as the participants, I have the advantage of being an "insider" to the Somali community. I share the same cultural values, possess an awareness of the social dynamics at play, and have a deep understanding of the societal constructs the participants navigate. Having been born and raised in Somalia until my late teens, I am familiar with the intricate ways in which relationships are formed and maintained within the community. This insider perspective, while enhancing my ability to engage meaningfully with the participants, also allowed me to construct a relational context conducive to the inquiry. It enabled me to privilege local interpretations of reality and to strengthen my knowledge of the community while contributing to the broader academic understanding of Somali culture and leadership structures. Chen and Boore (2010) emphasized the importance of a researcher's understanding and fluency in the local language to ensure a culturally nuanced approach, which in turn enhances the credibility of the researcher and the data obtained.

While I am embedded within the community, it is important to note that I did not have personal relationships with the primary participants selected for the study. To ensure the integrity of the data and minimize potential bias, I sought independent assessments of the interview transcripts. I enlisted the help of a Somali professional, Mohamoud Abdi (no relations to me), and a non-Somali colleague, Dr. Kon Madut, to evaluate the transcripts and ensure accuracy and consistency between the recordings and the transcriptions. Both assessors found no discrepancies

in the transcripts. However, Mohamoud Abdi pointed out that I needed to differentiate between the singular and plural forms in Somali language—such as "Isim" (singular) and "Isimo" (plural)—during the translation. This reminder further ensured the cultural and linguistic integrity of the data.

As a researcher, I was conscious of my own assumptions throughout the interview process. I informed participants of my role as the interviewer and facilitator before the interviews began, explicitly stating that I would not share my personal views on the topics discussed. To ensure consistency and accuracy, I transcribed the interviews on the same day they were conducted and took detailed notes throughout the process. The transcriptions were reviewed multiple times, with audiotapes re-listened to repeatedly, allowing for a thorough examination of consistent patterns in the data. The analysis of the data led to the identification of several key themes, which emerged from the narrative analysis of the data transcripts. These themes were analyzed using NVivo 12-Pro, as detailed in Table 6.

Table 1

Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1- Clan history and social values	a) Clan culture as part of Somali identity/faith b) Clan role and benefit c) Clan trust and security
Theme 2- Clan leadership and governing	a) Clan democracy and good governing b) Clan leadership change

Theme 3-government and clan historic relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Distinct Roles of Government and Clan b) Political Separation of Clan and Government c) Government Can Benefit from Clan Leadership
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Theme 1—Clan History and Social Values:

Issa-Salwe (1994) observed, “Before the arrival of colonialism in the Somaliland, the Somali society led a decentralized way of life. The colonial powers demanded a way of life contrary to their traditional one” (p. 1). Similarly, in other parts of Africa, the colonial state, for instance, established chiefs in regions without centralized authority systems and imposed them on the existing decentralized traditional structures, as seen among the Ibo of Eastern Nigeria, the Tonga in Zambia, various communities in Kenya, and communities in Somalia (Mengisteab, 2019). This theme highlights participants’ understanding of the Somali clan system, its historical context, and the social value it holds for its members. Collins (2006) defined a clan as an “informal organization comprising a network of individuals linked by kin-based bonds. Affective ties of kinship are its essence, constituting the identity and bond of its organization” (p. 231). The majority of participants shared similar perspectives on the clan system’s role and functionality both before and after Somalia’s independence. However, a few participants critiqued the pre-independence clan structure as inefficient due to the absence of a centralized governance system.

Bulhan (2008) noted, “The Somali clan system rests on a chain of paternal ancestors reaching back to a mythical founding ancestor whose name all members of the clan take for collective identity. The system is patrilineal and, by acknowledging only male ancestors, favors male dominance” (p. 9). Tradition, whether expressed through clans, tribes, or organizations, is rooted in socially constructed beliefs requiring some form of leadership structure. Whitney and Trosten-

Bloom (2010) argued, “The concept of traditional leadership is based on the perception of hierarchy and power, and hierarchies all too often exclude those people most significantly impacted” (p. 4). Max Weber (1947) described traditional leadership as grounded in the belief that authority is conferred upon leaders in accordance with long-established traditions. Participants noted that while Somali clans have a history of structured leadership, it is distinct from the traditional hierarchical power structures that often exclude subordinates, as described by Whitney and Trosten-Bloom.

a) Sub-theme—Clan culture as part of Somali identity/faith:

Clans are not merely pre-modern phenomena but are socially embedded identity networks that persist in many societies and states, even into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Collins, 2006). The participants in this study shared similar perspectives on the role and function of clans in Somalia. They emphasized that clans are not only integral to Somali identity but also intertwined with their faith, as referenced in Islamic teachings. Participants agreed that clans are predestined to be part of Somali society and should be utilized positively and constructively. However, they unanimously cautioned that the misuse of clan identity for selfish or divisive purposes could have detrimental consequences. One participant, Mohamed, underscored the importance of clan lineage to Somali identity, asserting that Somalis would lose their sense of self without this connection. He stated:

Clan is very important to Somali culture because it has its own governing constitutions to resolve internal clan problems. Somali history without the clan would be unrecognizable because the clan played a major role in the creation of Somalia. It is also mentioned in Islamic teachings, where it is adorned as a representation of family (participant)

In this context, the clan is viewed not only as a cultural institution but also as a religiously endorsed structure that fosters familial and communal connections. Mohamed further noted that the clan system itself is not inherently problematic: *It is not bad unless it is made bad, such as by involving it in political issues that create inequality.*

This perspective underscores the dual nature of clan systems, which can serve as a unifying social mechanism but may also become a source of division and conflict as one participant putted, when *misused in political contexts*. The Somali people, traditionally as it's mentioned before are nomadic pastoral society, and have historically faced threats from both internal and external elements. [However, to address these challenges, the clan system has functioned as a critical framework for mediation, guided by constitutions established by elders or community leaders in consensus with the broader community (Cassanelli, 1982; Issa-Salwe, 1996; Lewis, 1961; Lyons & Samatar, 2010). Rooted in communal connections, the clan system regulates the social and economic affairs of families and communities, fostering cohesion and mutual support. Similar traditional institutions have existed across Africa, relying on village-based systems to manage communal matters; however, these systems have never been the sole form of governance (Mamdani, 1996). The dynamic and adaptable nature of these traditional systems, particularly in the nineteenth century, challenges any assumption of their static nature. Ahmed underscores the importance of clan culture, stating: *clan culture is an identity for its members. It's being said in our religion that clan is like family, and people should recognize each other by it.* In this context, the clan functions not only as a marker of social identity but also as a system reinforced by religious principles. While some participants viewed the clan as the foundation of Somali identity and societal organization, others contended that colonial powers manipulated clan structures to serve purposes of social categorization and control. Abdullahi (2001) argues:

Somali clan historiographies, much like the noble lineage of Europe, have become convoluted, as the genealogies were embellished with saints and noble ancestors...

At the same time, the clan became associated with notions of common ancestry, perhaps as a result of Islam. Later, the colonial practice of giving salaries to chiefs also helped to institutionalize what was a minimal associative system into a more reified one (p. 9)

The colonial impact on traditional Somali culture disrupted the organic flow of customary law, institutionalizing clan leadership to create divisions that undermined traditional harmony (Abdullahi, 2001; Issa-Salwe, 1996).

Despite these disruptions, participants emphasized that clans retain their cultural significance as traditional institutions of identity and governance, transcending their role as mere tools of administration. Abdulqadir articulated this view, stating: *clan is a system that holds society together, like the word tol (sewing) in English*. It is also seen as insurance to safeguard clan members. That being said, he further added, *if there is a government that can take care of security and has a far-reaching effect, then perhaps the clan would not hold so much power*. Clan identity is deeply ingrained in Somali culture and passed down through generations. Bhugra and Becker (2005) define social identity as culturally ascribed personality traits that shape individuals' roles in society, such as being a parent, friend, or employee. Hirsi similarly observed: *Clan had governed its members because there was no alternative to it. If there were a government that could take care of social security, then perhaps there would not be such loyalty to it*. Huband & Samatar (1993), The institution of elders "(heerbeegti), consisting of legal experts and arbitrators, played a significant role in mediating disputes and regulating intra- and inter-clan conflicts" (p.16). Culture, as Jurkova (2019) notes, is integral to how individuals construct meaning, grow,

and develop through interactions with others. This perspective situates the clan as a key cultural institution that facilitates social order and identity. Mohamud highlighted the practical significance of clan culture:

The clan holds great significance in Somali culture, serving as a primary means of identification. In our faith, it represents family, which is deeply respected and valued. Traditionally, clans were used as a form of personal identity, especially in legal disputes, where family lineage played a crucial role in resolving issues (participant)

All participants emphasized that clan lineage acts as a social identity card, as it enables people to connect with an individual's clan family members or leader in the city for assistance. In legal matters, courts or police often accept a representative from the person's clan family, allowing the individual to be released under their responsibility. Participants repeatedly stressed that clan identity serves as both a personal and social framework of belonging. Ali noted, *he would not know who he is if he does not have clan identity*. This statement underscores the importance of clan affiliation not just as a marker of Somali nationality but as a system of solidarity and relational association. Mohamed offered a nuanced perspective: *personally, as an educated person, I have no need for clan on a personal level; however, I become defensive if I feel there is a threat to my own clan lineage. I have loyalty to it, but there is no personal benefit*. It is based on historical connection. Clan has a social benefit for its members. He further added, *if for example, someone travels to another city and they have no immediate family, the clan becomes their family, and they will take care of that person just because they share a sub-clan connection*. Mohamed is loyal to the clan consciously but cannot explain why.

This nuanced loyalty, while not always rooted in direct personal benefit, reflects a belief in the social and historical value of clan membership. Durkheim (1893) described such solidarity as a form of social cohesion based on shared values and collective belonging. Participants in this research conceptualized clans less as national institutions and more as localized systems of shared values and social support. Hassan noted that *the clan system is not only deeply rooted in society but is also referenced in the Quran, framing it as a familial matter*. He emphasized that *families respect and support one another, much like the relationships within a clan*. Coe et al. (2018) argue that "the implicit here is the claim that traditions that lasted for a great many years, transmitted carefully between generations of kin, can be evolutionarily adaptive" (p. 124). Similarly, Abshir pointed out that *clans have historically maintained steady leadership and functionality*. Participants often highlighted the stability, dependability, and consistency of clan leadership, which strengthens loyalty among its members. Uhl-Bien (2006) describes leadership as a relational process that facilitates the co-creation of shared and morally sound goals: "Leaders bring together different people to conform to a shared and morally sound vision" (p. 661).

b) Sub-theme—Clan role and benefit:

Cultural values and assumptions vary across societies, with each culture being shaped by different principles and influences. Gundel (2006),

Historically, especially in the southern regions since the colonial era, the role of elders has been marginalized by both colonial and post-colonial centralized administrations... In this context, the crisis of the traditional system can be traced back to the forced changes initiated during colonial times, a legacy that endures to this day (p. iv).

Africa, as a vast continent, presents a wide array of ecological and cultural contexts.

McNamee (2015) notes, “As people coordinate their activities with others, patterns or rituals quickly emerge. These rituals generate a sense of standards and expectations that we use to assess our own and others’ actions” (p. 377). However, Bashir views the role of clans as extending beyond mere mention in religious texts. He states,

the clan dealt with a society that used a rudimentary lifestyle and was significant in that aspect, as it facilitated social enhancement and function. However, today, during and after the country’s civil strife, it has become politicized and a liability that opposes the government system (participant)

Many scholars, including historians and anthropologists, have emphasized the pivotal role of Somali clan relations in shaping their identity. However, the question remains whether Somalis define themselves primarily through their clan and their interactions with governance, or if they perceive their political, societal, and cultural landscapes differently. Bulhan (2008) offers a noteworthy perspective on the disrupted evolution of Somali culture and tradition:

Whether we recall the past with nostalgia or dread, we can learn some lessons from it... one thing is certain: the social capital—the worldview, the values, the institutions, the social relations, and the means of war—Somalis inherited did not prepare them to anticipate the coming colonial onslaught or to defend themselves from it (p. 36)

Somalis, like other clan-based societies, have a segmented lineage organization, where key aspects of this system are important. Lewis (1982) explains, “Descent is traced patrilineally, and through his genealogy (abtirsiya, reckoning of ancestors), each individual has an exact place in

society... Patrilineal descent (tol) indeed is all pervasive: most corporate activities are contingent upon it” (p. 19). What sets clan-based structures apart from Western European political systems, such as political parties, is the cohesive power of membership. In Western political parties, cohesion is driven by ideas, programs, or social classes, while in clan structures, membership is defined by strong kinship bonds (Tripodi, 1999).

Participants highlighted the profound significance of clans in Somali society and their personal connection to this system. Abdulqadir observed, *Somalis, as a society, grew up with clans, and there was nothing else but the clan*. He explained that the clan system provided social connections and relationships within groups, fostering collaboration to protect shared interests and values. For many participants, clan affiliation is central to their sense of security, serving as a cornerstone of their heritage, defining their societal role, and influencing personal relationships. As Mohamud shared, *Personally, I believe in clan lineage because it's how I build my relationship with other people. It allows me to understand where another person is coming from when we have discussions or concerns/issues*. This sentiment reflects the deep personal attachment participants feel toward their clan identity, even though many find it challenging to articulate the root of their admiration and affection. Abdulqadir further emphasized the clan's systematic structure, noting that *leaders care about their members' needs and work collectively for their benefit*, underscoring the organized and supportive nature of clan leadership.

Research participants described the Somali clan as a social entity that maintains moral boundaries and shared values. According to Bulhan (2008), “No social relations exist without invoking or engaging the clan; birth, marriage, divorce, and death invariably involve the blessing, consent, or participation of the kinfolk” (p. 9). This reflects the influence of discursive practices on how individuals are positioned within society and how these practices affect individual

subjectivity (Davies & Harré, 1990). The subjective identity of individuals can be shaped by discourses that construct their perceived clan identity.

c) Sub-theme—Clan trust and security:

Bulhan (2008, “The clan is the crucible of identity, social defense, and social security. Providing social insurance and social control, it supports members in times of need and defends the individual from external attack” (p. 9). Culture plays a crucial role in shaping inclusivity or exclusivity, as well as uplifting or disadvantaging individuals. Somalis describe their affiliation with their clan as an integral part of their identity, shaping their relationships within their families and communities. According to Jurkova (2019),

Culture is a central concept in understanding cultural competence and transformative learning, where individuals learn who they are, how they construct meaning, and how they grow and develop through interactions with other socially and culturally situated individuals (p. 15)

Participants in the study affirmed that clan is a fundamental part of their culture, particularly in terms of fostering a sense of belonging. Asha explained, *clan is my social security and network that I follow, which roots me as a Somali. For example, clan members look after their own if they are without family when they move to a new city*. In alignment with Bulhan (2008), “As in the past, the clan and sub-clan come to the assistance of their members in times of financial and social difficulties” (p. 9). Ali added, *clan was necessary for social security and defense, especially since there was no government system*.

Although the participants, as educated individuals in the diaspora, do not directly benefit from clan relations in terms of material or financial support—unlike nomadic individuals—they still view it as an essential identity marker for engaging with others. As Mohamed noted, *I become*

defensive if I feel my clan lineage is threatened. Issa-Salwe (1996) argues, “Because kinship engenders, in a psychological sense, a feeling of closeness to certain people by virtue of being related to them, for the Somalis, the clan is the most important political unit in the traditional system” (p. 7). This political unit is key in driving clan loyalty and relevance. Mohamud asserted, *Clan engenders a social safety net, and it’s important for society because it ensures survival.* Social identity is understood as the culturally defined personality characteristics ascribed to social roles, such as those of father, mother, friend, employer, or employee (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Asha noted, *in Somalia, clans were fully functioning with their own structured system, where they led with care and earned the trust of their members.*

Summary and Discussion of Theme 1:

This theme emphasizes the significance of clan history, its meaning, and the identity it holds for the Somali diaspora in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. Although the diaspora has lived outside Somalia both before and after the country’s civil war, participants shared their perspectives on the clan’s role in providing security and benefits to society. There was no significant variation in their views regarding the interplay between clans and government institutions, regardless of their country of residence. Participants expressed strong loyalty and trust in their clans, and although they recognized that clan affiliation does not directly benefit them, they still associate their identity with it. In this context, while participants affirmed that clan identity is intrinsic to their being and will always be carried with them, they do not conflate it with governance at the national level. Nevertheless, Castagno (1964) suggested that Somalis lack a strong national identity, with clan identity taking precedence.

Somalis understand the separation of powers—clan versus national government—and believe each has a distinct role that can contribute positively to society, provided their responsibilities are

managed separately. However, survey data collected by the Afrobarometer show that Africans who living under dual systems (chiefs and elected local government officials) of authority do not differentiate as clearly between hereditary chiefs and elected local government officials as many analysts would anticipate. In fact, public evaluations of selected and elected leaders are strongly and positively correlated (Logan, 2009). In this context, the Somali diaspora distinguishes between clan-based structures and national governing bodies, recognizing a positive correlation between their collaboration while maintaining their distinct roles. McNamee and Hosking (2012) argued, “Culture within society forms values and patterns of influence, and from the very simple process of coordinating, we develop local cultural norms and values that serve as common-sense justifications for future coordination” (p. 40).

The phrase “Clan is part of our faith” was frequently mentioned by participants, who interpreted faith as strengthening the clan as an extension of one's family. According to Coe, et al, (2013),

An important part of traditional religion, however, was the metaphorical use of the close kinship terms (e.g., brother, sister, mother, father), to refer to those sharing common descent, and who thus were not necessarily closely related, and to encourage those individuals to live in harmony, as if they were close kin (p. 117)

While the participants acknowledged that clan could be used for both positive and negative purposes, as evidenced by the country's civil conflict. This theme captures the strength of clan identity, solidarity, and value within the Somali diaspora. However, it also highlights the recognition of its limitations in today's Somali society, particularly in the negative politicization of clan leadership and loyalty.

Theme 2—Clan Leadership:

This theme delves into the leadership and governance dynamics of the Somali clan, examining its role within the social contract it maintains with its members and how it operates as a governing body outside formal institutional frameworks. Coe, et al., (2013, “Tracing descent creates the kinship relationships between individuals that typically form the basis of the social relationships

that constitute traditional human groups” (p. 123). Leadership, as a social process, is integral to shaping and guiding social behavior and perceptions. Kotter (2008) highlights that

effective leadership in complex organizations involves creating a forward-looking vision that aligns with the legitimate long-term interests of stakeholders, developing a strategic pathway to realize that vision, garnering support from key power centers, and motivating those whose actions are critical to implementation (p. 24)

Sub-theme: Clan Democracy and Good Governance:

Participants frequently described clan leadership as intrinsic to governance, emphasizing its traditional and historic role in Somali society. They noted the clan's ability to sustain moral boundaries and shared values through self-regulation and collective agreements. Fatuma observed that *clans had been self-governing long before colonial systems*, a sentiment aligned with Mohamed (2007), who described traditional Somali society as inherently democratic. Though clan leaders bore titles such as Sheikh, Ugaas, Garaad, or Sultan, they held no greater authority than an elder (Lewis, 1961). Asha echoed this, stating that *clan leadership operates with collective agreement from members, emphasizing its democratic essence*. Leaders, according to Uhl-Bien, (2006), “are facilitators of relational processes of co-creation and orchestrator for

achieving mutual purposes. They bring together different people to conform to a shared and morally sound vision” (p. 661).

Relational leading provides a space to acknowledge leading as an interactive process involving many people. Thus, the focus in relational leading is on constructing interactive relational process. “This not to say there is no place for transitional problem solving, but an inquiry into deficits does not serve us well when our goals are to develop trust within relationships, or create innovative change within an organizational political system” (Stavros & Torres, 2006, p. 40). Bashir elaborated, noting that *the clan functions as a social framework for cohesion, where members collectively select leaders to represent them*. This governance system is sustained by unwritten customary laws (xeer) that evolved over time and were rooted in social contracts negotiated between clans and lineages (Gundel, 2006; Mohamed, 2007; Samatar, 1992). Participants viewed these traditions as adaptable yet robust, facilitating solidarity and collective benefit while remaining open to progressive changes, as noted by Gundel (2006). Hirsi further highlighted *the clan's role as a mediator, resolving conflicts both within and outside the clan family*. A central aspect of good governance in African contexts is its indirect relationship with democratic systems, intertwining political stability, economic development, and national unity (Afyare, 2024).

According to Mengisteab (2019), existing evidence suggests that authority systems in postcolonial Africa exist on a continuum between two extremes. On one end are the centralized systems, where leaders hold near-absolute power, while on the other end are decentralized systems, led by councils of elders, which hold limited formal authority. For Somalis, the clan has historically embodied these principles by ensuring stability and shared values. However, participants emphasized the necessity of maintaining clan governance within its traditional scope

rather than extending its role into national politics. Somalia's current situation suggests that the leadership crisis at the national level may stem from the historical influence of clan institutions, which have shaped the attitudes and approaches to leadership in the context of national development (Hassan, 2021). Sahnoun (1994), contextualized the Somali crisis within a broader framework of geopolitical and sociopolitical challenges. He attributed the crisis to

Border disputes, the Cold War dynamics, and the global tolerance of corrupt or authoritarian regimes as part of the struggle between communism and capitalism.

Additionally, he highlighted the inability of many Third World elites to effectively address the political, economic, and sociological demands of a rapidly changing era (p. xi)

Sub-theme: Clan Leadership Change:

The evolution of clan leadership has been shaped by cultural, historical, and political contexts. While participants acknowledged the clan's leadership role in traditional Somali society, they observed a shift in its function, particularly during and after the civil war. Ahmed noted that *the clan's involvement in national governance, which began as a temporary political settlement, has now contributed to negative outcomes*. Participants felt that clan elders should return to their traditional advisory roles, addressing clan-specific matters without direct involvement in national politics. The integration of clan leadership into governance in certain African contexts, such as Botswana's *guurto* system, was cited as a potential model for Somalia. This system allows clan leaders to oversee the interests of their members while remaining detached from policymaking. Participants expressed hope for similar approaches in Somalia, where clan leaders could serve as advisors or consultants on clan-related issues without undermining national unity.

Summary and Discussion of Theme 2:

This theme underscores the importance of clan leadership and governance in Somali society, highlighting the participants' perspectives on its value and limitations. Clan relations are vital for trust and social cohesion, especially during periods of instability, and participants recognized the role of clan leadership in fostering solidarity and resolving conflicts. Clan relations are crucial in Somalia, particularly during times of war, so that one can know who one can trust and share information (Salah, 2011). However, there was a consensus that clan involvement in national politics has caused significant harm, particularly during and after the civil war. Wheatley (1992), “Leadership is always dependent on the context, but the context is established by the relationships we value; therefore, leadership is a relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish positive change” (p. 144).

Participants advocated for a separation of powers, where clan leadership would focus on traditional roles while national governance operates independently. They were open to limited clan involvement in national matters, such as providing advisory support or addressing clan-related issues that impact the broader society. This nuanced perspective reflects the participants' recognition of the importance of preserving the clan's cultural and social role while mitigating its politicization to support nation-building efforts. As Fatuma remarked, while the destructive potential of clan involvement in national politics cannot be ignored, there is hope that future generations of leaders may bridge the gap between clan identity and national unity. The challenge lies in balancing the clan's historical significance with the need for a cohesive and inclusive national governance system.

Theme 3: Government and Clan History Relationship:

This theme explores the interplay between past and present governments and clans in Somalia, analyzing whether these relationships have been a help or hindrance. Traditionally, Somalis are independent and egalitarian, yet fiercely loyal to their clans. Ceremonial clan leaders, known as *sultans* or *boqor* in Somali (a term symbolizing unity), play symbolic roles, while actual governance and the enforcement of clan laws typically fall to elders and a council of the clan's adult males (Issa-Salwe, 1996; Lewis, 1961; Padilla & Trigo-Arana, 2013). However, the principle of their kinship was communalism in that they were self-governing, autonomous entities where all members took part directly or indirectly in the daily running of the tribe (Clapham, 2017; Lewis, 1960b; Mamdani, 1996). Clan affiliations and their societal impact are deeply ingrained in Somali identity, as (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010) noted, "human communication is the central process that creates, maintains, and transforms realities" (p. 49).

The relationship between government and clans has evolved over time, beginning with the European colonial era and continuing post-independence. For instance, during Italy's trusteeship regime, clan leaders were influential in post-colonial political activity, though their loyalty remained with their clansmen (Trunji, 2015). Asha reflected, *during the post-colonial period, clans did not have executive power but participated in consultations and elections. They worked with government leaders, including civil authorities.* According to Schein (2010),

Culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin in that leaders first start the process of culture creation when they create groups and organizations...if they do not become conscious of the culture in which they are embedded, those cultures will manage them (p. 22)

Sub-theme: Distinct Roles of Government and Clan:

Clans emphasize loyalty to their members, with their past involvement in politics often described Lewis (1958), as “agnation (patrilineage) that is far more important than party solidarity” (p. 348). Participants recognized the importance of loyalty to their clan genealogy, considering it deeply personal. However, they did not view it as something that inherently limits other aspects of their lives. However, Touval (1963) noted that Somali nationalism stems from a collective consciousness shaped by tribal genealogies, Islamic ties, and conflicts with foreign peoples. Clan loyalty has always mattered but the participants stressed the distinction between clan and government roles. Hassan asserted, *the government’s role is to address national interests, not the betterment of specific clan members or families*. Despite this, participants viewed the government as a distant entity concerned primarily with political affairs, while clans remained intimately tied to the community’s needs. Hirsi explained, *clan and government leadership have different job descriptions: clans focus on their communities’ welfare, while the government addresses national interests*.

Participants expressed skepticism about the government’s effectiveness, linking its shortcomings to political tribalism. Fatuma observed, *government lacks the reliable structure of clans and could benefit from their leadership to build trust*. This sentiment underscores the perceived inadequacies of the current government system and the enduring strength of clan leadership. A leader strives to bring clarity to situations by articulating and interpreting what has previously been implicit or unspoken...in essence, a critical aspect of leadership is the ability to shape and organize meaning effectively (Bennis & Nanus, 1985).

Sub-theme: Political Separation of Clan and Government:

Participants widely agreed that the traditional roles of government and clan leaders should

remain distinct. Mohamud emphasized, *government represents national identity, whereas clans represent their members... they should not be mixed but can collaborate in areas such as mediation and conflict resolution*. The participants discussed the factors contributing to the country's dysfunction and political deadlock, focusing on clan-related dynamics. They emphasized the division and noted that clans are better suited for managing internal member affairs rather than national politics. Others, like Bashir, echoed this view, arguing that the *blending of clan and government responsibilities risks undermining national cohesion*. Participants viewed traditional relationships as supportive and their leadership as more trustworthy, which they believe contributes to the division of power.

A universal challenge in transitioning from a kinship-based social organization to a state-based system lies in preventing internal ethnic violence. This requires persuading individuals to cooperate and build trust with non-kin members of society, fostering a sense of shared identity and collective purpose that transcends familial or tribal loyalties (Coe, et al., 2013). However, the participants believe that integrating clan power-sharing into governing bodies could lead to more discriminatory policies, potentially disadvantaging certain clans. The contentious 4.5 clan power-sharing formula, introduced after the civil war, exemplifies the challenges of merging clan influence with government. While intended to reconcile rival factions, it was criticized as unjust and discriminatory, deepening mistrust among clans (Hesse, 2010). Participants expressed concern that political tribalism, fueled by unresolved historical grievances, continues to hinder Somalia's progress.

Sub-theme: Government Can Benefit from Clan Leadership:

Despite their reservations, participants acknowledged that the government could learn from the leadership qualities exhibited by clan elders. Clans have long provided stable and reliable

leadership, rooted in communalism and kinship, which participants saw as beneficial for fostering trust and reconciliation (Clapham, 2017; Collins, 2006; Hoehne, 2010).

Ali suggested, *clans can play a reconciliatory role, helping governments rebuild society by leveraging their strong relationships with the population*. In Somali society, particularly among nomadic communities where clan warfare can easily arise from disputes over land or water, reconciliation serves as a vital survival mechanism. According to Coe, et al. (2013), “These conflicts could have multigenerational effects, leading to blood feuds that were perpetuated through future generations, with future generations inheriting the conflict without being aware of its initial cause” (p.112). Somalia's clan feuds have been a persistent feature throughout the country's history, as extensively documented in the literature. However, there is also a notable capacity for reconciliation, especially among the nomadic communities. Similarly, *Asha argued that clan leaders' experience in mediation and conflict resolution could serve as a model for government leadership*.

As Menkhaus (2007b) highlighted that clan elders have successfully managed conflicts in pastoral areas, providing a modest level of security in the absence of a central state. The endurance of traditional institutions entails complex and paradoxical implications for contemporary Africa's governance. On the one hand, traditional institutions are highly relevant and indispensable, and already governing much of rural Africa. On the other hand, their endurance creates institutional fragmentation that has adverse impacts on Africa's governance and socioeconomic transformation Mengisteab (2019).

Summary and Discussion Theme 3:

This theme underscores the complex and evolving relationship between government and clans in Somalia. Participants advocated for a collaborative relationship in which clans support reconciliation and community-building, while the government focuses on national governance. As Bashir succinctly stated, *Leadership should be transparent and supportive of its people,” reflecting the qualities participants hope to see in both government and clan leadership.* While participants appreciated the stability and communal focus of clan leadership, they resisted the integration of clans into national politics, citing concerns about political tribalism and corruption. Achieng (2015) highlighted that, despite the scarce documentation of peace initiatives, traditional institutions in Africa have been pivotal in addressing crises, such as those in Angola, Rwanda's post-genocide reconciliation process, and Liberia (as cited in Mulumebet et al., 2024). While historical attempts to merge these systems have faced challenges, the potential for mutual learning and collaboration remains a promising avenue for Somalia's future governance.

Conclusion:

According to Bulhan (2008),

The Somali clan system is rooted in a chain of paternal ancestors, tracing back to a mythical founding figure whose name serves as a collective identity for all clan members. This patrilineal structure, emphasizing only male ancestry, inherently supports male dominance (p. 9)

This study aims to examine the leadership structure of Somali clans and state governance institutions. Specifically, it contributes to the field by exploring and understanding the experiences and perspectives of the Somali diaspora in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. While existing literature has offered varying interpretations of Somali clan dynamics—ranging

from segmentary and primordial to adaptable and contemporary—the diaspora participants' perspectives reveal elements of truth in each viewpoint. For instance, participants acknowledged their clan identity as an intrinsic part of their sense of self while simultaneously articulating the rationality or limitations of clan attachment. They noted that clan identity holds less significance for them compared to Somali nomads but maintained a sense of loyalty, particularly evident among the diaspora. The research also highlights strong support among participants for a separation of powers between clan culture and national governance. While participants recognized the importance of both clan structures and government institutions, they viewed the role of the government as national and that of the clan as localized, serving the interests of its members. Historically, clans have played a critical role in ensuring social stability during periods of state or clan conflict. By providing collective identity, clans have mitigated potential conflicts and served as stabilizing forces for their members.

Findings indicate that most participants maintained an attachment to their clan, rooted in the values and identity instilled during upbringing. As Bulhan (2008) observed, "A new child born enlarges not only the size of the nuclear family but also augments the number and strength of the sub-clan and clan."(p.10). However, participants also noted that education and exposure to diverse societies often led to nuanced perspectives on the benefits and reliance on clan systems. Religion was identified as a reinforcing factor for clan loyalty, with participants likening clan identity to family ties emphasized in the Quran. Heitritter (1999), underscores this connection: "Religion provided a foundation for tradition, for community solidarity, and was the source of a religiously affiliated social Brotherhood."(p. 4). The study confirms that clan cultural leadership significantly influences the identity, values, and loyalty of the Somali diaspora, presenting a distinct cultural relational leadership process separate from national governance. While most participants opposed

direct clan involvement in national governance, they supported advisory roles for clan leaders in state-building efforts, consistent with their historical contributions. Bulhan (2008), aptly noted, "Old traditions die hard—particularly so when the socialization of children, the economic relations, and belief system do not change." (p. 13). It is important to note that although the Somali diaspora from various geographical locations participated in this study, their perspectives on clan and national government leadership remained consistent.

Participants acknowledged Somalia's history of diverse governance styles, including participatory democracy, while emphasizing that clan leadership has traditionally focused on member welfare and social cohesion. This research sheds light on the enduring relevance of clan identity, the functionality of clan networks, and the collective identity they provide. While the study underscores the stabilizing effects of clan systems, it also recognizes their potential for destabilization, as Collins (2006) cautioned: "Clan-based stability is a double-edged sword, for it can also potentially destabilize." (p. 187). Nonetheless, the findings reaffirm the vital role of clans in Somalia's historical and future state-building efforts. Participants expressed a desire for strong national leadership that could collaborate with clan leadership in advisory capacities without direct power-sharing. These insights contribute to leadership theory by offering a Somali perspective on relational leadership.

Recommendations:

This study provides valuable insights into Somali clan and government leadership and their interrelations, both historically and in contemporary contexts. It is intended to assist policymakers in understanding the social structures that influence state reconstruction. Future research should explore the perspectives of Somali clan leaders regarding their roles and relationships with their members. Additionally, studies focusing on diaspora youth and their engagement with cultural

leadership could further enhance this research. The establishment of community platforms to harness the talents and contributions of diaspora members in rebuilding Somalia's political and social systems is also recommended.

Limitations:

It should be noted that the sample size of this study may be considered limited, as it focused exclusively on the Somali diaspora and did not include Somalis residing in Somalia. Furthermore, the research primarily addressed older generations within the diaspora.

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Appendixes:

Appendix 1-Consent form

Title of Project: Leadership: Somalia's clan culture vs state institutions

Name of Researcher: Farhia Abdi

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated March, 2021 (PhD study) for the above title. The researcher explained everything I need to know in order to participate in this study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during and up until the date analyzed, without giving any reason. Further, I understand if withdraw the researcher can use the information collected from me to date. I have been reassured that all the answers that I provide to the researcher are confidential.

3. I understand the researcher will be audio recording the interviews and taking notes, and will maintain my anonymity by not using any identifying information in the final report. I understand that the data will be stored in a locked secure file cabinet and personal removable drive to avoid any accidental exposure of the participant's identity. I also understand the data collected during the study may be looked at by the lead supervisor, Dr. Sheila McNamee, Dan Wulff/Sally St. George. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my data.

4. I understand that when the research is completed, the researcher will share the executive summary with me if I am interested. The researcher will also inform me that I can access the complete thesis by contacting the library of Canterbury Christ Church University Archives or the Researcher.

5. I agree that anonymous quotes from my interview may be used in published reports of the study findings. My name will be concealed unless I agree that the researcher quotes me publicly.

6. I agree for my anonymous data to be used in further research studies up to ten years.

7. I agree to take part in the above study.

☐

Name of Participant _____ Date _____

Signature _____

Name of Person taking consent _____ Date _____

Signature _____

Appendix 2-Information sheet about the research:

Title: Leadership: Somali clan culture vs state institutions

Hello. My name is Farhia Abdi. I am a doctoral student at Canterbury Christ Church University. I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being conducted and what it would involve for you.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study will investigate and better articulate the perspectives of the Somali Community living outside of Somalia in (Europe and North America). The focus is on your view of clan leadership compared to government leadership. I want to know, historically, how traditional clan leadership governed and if the approach to leadership is in any way unique or different from contemporary governmental leadership styles. Therefore, your participation in this study is very important as it will help to clarify the culture and the leadership of Somalia. For this purpose, I am collecting information from a maximum of ten people between the ages of 60-80 years, conducting either Zoom, WhatsApp, Skype, phone or in-person interviews.

Why have you been invited?

The aim of this research is to study the role of leadership in Somalia's clan leaders in comparison with government leaders. In order to understand how leadership systems work, your participation is important. The participants in this research have been selected based on various identified backgrounds in terms of age, education and profession. By participating in this interview, you will likely become aware of how clan and governments leadership styles play a role in your own upbringing and that of your family. You will perhaps also begin to think about the inner workings of leadership (that is, you are likely to acknowledge different leadership processes and styles). Therefore, your participation in this study will help advance the understanding of Somalia's traditional and state leadership, and their suitability.

Do you have to take part?

Participation in the study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether to join the study. You are free to withdraw the research, up until the point that the data is analyzed without giving a reason. You can also decide not to answer any question(s) that you are not comfortable answering.

What will happen to you if you take part?

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in an interview session. The interviews with the participants from United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US) will be conducted on Zoom, WhatsApp, Skype or phone, based on your preference. Participants in Canada (Ottawa/Toronto) will be offered the same options for an interview along with the possibility to meet face-to-face. The sessions will take 1-2 hours. As a participant, you will have intermittent comfort breaks of 15 minutes every 45 minutes or as needed. During the interview, if you express any discomfort, the interview will be terminated. You may withdraw from the study with no negative effect at any time up until the point that the data is analyzed.

You may be contacted beyond the specified timeframe of this study. For instance, the researcher may need to follow up with you to clarify information. These follow up contacts (if needed) will be conducted either by phone or online zoom, depending on your preference. With your permission, I will audio record the interview as well as take notes. All answers that you provide to me are confidential. Your name will be concealed unless you agree that I quote you publicly. No one besides the researcher and my supervisors will have access to this information without your consent. The data will be stored in a secure, locked file cabinet in my home office and on a personal, removable drive to avoid any accidental exposure of the participant's identity. With your approval, I will retain the collected data after the completion of this study for the next ten years for future projects and references.

Randomized Trial

Not applicable

Cross-over trial

Not applicable

Expenses and payments

There will be no remuneration involved in this research.

What will you be asked to do?

The research examines leadership in Somali society's historic clan and government institutions, and their influence on culture and societal function. The goal is to conduct interviews with community members within Canada, United States (US) and United Kingdom (UK) to gain perspectives on Somalia's clan and government leadership. The interviews will take place at a mutually agreed-upon time and place; however, because of the pandemic, and in consideration of your health and safety as well as mine, we will follow the Canadian Public Health guideline (i.e., mask wearing and social distancing). Ten members of the local Somali community living in

Europe and North America will be interviewed. Some of the questions that the participants will be asked include:

- A) How would you describe the historic clan and state governing leadership structure in Somalia based on your experience?
- B) Do you think the clan cultural leadership structure differs from state leadership? Why or why not?
- C) How would you describe the role clan cultural leadership plays in Somali contemporary governance?
- D) Do you see clan leadership influencing the process of state building? How so?
- E) What are the other leadership elements that can help the Somali culture and society?

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

I would like to inform you that, during the interview, a personal profile (age, education, etc.) will be established; however, your identity will not be shared publicly. There is no risk to you by participating in this research as you will only share your perspective or knowledge on clan and government leadership in Somalia.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The topic of this research is Leadership: Somalia's clan vs State leadership. By answering the interview questions, you will likely become aware of role of leadership culture and institutional values that may have impacted or played a role on your own values and that of your family. You may also share your personal awareness of this topic with the community in general. The result will be published in an academic publication for distribution to a wider academic audience for further research. The research could aid policy makers to develop awareness of the country's social structure and its bases of influence in state development. Therefore, your participation in this study is important to the understanding of how leadership works in Somalia, the impact it has, and the kind of leadership suitable for future governments.

What if there is a problem? If there is any concern about your participation in this study and the way you have been dealt with during the study or any possible harm you might suffer, the researcher will address this by putting you in touch with Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) supervisor committee: Dr Sheila McNamee, Dan Wulff and Sally St. George.

Part 2 of the information sheet

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

Nothing will happen to you as you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time during and up until the point your data is being analyzed. I will follow the ethical practice of reliability and care of data; therefore, all personal information will be handled in confidence.

Complaints

Any complains about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to me, and I will do my best to address your concerns. You can leaving a message on the 24-hour voicemail phone number 613-796-8818. Please leave a contact number and say that the message is for [Farhia] and I will get back to you as soon as possible. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this by contacting: Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) supervisory committee: Sheila McNamee, Dan Wulff/Sally St. George.

Will information from or about you taking part in the study be kept confidential?

All information collected will be treated confidential, and unless agreed otherwise, all referenced in publications, or other form of public participation or presentations will be anonymized as any identifiable information will be removed.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The goal will be eventually present to present the research along with the date collected in appropriate academic and professional, through publications, conference presentations, etc. However, the participants will be given copies of any publication based on the research if requested or it can be accessed on the CCCU-library.

Who is organizing and funding the research?

The research is self-funded through Canterbury Christ Church University.

Who has reviewed the study?

This research has been reviewed by an independent group of people, called the Research Ethics Committee, to protect your interests. This study has been given a favourable opinion by the Research Ethics Committee, Salomon's Centre for Applied Psychology, Canterbury Christ Church University. When the research is completed, I will share the executive summary with you if you are interested. I will also inform all participants about how you can access the complete thesis by contacting the library of Canterbury Christ Church University Archives or myself. If you have concerns or questions about your involvement in the study, you can contact the research lead supervisory committee Chair. Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) Advisors: Sheila McNamee, Dan Wulff/Sally St. George.

Further information and contact details

If you are not satisfied with the responses you received from this researcher or the research supervisors, you can contact Canterbury Christ Church's ethical committee chair, Professor, Alex Hassett.

Appendix 3: Community agency's participation research permission letters

Somali Centre for Family Services 
 200-1719 Bank St. Ottawa, ON K1V 7Z4 Tel: (613) 526-2075 Fax: (613) 526-2803
 Website: www.scfsottawa.org, Email: info@scfsottawa.org

Date: March 19, 2021

Subject: Farhia Abdi, PhD student at Canterbury Christ Church University- Salomon's Institute of Applied Psychology,

To whom it May Concern

Letter of Authorization to Conduct Research at Our Site:

This letter will serve an authorization of Ms. Farhia Abdi (PhD student) to conduct the research project entitled, *Leadership: Somali clan culture vs state institutions* at our site. We are glad to offer you an opportunity to conduct your research at our facility. All interviews and distribution of your research materials are approved by our organization. If you have any question or require additional information please contact me at my email: a.karod@scfsottawa.org

Sincerely;


 Abdirizak Karod, MA, Executive Director

Somali Centre for Family Services
 1719 Bank Street, Suite 303
 Ottawa, Ontario K1V 7Z4
 Tel: (613) 526-2075 Fax: (613) 526-2803

XARUNTA U ADEEGGA BEESHA IYO BULSHADA SOOMAALIYEED



Somali American Parent Association
1821 University Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55104
momoh@mnsapa.org
612-359-4949

Name: Mohamed Mohamud
Executive Director of Somali American Parent Association
Address: 1821 University Ave Ste 147 St. Paul, MN 55104

Farhia Abdi
PhD student at Canterbury Christ Church University- Salomons Institute of Applied Psychology
375 Lefebvre Way, Ottawa, ON,

To whom it May Concern

Letter of Authorization to Conduct Research at Our Site:

This letter will serve an authorization of Ms Farhia Abdi (PhD student) to conduct the research project entitled, *Leadership: Somali clan culture vs state institutions* at our site. We are glad to offer you an opportunity to conduct your research at our facility. All interviews and distribution of your research materials are approved by our organization. If you have any question or require additional information please contact me at #

Sincerely
Mohamed Mohamoud

Executive Director of SAPA



BARNET SOMALI COMMUNITY GROUP, ALGERNON Rd, Hendon London NW4 3TA; Email; info@barnetsomalicommunity.org.uk Tel: 02082029311

26th March, 2021

Re-Farhia Abdi

PhD student at Canterbury Christ Church University- Salomons Institute of Applied Psychology

To whom it May Concern

Letter of Authorization to Conduct Research at Our Site:

This letter will serve as an authorization of Ms Farhia Abdi (PhD student) to conduct the research project entitled, *Leadership: Somali clan culture vs state institutions* at our site. We are glad to offer Ms Farhia an opportunity to conduct her research at our facility. All interviews and distribution of her research materials are approved by our organization. If you have any question or require additional information, please contact me at info@barnetsomalicommunity.org.uk

Sincerely,

Mahad Farah

Community Development Coordinator

Barnet Somali Community Group



MIDAYNTA Community Services

Main Office: 1992 Yonge Street, Suite 203, Toronto, Ontario M4S 1Z8
 Tel: 416-544-1992 • Fax: 416-440-3379 • info@midaynta.com • www.midaynta.com
 Jane Street Hub: 1541 Jane Street, Toronto, Ontario M9N 2R3 • Tel: 416-645-7575 ext. 5

Ubah Farah
 1541 Jane Street Unit 149
 Toronto ON, M9N 2R3

Re: Farhia Abdi
 PhD student at Canterbury Christ Church University- Salomons Institute of Applied Psychology
 375 Lefebvre Way, Ottawa, ON,

Dear: Sir/Madam

Letter of Authorization to Conduct Research at Our Site:

This letter will serve an authorization of Ms. Farhia Abdi (PhD student) to conduct the research project entitled, *Leadership: Somali clan culture vs state institutions* at our site. We are glad to offer you an opportunity to conduct your research at our facility. All interviews and distribution of your research materials are approved by our organization. If you have any question or require additional information, please contact me at # 416-645-7575 Ext: 2813 or 416-518-5978.

Sincerely

Ubah Farah
 Housing Manager



**School of Psychology, Politics and Sociology Faculty of Social
and Applied Sciences In partnership with Professional
Development Foundation**

Chapter Five: Exploration of One Agency's Community Programming for the Somali Diaspora Community: A Case Study:

Summary:

This case study examined how a local community agency engages with its community to design and implement customized cultural services, such as the Settlement and Integration Program. It also explored the potential for fostering dialogue with community members to develop culturally sensitive programming. The research question for this study was shaped by insights from a previous Small-Scale project, which emphasized the importance of community engagement, meaningful dialogue, and the need for agencies to create well-defined programs. These programs should actively involve community members in the development and execution of tailored initiatives.

Background to my research:

This study explores the socio-cultural integration of migrant communities, with a focus on Somali expatriates, by examining their sense of belonging, language proficiency, and interactions with host societies (Ehrkamp, 2005; Gijssberts & Dagevos, 2007; Snel et al., 2006; Vancluysen et al., 2009). My Applied Research Project (ARP) investigated the relationship between Somali clan

culture and state institutions, inviting participants to share their experiences with historic clan and state governance structures in Somalia. The findings from my small-scale project highlighted the importance of Somali community engagement and collaboration with local service providers to co-create culturally sensitive programs. These programs aim to fulfill the community's aspiration for a governance model that integrates government institutions with traditional leadership. Participants expressed a need for initiatives that help maintain emotional and cultural ties to their children and ancestral homeland while also fostering a sense of belonging and connection necessary for successful integration into their new society.

As Gsir et al. (2015) observe, migration—whether voluntary or forced—often creates a desire to remain connected to one's homeland through cultural practices, oral histories, and storytelling. Culture, including behaviors such as language use (Filhon, 2013), plays a vital role in maintaining these connections. Family histories and genealogies, for example, establish links to the past, connecting individuals with both people and places (Lewicka, 2014). The Somali diaspora, one of the largest sub-Saharan communities in Canada, has significantly shaped the country's immigrant population (Legace et al., 2012). Following the collapse of Somalia in 1990, approximately two million people became refugees, widely dispersed across Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and North America (Lewis, 2008).

This case study examined how a Canadian government-funded agency, responsible for serving Somali community, engaged with, selected, and delivered services to address the community's specific needs. The findings provide insights into best practices and strategies based on the practical experiences of a local government agency, offering a valuable resource for other organizations designing community service programs. These findings also inform policymakers

by highlighting the importance of cultural integration and guiding the development of socially beneficial policies that align with the community's desire for culturally tailored services.

Additionally, engaging Somali expatriates in dialogue deepens our understanding of their cultural needs and the relationship between Somali institutional practices and behaviors, both within Somalia and in the diaspora.

Research questions:

The aim of this study is to explore how a government fund local community agency engages with its community and to understand the processes involved in providing and facilitating customized cultural services, such as the Settlement and Integration Program. Accordingly, the primary research questions guiding this case study are as follows:

- What, if any, role do community agencies play in the process of adopting customized programs that are culturally geared towards the Somali community's traditional values (e.g., cultural events, food, social connections)?
- In what ways, if any, do these customized services enable the community to have a connection in the wider Canadian society as well as build local community relations?
- How has the community's life context changed, if at all, since the arrival of the Somali diaspora in Canada? What seems to lead to this change?
- Are there any difficulties communicating key information that migrants need to form community contributions? If so, what are these difficulties?

Data derived from the analysis of semi-structured interviews and document reviews highlighted key changes required in community services to institutionalize community engagement in the development and delivery of programs.

Method:

A qualitative, descriptive, single-case study approach was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews and secondary data sources, such as publicly available materials. The unit of analysis focused on a settlement and integration program within a local government-funded agency that provided services to the Somali community. According to Yin (2018), the primary objective of a case study is to examine and describe a phenomenon within its real-world context. This Professional Practice project analyzed the programs offered by a community agency serving the Somali community in Ottawa, Canada, with a particular emphasis on the Settlement and Integration Program and its service delivery to the community.

Research site:

This study, conducted in Ottawa, Canada, critically explores the role of a local government-funded community agency in addressing the settlement and integration needs of Somali newcomers through culturally tailored programming. According to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), settlement programs are designed to equip newcomers with the knowledge, language skills, and social networks necessary for informed decision-making and successful integration. These programs aim to help immigrants and refugees overcome specific barriers and fully engage in Canadian social, cultural, civic, and economic life. IRCC provides funding for these programs both domestically and internationally, supporting capacity-building initiatives for recipient organizations. While IRCC's statement reflects a positive commitment to facilitating the integration and support of newcomers, it remains limited in scope, specificity, and depth. It fails to adequately address systemic and institutional barriers, the complexity and diversity of newcomers' needs, and the necessity of implementing culturally sensitive and accessible programs.

A more comprehensive, detailed, and action-oriented approach is required—one that includes provisions for structural reform, mental health support, program evaluation, and equitable access to essential services. Only with such measures can the statement's goals translate into tangible outcomes that foster meaningful settlement and integration for all newcomers.

Community-based agencies, however, are uniquely positioned to bridge these gaps in IRCC's settlement framework. By offering localized, practical, culturally sensitive, and inclusive support, these agencies can play a pivotal role in addressing unmet needs. Through tailored services, targeted advocacy, and active community engagement, they can empower newcomers to overcome systemic barriers, build connections, and thrive within their new environments.

The local agency partnered was established in 1991 in response to a significant influx of Somali refugees, initially focused on preserving Somali culture and heritage. Over time, however, its mission shifted to address the pressing settlement and integration needs of the community. Although the agency continues to prioritize cultural appropriateness, it now emphasizes social well-being and adaptation to Canadian society. This shift highlights the ongoing challenge of balancing cultural preservation with the practical demands of integration, raising questions about the agency's effectiveness in meeting the community's diverse needs. The agency's core program, the Immigrant Settlement and Integration Program, offers services such as housing assistance, language learning, employment support, financial literacy, and guidance on obtaining essential documentation. These services are designed to facilitate settlement and integration while fostering a sense of belonging. However, a critical examination of the agency's services reveals that its broad approach may not fully address the specific and evolving needs of the Somali community, particularly in maintaining cultural identity within the context of Canadian society.

Belonging, as defined by Mee and Wright (2009), connects individuals and communities to their environment through a sense of attachment and identity. However, for Somali newcomers, this sense of belonging is fraught with complexities. They must navigate the challenge of preserving cultural values while adapting to a new societal framework. While the agency's initiatives aim to address this duality, it remains unclear whether they truly meet the diverse needs of the Somali community. The agency has recently acknowledged these challenges by shifting its focus toward community outreach and incorporating input from the community into program design. However, this shift is relatively new, and questions remain about the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of these changes.

This case study critically investigates how the agency operationalizes its services and integrates community feedback into its program delivery. Despite the extensive literature on Somali culture and diaspora (e.g., Cassanelli, 1982; Hess, 1966; Issa-Salwe, 1994; Lewis, 1965; Laitin & Samatar, 1987; Touval, 1963), there is limited research on how settlement services are tailored to balance cultural preservation and integration. This study highlights the importance of addressing this gap and critically examining the processes through which services are designed and delivered to meet the Somali community's unique needs. Analysis of project documentation and interviews with agency representatives revealed the need for significant changes in outreach, engagement, and dialogue with the community. The agency recognizes the differing needs of the Somali community, such as those of older, established members versus newer arrivals, and has shifted its approach to better address these disparities. While this shift reflects an increased focus on community input, it raises questions about whether it fully addresses structural barriers and incorporates the voices of marginalized subgroups within the community.

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how culturally tailored programming can support the settlement and cultural preservation of Somali newcomers. It provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by agencies serving diverse communities and offers lessons for policymakers and practitioners in developing culturally responsive, community-driven settlement programs. However, it also underscores the need for further research on how agencies can move beyond superficial engagement to foster meaningful, sustainable partnerships with the communities they serve.

Study participant:

Through my professional network, I identified a local government-funded agency that serves the Somali community in Ottawa, Canada, as the focus of my proposed case study. The agency designated a representative with extensive knowledge of its programs, including the Settlement and Integration Program, to participate in the study. I chose to focus on the Settlement and Integration program because it is the primary initiative through which tailored programming for migrants is developed. The participant, who has been with the organization for ten years, was selected for their deep experience and expertise in the program. Additionally, this study explores the participant's understanding of the community's needs and examines how well the agency's services integrate customized cultural programming.

Data collection:

Data for this study were collected from two sources: interviews and documents. A qualitative descriptive single-case study approach was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews and secondary data sources (i.e., publicly available materials) to develop a comprehensive understanding of the participant's experience in leading the local agency's Settlement and Integration Program. A single participant was deemed adequate for this study, as this individual

possesses extensive knowledge of the Settlement and Integration Program's history within the agency and is uniquely positioned to provide insights into the program's operations and its significance to migrants. The agency's decision to nominate this participant for the interview, based on their vast expertise in the Settlement and Integration Program, reinforces the justification for focusing on a single participant. According to Yin (2018), a single-case study is suitable when "the objective is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation—again because of the lessons it might provide about the social processes related to some theoretical interest" (p. 86).

This approach provided a deeper understanding of the services and resources offered to the Somali community in Ottawa. Yin (2018) emphasizes that "interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs or actions" (p. 120). In this research, interviews were appropriate as they facilitated an exploration of the participant's experiences during the evolution of the Settlement and Integration Program, including the challenges faced and the lessons learned. Two interviews were conducted with the participant: the first interview lasted 90 minutes, and the follow-up interview lasted approximately one hour. The second interview allowed for deeper exploration of ideas and themes identified in the initial interview while addressing clarifications or new questions that arose from reviewing the first interview and accompanying documents.

The documents reviewed were classified into three categories:

1. **Policy Documents:** These provided evidence of how the agency structures and implements services to the community.

2. **Annual Reports:** These included details about the Settlement and Integration Program’s mandate, participant engagement, and yearly outcomes, highlighting the program’s success and progress.
3. **Public Materials:** These comprised information published on the agency’s website and the processes for keeping this information updated.

The information contained in these three categories of documents corroborated the participant’s account of how the agency, at the policy and strategic planning level, delivers services and executes its projects. This triangulation of data from interviews and documents strengthened the validity of the study’s findings.

Table 7

An Overview of the Secondary Data Source Documents

Document type	Document name
Policy development	Comprehensive strategic planning and service delivery model: Settlement initiatives/recruitment policy
Website-public information	Building inclusion through settlement and integration: About the agency, events, and videos
Reports	Annual highlights of the most significant activities, services, and programs as well as outcomes and results of the settlement and integration services

Data analysis:

In this study, I employed thematic analysis to examine both primary and secondary data due to “its flexibility”, which is a key advantage of this method (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 4).

Thematic analysis was selected over other qualitative methods because it allowed for an interpretive focus and the ability to synthesize multiple data sources into coherent patterns. Methods like grounded theory, content analysis, phenomenological analysis, and discourse analysis were not chosen because they either did not align with the research objectives—such as theory-building or linguistic analysis—or focused on specific aspects of data, like individual lived experiences or frequency counts, which did not fully address the complexity of the Settlement and Integration Program’s implementation and impact. Thematic analysis offered the right balance of flexibility and structure for analyzing the rich, multi-dimensional data collected in this case study.

While case study methodology was central to this research, focusing solely on within-case analysis, without thematic analysis, would have limited the ability to identify recurring patterns across diverse data sources. Case study research typically involves various types of data, such as interviews, documents, and observations, and thematic analysis provided the necessary tools to integrate and analyze both primary (interview) and secondary (document) data. This ensured a comprehensive understanding of the case study’s context and content. The six-phase approach to thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) was followed for its systematic framework, which facilitates the emergence of themes and new insights. As Braun and Clarke (2006) state, “Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (p. 6). This method goes beyond categorization, allowing for the interpretation of complex aspects of the research topic in a manner that enhances accuracy and sensitivity (Boyatzis, 1998).

Although there is no one specific way to conduct thematic analysis, the six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) guided the transparent and rigorous analysis of data in this study. These phases are as follows:

1. Familiarization with the data
2. Generation of initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Following the collection of interview data and secondary documents (as detailed in Table 7), I transcribed the interviews and uploaded all data to NVivo software. NVivo facilitated the data analysis process by managing, coding, and developing emergent themes. The analysis began with multiple readings of the interview transcripts and secondary documents to ensure thorough familiarity with the data before coding began.

In the second review, I made preliminary notes and recorded initial reflections. During the third review, I identified relevant text excerpts aligned with the research questions and initiated the coding process. As Braun and Clarke (2006) describe, coding involves "organizing your data into meaningful groups" (p. 88). I systematically compared and cross-referenced text excerpts and codes, identifying as many potential themes and patterns as possible. To ensure rigor, I identified as many potential themes and patterns as possible through coding. Afterward, I conducted several cycles of grouping the codes into broader categories, merging duplicates, and eliminating any codes that were not relevant to the study. For example, non-relevant data included personal information about the participant, unrelated interests, or documents not related to the settlement and integration program. Subsequently, I engaged in an iterative process of identifying, reviewing, and refining the themes. This involved revisiting the data and adjusting the thematic framework to ensure alignment with the research objectives. The categories identified during the coding phase

were organized into overarching themes and sub-themes that captured broader conceptual relationships. The process of reading, re-reading, defining, and naming themes continued until a final set of themes and sub-themes emerged, providing a coherent and comprehensive representation of the data.

Simultaneously, the analysis of secondary source documents, as outlined in Table 7, was conducted in an iterative manner alongside the interview data. These documents helped deepen the understanding of the organization's processes, practices, and community engagement strategies. Furthermore, they enriched the participant's accounts, providing a broader perspective on how the organization designed and delivered culturally relevant services. Discrepancies or gaps identified during the review of secondary documents were addressed in the follow-up interview with the participant. This second interview allowed for clarification of inconsistencies, deeper exploration of key themes, and validation of the findings. By triangulating data from multiple sources, including the participant's accounts and the secondary documents, the study ensured a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the organization's settlement and integration program and its engagement with the community.

Ethical issues:

All participant information was treated with strict confidentiality. The data collected in this study was accessible only to the researcher and research supervisors and was not shared with others. All information was securely stored in a locked location and was not released or used in any publications without the participant's explicit knowledge and permission. The anonymity of the participant and their agency was carefully maintained throughout the research process. It should be noted that the agency examined in this study is one of several providing services to this community. To ensure privacy, all reports, publications, and presentations derived from this

research used pseudonyms instead of real names, and no identifying details about the participant or their agency were included. Participants were also informed that they could choose not to answer any questions they found uncomfortable at any stage of the research process. An Informed Consent Form was reviewed and signed by the participant (see Appendix 1—Informed Consent Form). Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Ethics Panel of Salomons Institute for Applied Psychology at Canterbury Christ Church University, in collaboration with the Professional Development Foundation Board of Studies.

Results and Discussion:

The results of this research are presented through detailed examples and discussions that address the research questions. A thematic analysis was conducted, highlighting the primary and secondary themes that emerged from the data. This case study aimed to explore how a local government-funded community agency engages with the community, focusing on the creation and facilitation of culturally customized services such as the Settlement and Integration Program. Additionally, the study sought to understand how the agency could engage community members in dialogue to collaboratively develop culturally sensitive programming.

The data analysis, which included semi-structured interviews and document reviews, revealed a need for significant changes within the agency, particularly regarding its engagement strategies and program delivery processes. The findings indicate that while the agency has taken steps to enhance its services, a reevaluation of its approach is required to better address the community's needs. An analysis of the participant interview, along with a review of the agency's policies, strategic planning documents, and settlement project delivery processes, revealed that the agency has adopted a flexible approach to improving its services. The interviewed representative described this approach as follows:

The community calls us for various services they need. We always want to expand our programs, particularly those the community specifies. However, sometimes after discussion and deliberation among our senior management, we prioritize the emerging needs based on our capacity. I believe the way to reach our goal is to build more partnerships

He further added the agency's basic principle is to help the community more to make sure they have the services they need—like addressing language barriers, housing, and the educational system. This insight underscores the agency's emphasis on adaptability and collaboration in meeting the diverse and cultural needs of the community. The thematic analysis further revealed that while the agency is committed to addressing emerging needs, there is a pressing need to enhance its capacity to engage the community more effectively and co-create culturally sensitive programs. This includes building stronger partnerships with other organizations and fostering a more inclusive dialogue with community members.

Table 8

Themes Identified in the Data Analysis Process

	Theme	Description	Sub-themes
	Theme 1: Organization's engagement.	This theme describes what strategic plans the agency uses and how those plans shape the services to the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community request • Needs Assessment • Workshops/information sessions

Theme 2: Partnership Building	This theme describes the agency's plan to build relationships with the community and other partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community outreach • Working with parents
Theme 3: Diverse Community Needs	This theme describes the community's incremental changes in Canada and the diverse needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government fundings • Relationships
Theme 4: Communication Challenges	This theme describes the challenges that the agency faces by addressing myths and cultural expectations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust issues • Responsibilities

Theme 1: Organization's Engagement:

Over the past few years, the local organization has made considerable efforts to enhance its services by addressing the community's cultural needs through the development of more targeted and culturally appropriate programs. These efforts, as outlined in the organization's reports and strategic planning initiatives, reflect a commitment to tailoring services to meet the specific needs of the community. This theme explores the strategic plans implemented by the agency and analyzes how these plans have influenced and shaped the delivery of services to better support the community. The intent behind the strategy of developing outreach activities is to serve as an integral component of creating targeted cultural programming. By directly engaging with the community, these outreach efforts aim to identify specific cultural needs, build trust, and ensure that programs are both relevant and impactful. This approach enables the organization to establish

stronger connections with the community while tailoring services to address its unique cultural contexts effectively.

Sub-theme—Community requests:

Over recent years, the organization has implemented initiatives aimed at addressing barriers experienced by the Somali community since their arrival in Canada. These efforts originated within the community, with members articulating their needs to the agency. This community-driven approach highlights an essential strength: responsiveness to grassroots input. However, the execution of these efforts, as described, raises questions about the agency's capacity to sustain and scale its initiatives effectively. The frontline workers play a central role in identifying community needs and relaying them to management. According to the participant:

This comes from the frontline worker based on the emerging items. They will bring this to management's attention, then they assess the need and decide if this is something we can partner with our other community partners or it's something we can provide ourselves—for example, English as a Second Language (ESL). We offer communication classes, but we get volunteer teachers coming from other local partners

While this decentralized process underscores the importance of frontline workers' insights, it also points to a potential gap in organizational structure. Reliance on individual staff members to identify needs and on management to determine feasibility suggests a reactive rather than proactive approach to community engagement. This raises critical questions: Does the agency have systems in place to anticipate and plan for evolving community needs? Are there mechanisms to evaluate the long-term impact of its initiatives?

The agency's partnerships with local organizations are presented as a key strategy for addressing resource constraints. Its 2020–2024 strategic plan identifies the development of partnerships and a community relations team as major achievements. While collaboration with other organizations is a commendable strategy, it is not without limitations. Partnerships often require alignment of goals, shared resources, and mutual accountability, which can delay or complicate service delivery. Further analysis of how the agency navigates these challenges would provide a more robust understanding of the effectiveness of its collaborative efforts.

The agency's recognition of the importance of cultural events, such as the "Somali Cultural Festival" and the Somali Independence Day celebrations, demonstrates its commitment to fostering cultural pride and community cohesion.

Hosting these events in partnership with the City of Ottawa allows for broader cultural exchange and visibility of Somali heritage within the Canadian context. However, the reliance on such events to address cultural needs may not be sufficient to build sustainable community connections. A deeper exploration of how these events translate into lasting outcomes—such as increased access to resources or strengthened community ties—would enhance the analysis of their impact. A significant area of improvement lies in the agency's capacity to conduct comprehensive needs assessments. While the participant acknowledged efforts to invest in staff skills for service delivery evaluation, the absence of a systematic framework for assessing community needs and outcomes is concerning. Effective needs assessments require not only skilled staff but also tools and processes that ensure inclusivity, accuracy, and strategic alignment. Without such systems, the agency risks addressing surface-level issues while deeper structural barriers remain unexamined.

While the organization has made notable strides in engaging with the Somali community and addressing immediate needs, the analysis reveals gaps in strategic planning, sustainability, and evaluation. To enhance its effectiveness, the agency must transition from a reactive, ad hoc approach to a more structured and proactive model. This includes developing robust systems for needs assessment, strengthening its strategic alignment with partners, and evaluating the long-term outcomes of its initiatives. By addressing these gaps, the agency could better position itself to meet the complex and evolving needs of the Somali community.

Sub-theme—Need assessments:

The agency's approach to service delivery, as reflected in its five-year strategic plan (2020–2024), demonstrates a concerted effort to operationalize its commitment to community service. The participant's statement— *“All our programs are based on needs and demands, and we assess all emerging items on their merit”*—underscores the organization's focus on responsiveness and adaptability. However, a critical review of the agency's strategic initiatives, processes, and challenges reveals significant strengths and areas for improvement. The agency's strategic plan is a structured attempt to create a long-term roadmap for building community capacity and enhancing service delivery. One notable initiative within the plan is the creation of a “community database (app) with a productivity and collaboration tool.” This initiative represents a forward-thinking effort to integrate technology into service delivery, potentially streamlining communication and improving resource management. Furthermore, the plan's emphasis on “knowledge exchange and capacity building with other organizations/partners” highlights a recognition of the importance of collaboration and continuous improvement through training and development.

Additionally, the strategic plan's explicit focus on Somali representation and strengthening ties with the community demonstrates cultural sensitivity and inclusivity. This aligns with the agency's goal to address the unique needs of the Somali community while fostering a sense of belonging and representation. These goals are laudable and signal a clear commitment to embedding cultural relevance into the organization's core operations. Despite its ambitious vision, the strategic plan raises critical questions about implementation and sustainability. For instance, while the community database app is a promising initiative, its feasibility remains unclear. The agency has not provided sufficient details about how this tool will be funded, maintained, or evaluated for effectiveness. Without clear metrics or a roadmap for execution, this initiative risks becoming a symbolic gesture rather than a practical solution.

Similarly, the emphasis on building partnerships and knowledge exchange, though essential, relies heavily on external collaboration. Partnerships often require careful alignment of priorities, shared resources, and sustained effort to ensure mutual benefit. The agency's capacity to manage and maintain such partnerships while delivering on its internal goals remains an open question. The Settlement and Integration Program's reliance on needs assessments as a core activity reflects the agency's commitment to community-driven service design. Frontline workers play a pivotal role in gathering information from the community and identifying gaps in services. The participant's statement— "*The majority of our program assessments come from the frontline worker who brings forward any and all emerging items from the community*"—emphasizes the grassroots nature of this approach. However, this reliance on informal feedback mechanisms, such as word of mouth, flyers, and local radio, may limit the agency's ability to systematically capture and analyze the broader needs of the community. Informal methods, while effective in engaging

the community, are prone to bias and may fail to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by underrepresented or marginalized groups.

A more robust and standardized approach to data collection, such as structured surveys or focus groups, could enhance the reliability and validity of the needs assessment process. One of the most significant barriers to achieving the agency's goals is financial limitations. The participant candidly acknowledged this challenge, stating, *"It's our challenge. We want to do all of the community's needs, but we can only do so much, and we need to go beyond the limits of funding and find other resources."* The agency's reliance on limited funding directly affects its ability to implement community-driven initiatives. While the strategic plan outlines ambitious goals, including workshops and information sessions based on emerging needs, not all program ideas can be executed due to resource constraints. This reality underscores the need for the agency to adopt a more critical approach to prioritizing initiatives. Programs that deliver the greatest impact, particularly those addressing systemic challenges such as housing, employment, and education, should take precedence over less urgent activities. Additionally, the agency must explore strategies to diversify its funding streams. Grant applications, private sponsorships, and community-led fundraising campaigns could provide supplementary resources to address unmet needs. By expanding its financial base, the agency can reduce its dependence on limited funding mandates and increase its capacity to respond to the community's evolving demands.

The strategic plan's focus on Somali representation and cultural initiatives, such as community events and celebrations, highlights the agency's commitment to fostering cultural pride and inclusivity. For example, organizing Somali Independence Day celebrations and other cultural festivals creates opportunities for the Somali community to connect with one another and

showcase their heritage to the broader Canadian society. These initiatives help build a sense of identity and belonging while strengthening ties between the community and the agency.

However, while cultural events are valuable, they do not address deeper systemic issues such as housing insecurity, language barriers, and employment challenges. The agency must strike a balance between cultural programming and initiatives that tackle structural inequities. Moreover, investing in staff training on cultural competence and community engagement can ensure that services are delivered in a manner that is both respectful and effective. The agency's strategic plan and community-driven approach demonstrate a strong commitment to addressing the needs of the Somali community. However, critical gaps in implementation, sustainability, and resource allocation must be addressed to fully realize its potential.

Sub-theme—Workshops and information sessions:

Workshops are an invaluable tool for both teaching new concepts and skills and fostering connections among participants. As noted by Talvio et al. (2016), workshops serve not only to introduce fresh ideas but also to promote practical hands-on learning, allowing participants to experiment with new methods in a safe environment. Furthermore, workshops facilitate the development of relationships, offering participants opportunities to connect with others who share similar interests or needs, as well as engage with clients and vendors on a more personal level. Talvio et al. (2016) further emphasize that workshops enhance social interaction skills, such as effective communication, active listening, and problem-solving, which are essential for collaboration and achieving shared goals. Additionally, the focus on social and emotional learning (SEL) in these environments has been shown to improve motivation, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence (Elias et al., 1997; Leroy et al., 2007), which can significantly enhance the overall well-being of participants. The local agency's settlement and integration services aim to alleviate

the barriers faced by eligible newcomers by providing essential programs and support that improve access to resources, increase awareness, and speed up their integration into Canadian society.

However, the challenge of ensuring sustainable integration and peaceful coexistence remains an ongoing issue, as noted by Okumu et al. (2018), who highlight gaps in understanding the complexities of the integration process. According to the participant, the agency's commitment to community service is reflected in its offering of a variety of workshops, such as those focusing on pathways to citizenship, English as a second language (ESL), communication skills, health, education, and parenting. These efforts align with the agency's goal to empower newcomers by providing crucial information and services that contribute to their successful settlement in Canada.

Positive Outcomes of Workshops and Information Sessions:

The 2016–2017 report highlights the agency's success in organizing 41 group information sessions that reached 458 participants. The reported outcomes of these sessions include:

- Increased awareness of available resources and life in Canada
- Improved access to healthcare and language classes, leading to enhanced socioeconomic status
- Ability to navigate various public services
- Access to job search services and networking opportunities
- Connections to Ontario employment centers, resulting in employment opportunities
- Achievement of personal goals related to settling in Canada

These positive outcomes underscore the effectiveness of workshops in fostering both practical knowledge and socio-economic mobility for newcomers. The agency's role in supporting this

transition is pivotal in ensuring the successful integration of immigrants into the broader community.

Expansion of Services and Adaptation During COVID-19:

The 2017–2018 report also highlights the diversity and comprehensiveness of services offered by the Settlement Program, which included interpretation services, job search assistance, and help with navigating government systems. This wide-ranging support is essential for empowering newcomers to overcome barriers related to language, employment, and access to essential services. However, the report does not address potential gaps in services, such as the availability of resources for mental health or support for individuals facing cultural or social isolation, which may require additional attention in future reports. The transition to remote services during the COVID-19 pandemic is a notable adaptation to ensure continuity of services despite physical distancing measures. The agency facilitated 310 group sessions remotely in 2020–2021, covering topics such as Canadian citizenship, employment support, income tax, and the impact of COVID-19. Although the shift to online platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams allowed the agency to continue supporting clients, it is crucial to consider the digital divide that may have hindered access for some participants, particularly those with limited technological resources or digital literacy. The challenge of addressing the high demand for employment-related services also underscores the agency's struggle to meet all the community's needs within its resource constraints.

Limitations and Areas for Improvement:

While the agency's comprehensive approach to settlement services is commendable, there are several areas where improvements could be made to enhance the efficacy and inclusivity of its programs:

1. **Digital Access and Inclusivity:** The shift to online platforms during COVID-19 brought attention to the digital divide, as not all participants may have had access to reliable internet or digital devices. Future efforts should include strategies to bridge this gap, perhaps through providing clients with access to digital tools or offering in-person services where feasible.
2. **Systematic Evaluation of Impact:** Although the agency reports the outcomes of its workshops, there is limited evidence of a robust system for evaluating the long-term impact of these services on participants' integration and overall well-being. Developing measurable outcomes and conducting regular evaluations would provide valuable data to inform future service delivery.
3. **Addressing Mental Health and Social Isolation:** While the agency offers a wide range of practical services, there is no mention of addressing the mental health challenges faced by newcomers, particularly those who may experience social isolation or trauma. Including mental health services or collaborating with mental health professionals could greatly enhance the agency's holistic approach to settlement.
4. **Resource Allocation and Funding:** The agency's reports reflect an ongoing struggle with high demand and limited resources. Exploring alternative funding options, partnerships, or innovative community-driven initiatives could help alleviate these pressures and enable the agency to expand its services further.
5. **Cultural Competence in Service Delivery:** The agency's workshops provide culturally relevant content, but it is important to ensure that all staff members receive continuous training in cultural competence to effectively address the diverse needs of the community. This would help foster greater trust and participation among clients from different cultural

backgrounds. The agency's settlement and integration services have proven effective in meeting many of the community's needs, particularly through its workshops and information sessions. The transition to online services during the pandemic was a necessary adaptation, though challenges related to digital access and inclusivity highlight areas for improvement. Moving forward, the agency should consider expanding its focus on mental health, systematically evaluating program outcomes, and exploring additional funding and resource partnerships. By addressing these gaps, the agency can continue to enhance its services and better support the integration of newcomers into Canadian society.

Theme 2—Partnership building:

Partnership building is a key priority for this local agency, as highlighted in its strategic planning. The agency has explicitly committed to fostering and expanding partnerships both within the community and with external organizations. This strategic focus aims to enhance the agency's capacity to deliver services and address the complex needs of the diverse populations it serves. The agency's efforts to develop partnerships reflect an understanding of the limitations inherent in operating independently. By collaborating with other service providers, the agency can leverage additional resources, expertise, and networks, ultimately enhancing its ability to meet community needs more effectively. Furthermore, collaboration can help ensure that services are more comprehensive and holistic, addressing the multifaceted nature of settlement and integration.

Sub-theme—Community outreach:

The agency's approach to community outreach and engagement involves a volunteer-based model, where "ambassadors" within the community serve as liaisons to communicate the needs of community members and disseminate information about new programs. This model offers a

direct, community-driven method of connecting with residents, which can enhance trust and ensure that local voices are heard. However, there are potential challenges with this approach. While volunteers may have a deep understanding of the community, their ability to accurately capture the full spectrum of community needs and effectively communicate them back to the agency may be limited by their own personal biases or knowledge gaps. Furthermore, the reliance on community volunteers means that the quality and consistency of the information provided could vary depending on the volunteers' training, experience, and commitment.

The agency's commitment to collaboration with multiple service providers in Ottawa is another cornerstone of its strategy to strengthen community services. By engaging with various community groups, social service providers, and local schools, the agency aims to address the diverse and evolving needs of newcomers. This approach fosters a more integrated service network, helping clients navigate resources across different sectors. However, the success of these partnerships' hinges on the agency's ability to manage relationships across diverse organizations with varying mandates and priorities. There is also the risk of fragmentation or misalignment between partners, particularly when resources are stretched thin, or when the agency's priorities differ from those of external service providers.

One notable aspect of the agency's partnership-building strategy is its use of student volunteers from Algonquin College, which benefits both the students, who gain hands-on experience, and the agency, which can expand its outreach efforts. However, this collaboration could raise questions about sustainability. Relying on student volunteers may offer temporary relief, but it does not address long-term staffing needs or the capacity challenges the agency faces. Moreover, student volunteers may not have the depth of knowledge or the continuity necessary to build lasting relationships with the community.

Table 9*Number of Clients Served by the Agency*

Total number of clients served from April 2017 to March 2018	
Total clients: 4620	New clients: 1963
Sessions: 104	Participants: 1074

The agency's partnership with local employment services to provide job search assistance and resume preparation is another example of how partnerships are used to bridge gaps in services. The integration of employment services into the agency's offerings can significantly enhance the settlement and integration process for newcomers, equipping them with essential skills to navigate the labor market. However, as the participant mentioned, there are limitations on what can be done due to the constraints of funding. This is a common challenge for non-profits that rely heavily on external funding and grants to support their programs. Without sufficient resources, even well-intentioned partnerships may fall short in delivering the desired outcomes.

The report also highlights the agency's focus on building partnerships with educational institutions, particularly the Ottawa Board of Education, to address issues such as school suspensions and cultural misunderstandings between students and teachers. While this initiative demonstrates a proactive approach to fostering better integration and reducing systemic barriers, it also points to a broader challenge within the agency's service model—namely, the difficulty of addressing structural or systemic issues such as cultural competency within schools. The creation of liaison staff is an important step, but it remains to be seen whether this intervention will be sufficient to change entrenched practices or biases within the educational system.

Additionally, while the agency's leadership encourages internal collaboration and the sharing of resources, the effectiveness of these strategies will depend on the agency's ability to maintain strong internal communication and coordination. The potential for silos or duplication of effort within the agency is a risk, particularly if resources are limited and staff members are stretched thin.

While the agency's partnership-building efforts represent a positive and strategic approach to addressing community needs, several challenges remain. The reliance on volunteers, the coordination of multiple external partnerships, and the sustainability of services amid financial constraints all present obstacles that the agency must address to ensure the long-term success of its outreach efforts. Ultimately, the agency must carefully balance the benefits of collaboration with the need for effective internal management and adequate resource allocation.

Sub-theme—Working with parents:

The agency's work with newcomer parents in Ottawa reflects a thoughtful approach to supporting families through programs designed to address key challenges faced by immigrant families. One example is the "Community Leadership Network for Family Project through Youth Criminal Justice," which provides education and resources for parents on crime prevention and understanding the youth criminal justice system. This initiative reflects a preventative strategy aimed at equipping parents with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate and protect their children from the risks associated with youth crime. According to the agency's report, parents who attended the workshops felt empowered, which is a positive outcome and aligns with broader community-building goals. However, the agency's approach, while valuable, also reveals some limitations. The reliance on workshops as the primary means of engagement with parents may not fully address the complexity of the issues they face. For example, while the program covers

important topics such as recognizing warning signs of youth involvement in crime and the rights and responsibilities of parents, it may not be enough to resolve the deeper, systemic challenges that many immigrants' families face, such as language barriers, access to legal support, and cultural misunderstandings within the criminal justice system.

Moreover, the agency acknowledges that a significant challenge for parents, especially newcomers, is access to affordable childcare services. While providing support through workshops and counseling is important, these efforts do not directly address the lack of infrastructure and systemic barriers to childcare that prevent many newcomer families from fully integrating into Canadian society. The agency also recognizes the differences in needs between earlier Somali immigrants and newer arrivals. Older Somali Canadians often require services focused on justice, healthcare, and employment, and they also express a desire for greater community connection. This distinction is important, as it highlights the diversity of needs within the Somali community. However, the agency's response to these needs appears to be constrained by financial limitations. For example, while the agency hosted Somali festivals to foster community connection, these events were short-lived due to lack of funding. The participant's admission that the festivals did not adequately address the specific needs of community members—such as providing spaces for dialogue—reveals a mismatch between the agency's offerings and the expressed desires of the community.

This issue of underfunding is a recurring challenge, as the agency must prioritize emerging needs of newcomers over long-term community-building initiatives. Furthermore, the agency's focus on providing support to parents through various initiatives such as parental information sessions, counseling, and student summer jobs is commendable, but it remains limited by the broader issue of resource constraints. As noted in the report, the agency's efforts to build positive

relationships between parents and mainstream agencies, while important, are hampered by the lack of funding for more substantial community events and long-term engagement. The challenges of insufficient funding and the prioritization of immediate needs often leave less room for programs that focus on broader community integration and social connection.

The participant's reflection on the need for spaces where older Somali immigrants can engage in discussions about Somalia and its issues highlights an important gap in the agency's programming. While the agency has made efforts to host cultural events and festivals, these initiatives have been short-lived and do not fully meet the community's demand for spaces of dialogue and reflection. This points to a larger issue of sustainability and the need for the agency to find ways to fund and sustain community-driven events that promote meaningful engagement and integration. In line with the findings of Okumu et al. (2018), creating environments where newcomers and host communities can interact and learn from each other is essential for fostering mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence. The agency's efforts to create a welcoming and supportive environment for newcomers are important steps in this direction. However, the challenge remains in balancing immediate settlement needs with the long-term goal of building strong, cohesive communities.

The agency's focus on day-to-day issues, such as helping newcomers secure housing, employment, and childcare, is undoubtedly crucial, but it should also continue to invest in programs that facilitate broader social integration and dialogue between different community groups. While the agency's work with newcomer parents and its efforts to support community integration are valuable, its ability to fully address the community's needs is constrained by limited resources and funding. The agency must continue to adapt its strategies, find sustainable funding sources, and consider the broader social and cultural factors that affect the long-term

integration of newcomers. Only through a more holistic, resource-intensive approach can the agency ensure that it is meeting both the immediate and long-term needs of its diverse community members.

Theme 3—Diverse community needs:

This theme highlights the community's diverse needs and the gradual progress in their integration process.

Sub-theme—Government funding:

Project funding plays a pivotal role in how agencies achieve their strategic goals, and this study reveals that it is a critical determinant of which programs are made available to the community. The challenge lies in the fact that implementing programs that align with the community's cultural values and specific needs is often hindered by a lack of financial resources. As the participant noted, the agency is limited in its ability to provide culturally relevant programs, with the exception of the annual cultural festival, which has been disrupted by COVID-19. The festival, largely funded by the City of Ottawa, is one of the few cultural events the agency can host, underscoring how program availability is dependent on securing external funding. While community events like cultural expositions can foster group identity and promote intergroup learning, the agency's ability to respond to these needs is constrained by financial limitations. The community has repeatedly expressed a desire for more opportunities to connect culturally, such as spaces for leisure or discussions, yet these needs often remain unaddressed. As previous research within this study highlights, there is a clear demand for environments where community members, especially parents, can engage with one another and discuss issues related to their shared experiences.

However, the agency is faced with the challenge of balancing the needs of newcomers, who require immediate settlement support, with the ongoing demands of long-term immigrants who seek cultural engagement. These competing priorities, combined with the limited funding, have resulted in a focus on urgent settlement and integration services rather than cultural programming. To mitigate these constraints, the agency has resorted to fundraising efforts, seeking community support to sustain some of its programs. While this strategy strengthens relationships with the community, it also underscores the inherent limitations of relying on such initiatives for long-term program sustainability. The funding-driven nature of program implementation highlights a significant challenge for the agency in addressing the full spectrum of community needs. The reliance on external funding sources to cover essential programs, especially those related to cultural connectivity, limits the agency's capacity to provide a more comprehensive and culturally inclusive set of services.

Sub-theme—Relationships:

Relationship-building is a multifaceted process that draws on diverse cultural and interpersonal skills to foster effective interactions. For community agencies, nurturing these relationships is integral to developing services that resonate with the community's needs. As the participant explained, *the agency actively seeks input from the community to design relevant workshops*. For example, during the pandemic, the agency created programs tailored for seniors, focusing on nutrition, healthy lifestyles, and culturally appropriate recreational activities to enhance physical mobility and reduce isolation. Agency staff and ambassadors played a critical role in reaching out to seniors, ensuring their needs were met during a particularly isolating time. Community engagement is a cornerstone of social services, involving community members in all stages of problem-solving—from identifying challenges to devising and implementing solutions

(Okumu et al., 2018). Building sustainable relationships with the community is not only central to effective service delivery but also vital to fostering long-term collaboration and trust. As Frazer and Fitzduff (1994) suggest, community development initiatives can empower individuals, build self-esteem, and enhance collective decision-making, thus countering feelings of isolation, apathy, and alienation.

However, relationship and trust-building is a complex and ongoing challenge, particularly with newcomers. The participant noted that *newcomers often arrive with cultural misconceptions or unrealistic expectations about life in Canada, which can lead to mistrust when reality does not align with their hopes*. For instance, he added, when agency staff provide guidance on the steps needed for career reentry or transitioning to a new professional field, some newcomers may struggle to accept or trust this advice, especially if it conflicts with their preconceived expectations. This gap in understanding creates a barrier to effective communication and engagement. Addressing such trust issues requires a deliberate and culturally sensitive approach, acknowledging the perspectives and lived experiences of newcomers while guiding them through the realities of integration. Building trust is not simply about sharing information but also about validating the challenges individuals face, creating spaces for open dialogue, and demonstrating a genuine commitment to their well-being. For agencies, this underscores the importance of combining practical support with empathetic relationship-building to bridge gaps in understanding and empower communities to navigate their new environments successfully.

Theme 4—Communication challenges:

This theme highlights the challenges the agency encountered in addressing myths and managing cultural expectations among newcomers. Many individuals arrive in Canada with

preconceived notions about their new environment, often fueled by cultural misconceptions or unrealistic expectations about the ease and speed of integration.

Sub-theme—Trust issues:

Many small agencies face growing responsibilities from the public, particularly in response to recent health crises like COVID-19. At the same time, these agencies often contend with inadequate funding to support their expanding mandates. Non-profit organizations globally operate in an increasingly competitive and complex environment, vying for funding sources, qualified staff, and clients (Jaskyte & Kisieliene, 2006; Trautmann et al., 2007). This resource shortfall has heightened their reliance on corporate sponsorship, which, in turn, has influenced their governance structures (Gray & Bishop Kendzia, 2009). One significant challenge for these agencies is building trust among clients and stakeholders, especially when expectations and realities diverge. Trust is a fundamental element in any relationship, and, as the participant observed, clients may become "suspicious" when the information they receive conflicts with their preconceived expectations. The agency attempts to address this trust gap by building partnerships with other organizations and clients.

These partnerships, as highlighted in the agency's reports, aim to enable clients to access resources and services that align with their needs. However, while partnerships can facilitate service delivery, they do not inherently foster trust. Transparent, targeted communication is essential to establish and sustain trusting relationships. The participant identified a recurring challenge with newcomers, particularly those who arrive under the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). These individuals often arrive with misconceptions about the support they will receive. As the participant noted,

As an agency, we have to deal with the misconception of the community thinking that the government gives the agency everything, and they have high expectations. Newcomers, particularly those who came to the country under the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), think they would have everything they need because the Federal government will be responsible for their settlement.

The RAP, as described by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), is a contribution program providing income support and immediate, essential services to help resettled refugees establish themselves, usually within the first four to six weeks of arrival. However, not all refugees come through the RAP, and many newcomers, especially those from refugee camps, have experienced inconsistent or unreliable information in the past. This lack of accurate information exacerbates the difficulty of aligning their expectations with the realities of settlement services in Canada.

To bridge this gap, the agency has implemented processes to educate and orient refugees on how the system works, outlining both the available support and the responsibilities they must assume. However, this educational effort alone does not suffice to overcome the trust deficit. As the participant explained,

It's a struggle to earn the newcomers' trust when it comes to what they think they were expecting and what the reality is in this case. The agency must educate by giving orientation to the refugees about the way the system works, for instance, what they should expect to get help and what they need to take care of themselves.

Despite these challenges, the agency has made efforts to build trust by reaching out to the community and promoting its programs through various channels, including volunteers, community radio, and its website. The participant reflected on the progress made in the

community over the years:

The community is much better positioned now than a decade or so ago because they have a community that services them with their own language, connects them with resources, and supports them. That is not what I and other Somalis who arrived in Canada a couple of decades ago were able to access.

The agency recognizes that cultivating trust and fostering strong relationships—both within the community and with external partners—are essential to delivering effective services. However, the ongoing challenge lies in maintaining transparency, managing expectations, and ensuring that information is appropriately tailored to the needs of the community. As the participant emphasized, *it's our responsibility as a community agency to keep at it and build that trust and relationship by giving the community appropriate information.*

While the agency has made strides in addressing misconceptions and enhancing service delivery, the persistent challenges of limited resources, cultural misunderstandings, and mismatched expectations underscore the need for more comprehensive strategies. Building trust requires not only consistent outreach but also a sustained commitment to understanding and responding to the nuanced needs of a diverse community.

Sub-theme—Responsibilities:

Non-profit organizations operate under unique conditions, as their missions often drive their purpose rather than profitability. Drucker (1990) noted that these organizations frequently struggle with evaluating the impact of their activities, as they lack a “bottom line” to measure success. This tendency is exacerbated by a reluctance to redirect resources from programs that may not produce significant results, as non-profits tend to view all their initiatives as inherently righteous. This lack of critical self-assessment can limit an agency’s capacity to prioritize effectively and adapt to

evolving community needs. Accountability, however, is critical for non-profits, especially those reliant on government funding. Such funding often comes with mandates and deliverables, leaving little flexibility to address emerging or culturally specific community needs. As Drucker pointed out, non-profits contend with a broader and more diverse range of stakeholders than for-profit organizations, which further complicates their governance. Local agencies have faced acute resource scarcity, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving them unable to respond to all community demands. This research highlights how one local agency has been constrained in its ability to meet the diverse needs of its constituents due to these limitations. The participant admitted, *“There are few programs that we are behind, such as women, youth, and other cultural programs that are mostly important to our clients.”*

The agency's Settlement and Integration Program exemplifies how funding shapes service provision. Programs are primarily designed to address immediate settlement needs, such as housing, language training, and childcare, reflecting government priorities rather than community-defined goals. While the agency has successfully improved awareness, access, and skills for newcomers, these accomplishments come at the cost of neglecting other important community requests. The participant noted that, despite their efforts, long-standing residents of the community often feel sidelined in favor of newcomers' resettlement services, creating tensions and unmet needs. This study reveals a significant misalignment between government-mandated funding priorities and the broader needs of the community. The agency operates within a framework that prioritizes immediate, measurable outcomes tied to newcomer settlement, leaving little room for cultural or long-term community-building initiatives. For example, older immigrants have expressed a desire for cultural programs that foster dialogue and connection with their homeland. However, these initiatives are deprioritized due to funding constraints. As the

participant highlighted, *“Newcomers, particularly those in the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), expect ongoing support after the program ends, which stretches our already limited resources.”*

The agency’s historical mission was to preserve cultural heritage, but its focus has shifted toward settlement and integration, as dictated by its funding streams. This shift underscores the challenges faced by non-profits in maintaining their founding values while meeting evolving demands. The agency’s reports and participant feedback suggest that while its programs are impactful, they often fail to address the full spectrum of community needs, particularly those of long-standing residents who seek cultural and social connectivity. This dichotomy between immediate and long-term priorities creates an ongoing tension within the agency’s operations. Critically, the findings highlight the need for the agency to adopt a more strategic and inclusive approach to resource allocation and program design. While the agency has made commendable efforts to engage the community through outreach, workshops, and volunteer programs, these efforts often fall short of fostering genuine trust and collaboration. The participant noted, *“The community is much better positioned now than a decade ago because they have services in their own language and access to resources, but we still struggle to meet their cultural needs.”*

The agency’s reliance on government funding necessitates a critical rethinking of its sustainability strategy. Diversifying funding sources, including corporate sponsorships, private donations, and community fundraising, could provide greater flexibility to address cultural and long-term needs. Additionally, embedding community voices into decision-making processes would not only improve program alignment but also build trust, which is essential for effective service delivery. The participant acknowledged this challenge, stating, *“It’s our responsibility as a community agency to keep building trust by giving the community appropriate information.”*

Therefore, while the agency has made significant strides in addressing newcomers' settlement needs, its dependency on narrowly defined funding streams limits its ability to serve the broader community effectively. The tension between immediate resettlement services and long-term cultural and social programs reflects a systemic issue within non-profits: the need to balance external funding priorities with internal community values. To address this, the agency must critically assess its strategic priorities, engage more deeply with its community, and seek diversified funding opportunities that allow it to fulfill its broader mission of community support and cultural preservation. Without these measures, the agency risks perpetuating the cycle of unmet needs and missed opportunities for meaningful community development.

Limitations:

This study sought to explore how a local community agency engages with its community and how it facilitates culturally tailored services, such as the Settlement and Integration Program. However, several limitations should be noted. First, the research focused solely on one program within the agency, without examining other programs or services. This narrow focus might limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader operations of the agency or similar organizations. Second, the study relied on interviews with a single participant, rather than incorporating perspectives from multiple staff members, stakeholders, or community members. While previous research within this dissertation (Applied/Small-Scale Projects) engaged with community members to gather their perspectives, the absence of direct community voices in this specific study could be seen as a limitation. This omission might constrain the study's ability to provide a holistic understanding of the agency's impact from the beneficiaries' viewpoint.

Third, the study focused on one agency and did not include comparative analyses with other organizations implementing similar culturally sensitive programs. Such comparisons could offer a

broader understanding of best practices, challenges, and innovative solutions across different contexts. Finally, the study's scope could be expanded in future research to explore broader implications for both agencies and communities. Investigating the benefits of addressing the economic, social, and governance challenges faced by migrant communities would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how social responsibility investments could enhance agency effectiveness and community well-being. Future research could expand on this study by exploring how local agencies can bridge the gap between serving first-generation newcomers and supporting the cultural identity and integration needs of second-generation immigrants.

Implications:

This research highlights the importance of community engagement in bridging gaps between agency programs and the tailored cultural needs of their clients. The findings suggest that the agency is embarking on a transformative journey to improve its cultural programming through active learning and adaptation. By acknowledging the uncertainties inherent in this process and adopting a mindset of continuous improvement, the agency can position itself as a more responsive and inclusive service provider. For the agency, this journey involves conducting comprehensive assessments of its current practices, identifying gaps, and integrating community input into its programming. By doing so, the agency not only enhances its ability to serve its community but also strengthens its internal capacity to address complex cultural needs effectively. This iterative process of learning and engagement can foster greater trust and collaboration between the agency and its community.

From a broader perspective, this case study provides practical insights into best practices and strategies that can benefit other organizations serving migrant or immigrant populations. The

lessons drawn from the agency's experience can inform the program delivery processes of similar organizations, promoting culturally sensitive and community-centered approaches.

Additionally, the findings underscore the need for ongoing investment in social responsibility and collaborative initiatives to address the economic, social, and cultural challenges faced by migrant communities. By sharing these insights, the study contributes to a growing body of knowledge that emphasizes the value of aligning organizational practices with the unique needs of diverse communities, ultimately advancing equity and social cohesion.

Conclusions:

This research provides an insightful examination of a local agency in Ottawa serving the Somali community, focusing on how it creates, engages, and implements culturally appropriate programs and services. The findings reveal that the agency's community engagement practices encompass needs assessments, workshops, information sessions, partnership-building, and outreach initiatives. However, the study also highlights critical gaps in addressing the community's expressed desire for programs fostering emotional connection with their children, promoting community dialogue, and strengthening a sense of belonging in their new homeland.

The Small-Scale Project findings emphasize that the Somali community prioritizes culturally grounded services that facilitate meaningful engagement and preserve cultural heritage. While the agency has implemented strategies to address these needs, such as adopting broader outreach policies and strengthening partnerships, there is room for improvement. Specifically, the agency's approach to identifying and analyzing the community's needs could benefit from more direct and inclusive collaboration with community members.

This study underscores the importance of community-led engagement. A key recommendation is that agency employees actively consult with community leaders and members

to better understand cultural values and priorities. Soliciting input from the community ensures that programs are not only culturally sensitive but also aligned with the unique needs and aspirations of those they serve. Furthermore, the agency is encouraged to explore funding sources beyond government programs, such as partnerships with private sector stakeholders or community-driven fundraising efforts, to develop resources that go beyond the Settlement and Integration Program's limitations.

A broader implication of this study is the need for public policies that provide enhanced funding for community-oriented initiatives. Policies should support programs that encourage community cohesion, interaction, and dialogue—not only to strengthen connections within the community in Canada but also to maintain ties with their cultural heritage and original homeland. By addressing these needs, agencies can play a critical role in fostering integration while preserving cultural identity, ultimately contributing to the well-being and empowerment of immigrant and refugee communities.

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Appendix 1-Information about this Research– Chapter Five

Title: Exploration of One Agency’s Community Programming for the Somali Diaspora Community: A Case Study

Hello. My name is Farhia Abdi, and I am a doctoral student at Canterbury Christ Church University in the Professional Development program. The title of my study is Exploration of One Agency’s Community Programming for the Somali Diaspora Community: A Case Study. I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to explore how a Somali community agency engages with the community and to understand how customized cultural services are initiated, provided and facilitated.

Why have I been invited?

The aim of this study is to address how a Somali community agency engages with the community and to understand how customized cultural services like the settlement program are provided and facilitated. In order to understand how local Somali community agency work serves the Somali community, your participation is important. You have been selected to participate in this research based on your knowledge and the work you do for the researched community agency. Therefore, your participation in this study will help advance the understanding of local community agencies role in their communities.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this research study is voluntary, and you are also free to choose to withdraw your participation at any time without giving a reason. If you agree to take part, I will then ask you to sign a consent form.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in a 90-minute interview (with a break if desired). The interview will take place in the Somali community organization’s board room in person or via social media, if you prefer. You may withdraw from the study at any time up until the point of data analysis. You may refuse to answer any questions and have the right to disagree with the views of the organization. You will have a second, follow-up interview to clarify the accuracy of the information collected. You will have the opportunity to add, extend, or change the information you provided in the first interview. This follow up interview will be conducted either by phone or online with zoom, depending on your preference.

With your permission, I will audio record the interviews as well as take notes. All answers that you provide to me are confidential. Your name will be concealed unless you agree that I quote you publicly. No one outside of this research, besides the researcher, my supervisors, will have access to this information without your consent. The data will be stored in a secure, locked file cabinet in my home office and on a personal, removable drive to avoid any accidental exposure of your identity. With your approval, I will retain the collected data after the completion of this study for the next ten years for future projects and references, with your identity remaining anonymous.

Randomised Trial

Not Applicable

Cross-over trial

Not Applicable

Expenses and payments

There will be no remuneration involved in this research.

What will I be asked to do?

The aim of this case study is to see how the community agency engages with the community and to understand how customized cultural services like the settlement program are created and facilitated, potentially initiating dialogue on how community members can collaborate with government funded agencies in developing culturally sensitive programming.

Therefore, the main research questions broadly addressed by this study are:

- G.** What, if any, role do community agencies play in the process of adopting customized services that are culturally geared towards the Somali community's traditional values (e.g., cultural events, food, social connections)?
- H.** In what ways, if any, do these services enable the community to have a connection in the wider Canadian society as well as building local community relations?
- I.** How has the community's life context changed, if at all, since the arrival of the Somali diaspora in Canada? What seems to lead to this change?
- J.** Are there any difficulties communicating key information that migrants need to form community contributions? If so, what are these difficulties?

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There is no risk to you by participating in this research as you will only share your knowledge on the programs provided by your organization, specifically the settlement program.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The topic of this research is: Exploration of One Agency's Community Programming for the Somali Diaspora Community: A Case Study. By participating in research interviews, you will

likely become aware of how agency's customized settlement programs may meet the needs of the community. You will perhaps also begin to think about specific aspects of various programs, considering which aspects work and which ones may be less useful to the community you serve. This case study will bring a new understanding of the real world of the Somali community by looking into the services they receive from their community agency in Canada and understanding how these services support the community's needs. In this context, knowing the cultural services provided to the Somali community by the community agency will shine a light on how programs are selected, informed, and why they may or may not be addressing the community's needs. The result will be published in an academic publication for distribution to a wider academic audience for further research.

What if there is a problem?

If there are any concerns about your participation in this study and the way you were treated, you may contact Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) supervisor committee: Dr Sheila McNamee, Dan Wulff/Sally St. George.

Part 2 of the information sheet

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

Nothing will happen to you as you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time during and up until the point your data is being analyzed. I will follow the ethical practice of reliability and care of data; therefore, all personal information will be handled in confidence.

What if there is a problem?

If there is any concern about your participation in this study and the way you have been dealt with during the study or any possible harm you might suffer, the researcher will address this by putting you in touch with Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) supervisor committee: Dr Sheila McNamee, Dan Wulff/Sally St. George.

Complaints

Any complains about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to me, and I will do my best to address your concerns. You can leave a message on the 24-hour voicemail phone number 613-796-8818. Please leave a contact number and say that the message is for [Farhia] and I will get back to you as soon as possible. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this by contacting the Canterbury Christ Church University's Chair of the Salomons Ethics Panel, Professor Alex Hassett.

Will information from or about me from taking part in the study be kept confidential?

All the information collected will be treated confidential, and unless agreed otherwise, all referenced in publications, or other forms of public participation or presentations will be anonymized as any identifiable information will be removed. The interview will take place at a mutually agreed-upon time and place, and will last approximately two hours. The interview will be audio-taped and the tapes will be reviewed, transcribed, and analyzed only by myself and

reviewed by my doctoral supervisors. After completion of this study, the tapes and transcripts will be destroyed after ten years. We hope that with your contribution and participation of this study, you and the community/society in general will benefit by my analysis and the result of these stories. Participation in this research is confidential, and all study information will be kept in a secure location. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings. It will be included on my final dissertation as well.

Involvement of the General Practitioner/Family doctor (GP)

Not Applicable

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The goal will be ultimately to present the research along with the data collected in appropriate academic and professional, through publications, conference presentations, etc. However, the participants will be given copies of key summaries of the study or it can be accessed on the Canterbury Christ Church University-Library.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is self-funded.

Who has reviewed the study?

This research has been reviewed by an independent group of people, called the Research Ethics Committee, to protect your interests. This study has been given a favourable opinion by the Research Ethics Committee, Salomons Centre for Applied Psychology, Canterbury Christ Church University. When the research is completed, I will share the Key summaries with you. You will be able to access the complete thesis by contacting the library of Canterbury Christ Church University Archives or myself (researcher). You can keep a copy of the information sheet and consent form can be given to you.

Further information and contact details.

If you need further information, you can contact Canterbury Christ Church University- Salomons Institute of Applied Psychology at Lucy Fildes Building, 1 Meadow Rd, Tunbridge Wells TN1 2YG, United Kingdom. Phone: +44 333 011 7101. You may read further information on your rights relating to your personal data at the following link: Research Privacy Notice - <https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/universitysolicitors-office/data-protection/privacy-notices/privacy-notices.asp>

Appendix 2-Consent Form -Chapter Five

Title of Project: Exploration of One Agency's Community Programming for the Somali Diaspora Community: A Case Study.

Name of Researcher: Farhia Abdi

Please initial box:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated June, 2022 (PhD study) for the above title. The researcher explained everything I need to know in order to participate in this study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during and up until the data are analyzed, without giving any reason. Further, I understand if withdraw the researcher can use the information collected from me to date. I have been reassured that all the answers that I provide to the researcher are confidential.

3. I understand the researcher will be audio recording the interviews, taking notes, and will maintain my anonymity by not using any identifying information in the final report. I understand that the data will be stored in a locked secure file cabinet and personal removable drive to avoid any accidental exposure of my identity. I also understand the data collected during the study may viewed at by the supervisory team, Dr. Sheila McNamee, Dan Wulff and Sally St. George. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my data.

4. I understand that when the research is completed, the researcher will inform me that I can access the complete thesis by contacting the library of Canterbury Christ Church University Archives or the Researcher.

6. I agree for my anonymous data to be used in further research studies for a period of time up to ten years from the original collection of data.

7. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant _____ Date _____

Signature _____

Name of Person taking consent _____ Date _____

Signature _____



**School of Psychology, Politics and Sociology Faculty of Social
and Applied Sciences In partnership with Professional
Development Foundation**

Chapter 6—Reflective Account:

Introduction:

This dissertation offers collections of research work that focus on relational leadership and governing as it pertains to clan cultural and state institutional leadership. There are almost always competing ideas about leading, and competition can generate conflict. This study aims to analyze leadership effectiveness, style, and influence by looking into the traditional clan leadership style (the hallmark of many traditional cultures) in comparison to contemporary modern state leadership that, in many instances, has replaced clan leadership in attempts of modernization. This thesis first took a preliminary examination of how the Somali diaspora is dealing and reconciling with their own cultural upbringing to that of their Canadian-born children. The Small-Scale project focused on *sociocultural and leadership transmission of the Somali diaspora: Community values, family unity, and patriarchal leadership*. The primary objective of this preliminary research was to gain deeper insight into the sociocultural identification process of the Somali diaspora in Ottawa, Canada, by qualitatively investigating the experiences of 10 community members in Ottawa. This was achieved by using the narrative inquiry approach to investigate how different identification relates to individuals' well-being.

The first project: The Small-Scale study revealed that cultural value and leadership transmission is important to the Somali diaspora community living in Ottawa. Traditional values are considered a cultural legacy for their children. The study participant Abdul stated,

The role for male parents is culturally important, particularly the ones here in Canada because they have to navigate a multicultural system, while at the same time, need to keep and teach their cultural values to their children. They do that through storytelling and participating in community cultural events with their children.

The findings of the study suggest that there needs to be more community programming that provides friendly and safe environments for community members to share stories about their past, present, and future. Additionally, the preliminary study provided valuable insights into the Somali diaspora's perspectives on their traditions, their attachment to their customs, and the need for intergenerational connection. These results informed the approaches to the other research projects, particularly the approach to the final case study.

The second project: The literature review addressed *relational leadership and governing: Somali clan cultural leadership*. This study focused on exploring the distinction between theories of leadership and more contemporary visions of relational leading. The principal objective of this research was to study the role and the relations of traditional clan leadership and institutions during Somalia's pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial periods. The research also explores the impacts of these periods on the Somali state and seeks the best approach to support how to reconstitute state leadership. The findings highlighted that Somali traditional leadership is more aligned with relational leadership traits, which is distinguished from traditional, top-down forms of leadership (Uhl-Bien et al., 2000; Uhl-Bien, 2006). Thus, this study provided valuable insights

that informed the approach to the large study focusing on the Somali diaspora's perspectives on leadership and governing relationships between institutions, as well as their own relations and loyalty to them.

The third project: my Applied Research Project (ARP) focused on Leadership: *Somali clan culture vs state institutions*. The participants, 10 members of the Somali diaspora, were interviewed and asked how they would describe the historic clan and state governing leadership structure based on their experiences and perspectives. What emerged from the ARP's participants is that the community differentiates the roles of clan and government institutions and recognizes them separately. However, they wish to see a collaborative and good working relationship between clan and government leadership. They would also like to see the clan leaders sharing their leadership skills with the national governing institutions.

The diaspora community wants to see a tangible outcome of their original country's leadership, and they also have a keen interest in providing solutions for the rebuilding and the future of the country. The study suggests the need for local community organizations to create community spaces or platforms that allow the Somali diaspora community to congregate and have dialogues about their contribution to their homeland, as well as their adopted country. At the same time, the study suggests that government-funded programs could harness the community's talents and contributions to rebuild or reconstruct their homeland's political and social institutions. This study provided valuable insights about the diaspora and their longing to reconnect with their homeland. These insights informed, in part, the approach to the final case study.

The fourth project was *A case study: Exploration of one agency's community programming for the Somali diaspora*. The study investigated one community agency, funded by the Canadian government, and serving this community in Ottawa, Canada. The study examined

the journey of this agency by looking into how the agency creates, engages, and implements programs and services to the community by interviewing and analyzing the local organization's strategy plan and policy. However, this connection with the agency created an understanding that the agency needs to enhance and change its policies that implement strategies to strengthen outreach policies and enhance partnership building to provide a variety of needed programs. This reflective account will discuss the progression of the research questions and how this research contributes to knowledge and its implications for professional practices. The reflective account will conclude with a reflection on issues encountered along the way and future research directions. The following section outlines a summary of the aims and the main findings from the project and contributions to knowledge and practice.

Contribution to Knowledge and Scholarship: A Synthesis and Summary of the Main

Findings:

The study responds to the multitude of studies that specifically examine the Somalia genealogy, its clan and governing functions, or lack thereof, prior, during, and post colonialism (Abdullahi, 2001; Cassanelli, 1982; Hess, 1966; Issa-Salwe, 1994; Kapteijns, 2012; Laitin & Samatar, 1987; Lewis, 1961, 1965, 1987, 1994; Mohamoud, 2006; Samatar, 2016; Touval, 1963; Tripodi, 1999). The collection of the primary data from the Somali diaspora participants, detailing their experience of social integration and resource concerns in Canada, as well as their perspectives on the clan and governing leadership structures on their country of origin were valuable and a fundamental aspect of this project. The study contributes to the literature with the following findings.

Sociocultural identity and intergenerational relations:

Social identity is thought of as the culturally defined personality characteristics that are

ascribed to social roles, such as the role of being a father, mother, friend, employer, or employee (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). The primary objective of the preliminary study was to gain deeper insight into the sociocultural identification process of the Somali diaspora in Ottawa and how they see their role, as fathers, to pass down their cultural values to their children. The Somali community has distinctive characteristics and history when it comes to core family relations. In a family, fathers are traditionally the heads and the primary caretaker of the family unity; fathers are the “instrument in cultural transmission” (Adjaye & Aborampah, 2008). The world is becoming one global community, and as societies around the world face more cultural complexity, it becomes vital that we understand how individuals filter through diverse cultural contexts (Giguère et al., 2010, Mahtani, 2002). For multicultural individuals, including first generation immigrants, descendants from first generation immigrants, and people with a “mixed” cultural heritage, living in more than one cultural group requires them to negotiate and integrate differing expectations, norms, values, and practices associated with their multiple cultural identities (Giguère et al., 2010).

However, my study finds that the Somali diaspora community faces cultural and socio-economic challenges that limit their ability to have an intergenerational link that would have an impact on the transmission of their cultural values to their children. The lack of community resources and engagement will impede this community’s cultural values and further exasperate family unity. The local agency serving the community at present is involved in community relations and engagement work. They expressed a willingness to enhance their work to undertake further programming but claimed that the majority of the limitations to resources are the lack of available funds. Thus, it’s important that governments and policymakers provide appropriate funding to those agencies serving these immigrant communities as well. The

community agencies need to work on understanding the community and engaging them to create cultural programs that are sensitive to their unique cultural characteristics and needs.

Cultural impediment for cultural value transmission:

Consistent resources and engagement are the foundations of keeping community support functional and sustainable. Somali diaspora's sociocultural impediments to traditional value transmission are found to be

- **Language barriers**—where newcomers have either very limited local language or do not speak the language and rely on their children for translations.
- **Lack of financial resources**—where parents do not have the means to pay for extra curricula or activities for their children and cannot afford to take them home to Somalia for cultural education.
- **Lack of quality time**—parents work long hours and sometimes two to three jobs to meet their family's basic needs. The migration experience per se and husbands' search for employment, for example, can sometimes result in both the separation of some families and the loss of the traditional extended family support structure (Mohamed, 1999). And finally,
- **Lack of community programs**—there are not enough community programs that meet their cultural needs. The resolution of all these impediments was essential to maintain a continuous cultural connection.

Additionally, the lack of programs that support the community's effort to adopt their new culture and raise their children are consequential to their cultural relations with their children. Establishing cultural and educational programs that are tailored to the community's unique customs will be crucial to increase their adaptation to their new home and develop a shared sense

of values and relations with their children. Hence, any community engagement should ensure that the community voices are taken into account and that future program developments and policies are embedded into all community engagement endeavors. Community engagement facilitates better community relationships; therefore, we encourage the government, at all levels, to explore ways to encourage major growth in constructive community activity at a local level by providing adequate funding but also by reaching out and developing relationships with communities.

Leadership traits of Somali traditional clan institutions:

Somali history, as told in the literature, has been comprised of independent people living with and separate from each other without a unitary government. Yet, they have exhibited all the trademarks of central governing as they made trade dealings with the outside world, as evidenced by trade with Arab administrations and other business elites (Hess, 1966; Lewis, 1961, 1965; Luling, 2006; Touval, 1963). Scholars have further added that Somalis are a rare case of a homogeneous ethnic group inhabiting a large territory and united by culture, religion, and tradition. Their sense of unity was not effaced even by the divisive impact of alien rule. It is that shared heritage and attachment to their lineage that seemed to keep them together before the European invasion and allowed them to survive through it. Key findings that emerged from the current study are that engaging the traditional clan system as part of rebuilding the country will advance social stability and perhaps functional governing. In modern Somalia, consulting with clan leaders would stabilize a sense of normalcy for Somalis and would increase the sensitivity of the cultural context of non-Somalis. What also emerged from the study is that Somali clan institutions share similar traits to “relational leadership” (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Relational leadership integrates trust, reciprocity, and leadership—members exchange responsible ideas and are interdependent only in relations (Brower et al., 2000; Maak & Pless, 2006; Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Clan leadership can support governing institutions to provide an effective service to their people. Collaboration between clan leadership and national government leaders can start the country's agenda of social reconstruction moving forward. The history of Somalia speaks of clan and clan structure as an identity of its culture, but a gap exists concerning what type of leadership is used by clans. The description of clan leadership from both literature and the Somali diaspora presents a system with an established framework for dialogue and bottom-up relations of its members, which, as mentioned earlier, mimics relational leading styles. This, therefore, offers a new contribution to the literature on leadership. The findings from this research clearly show that the Somali diaspora has a clear view of their clan lineage and their loyalty to it, yet do not consider it as a hindrance to their lives, social relations, or day-to-day dealings. In this context, this is a dichotomy of two tales. Therefore, it is important that the Somali concept of leadership should be viewed holistically by including the voices of its people in consultation with the traditional leaders. Their ideas could be valuable to future governing and political institutions in the country.

This will build strong confidence in the society and allow the future governing leadership body to actively promote harmonious community relations and provide a measure of coordination in its policy within the general society. This foundation of its governing must then shift the paradigm to produce effective leadership across the government institutions, from which the country will greatly benefit. It will also allow the country to take a serious look into a proper and localized reconciliation to heal the country on the issues of territorial dispute, economic disparity, resource sharing, state roles and relations, etc. This will heal the past transgressions and get the future of the country on the right footing. Designing engagement strategies that both meet the needs of a society that has been driven apart by civil strife and advance the interest of their future

governing is challenging and will require creativity and innovation. Investment in dialogue can ensure that leaders understand their roles, which is crucial to advancing social cohesion. Leaders can provide the safety needed to have such a platform to innovate, taking some risks, as challenges and setbacks are part of reconstructing the future of their country's journey.

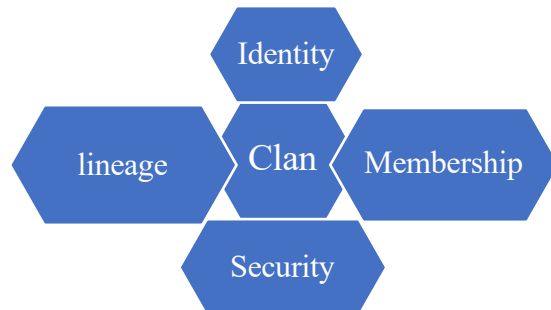
Towards a Framework for Structural Differences and Similarities Between Government and Clan Institutions and Their Possible Relationships:

Clans are not pre-modern phenomena but socially embedded identity networks that exist in many societies and states, even in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (Collins, 2006). In this section, (a) clan will be defined, (b) a look at how clans earn trust and loyalty among members will be presented, and (c) the government or institutions that govern will be defined, in terms of what they mean to society, particularly to Somalis.

Clan is described in the dictionary as a group of people tracing descent from a common ancestor, a group of close-knit or united people bound together by strong relationships and common interests and interrelated families (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Clan is perceived as a group of people united by actual or perceived kinship and descent. Even if lineage details are unknown, clans may claim descent from a founding member or ancestor. Clan is associated with words such as family, house dynasty, tribe line sib, kinship group, etc. In the context of Somali society, clan is part of the cultural bond, but the way it's structured evokes trust and loyalty born from its ability to engage its members and meet their needs, including reducing conflicts, particularly in a nomadic society. Clan culture is a central concept where individuals learn who they are, how "they construct meaning, and how they grow and develop through interactions with other socially and culturally situated individuals" (Jurkova, 2019, p. 15).

Figure 6

How the Somali Diaspora Identify Clan and Their Inner Relations



As was indicated in the literature review, the Somali clan system had leaders as well as political and judicial institutions. However, the leaders had no powers of coercion even when some carried impressive titles such as Sheikh, Ugaas, Garaad, Islan, or Sultan. They had no more power than an elder (Lewis, 1961).

Lineage is a descendent line of a particular family or ancestry that people are born into. In the context of Somalia, clan lineage is taught to children as part of their identity. At an early age, particularly in the nomadic society, children need to be knowledgeable about their own lineage due to the nature of their environment. For instance, nomadic lives exist within a conflict-prone environment where people need to be dependent on each other for support, and thus clan becomes a source of not only security, which plays a big part but also social and financial support. Knowing one's lineage is necessary for survival and safety. However, membership is also like being part of a social club. A clan family and the leadership of the clan elders engage and update members regularly. As Adjaye and Aborampah (2008) stated, traditions “provided the practical basis for membership of a domestic unit and the emerging social relations served to assign prestige, control, responsibility, and rights over property and services to certain categories of

persons within the unit” (p. 24). Family members like fathers, grandparents, and uncles circulate the clan interests and its support, whether it is financial or other social means. “Most elderly men are involved in specific tasks within the community, such as the maintenance of the function of the kinship system” (Lagece et al., 2012, p. 413).

One of the interviewed participants spoke about the clan feeling and said he is loyal to his clan and sub-clan but is not sure why because there is no direct benefit to him within the diaspora. Because it's part of their lineage, people see clan as their identity, so they feel they owe allegiance and will defend the clan. A research participant even proclaimed that he “would not know who he is if he does not have a clan identity.” Another participant said that although he is far away from his clansman, “I get defensive if I feel they are attacked or somehow defamed.” “Loyalty is devoted to one’s lineage and sub-clan and clan respectively” (Abdulle, 1999). Thus, all these elements are what also brings security to individuals. Participants viewed that by belonging or being part of the clan, one feels protected, cared for, and supported. The support comes in many different forms, including financial. If one faces financial hardship or is in trouble with the law and needs to be bailed out and defended, they can count on members from their clan family, even including murder defenses (mainly in the rural areas). Clans resolve conflicts with diyo or (blood money) and the Xeer system, which are part of their judiciary. All of these are part of the clan reliance, and what binds their members to them, who are seemingly loyal. Therefore, clan still is relevant in the diaspora, and while they identify with it, they are not necessarily beholden to it for their future and relations.

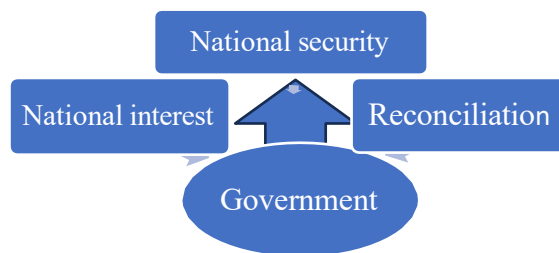
What they would like to see, however, is for the clan to remain a family lineage and not necessarily participants on the national governing parties. The research findings indicate that the Somali diaspora favors the clan leadership structure for its ability to foster relational dialogue and

problem-solving in the nation's political landscape over government leadership. However, they do not see the clan itself as a governing entity. Instead, they prefer clan leaders to collaborate with and support the national government in a consultative role as relational leaders. While they acknowledge the clan's value in serving its members' interests, they do not view it as representing the broader national interest. The study suggests since the current system of the Somali government is based on a clan allocation system, and their constitution dictates a future national participatory democratic election, that the country's leaders create a framework that builds a strong state-citizen link that is based on a resilient community. This will strengthen the trust in the political transitions.

The government, on the other hand, is defined as the governing body of a nation, state, or community or the body of persons that constitutes the governing authority of a political unit or organization that consists of legislature, executive, and judiciary (Merriam-Webster, Dictionary). The words associated with government include administration, governance, regime, rule, jurisdiction, authority, dictatorship, sovereignty, etc.

Figure 7

The Research Participants' Views on Government



My research finds that government is considered by the Somali diaspora as an important body that should function as the keeper of the nation's interests, unlike the clan, which has sole responsibility to its own members. The government should service all people regardless of their

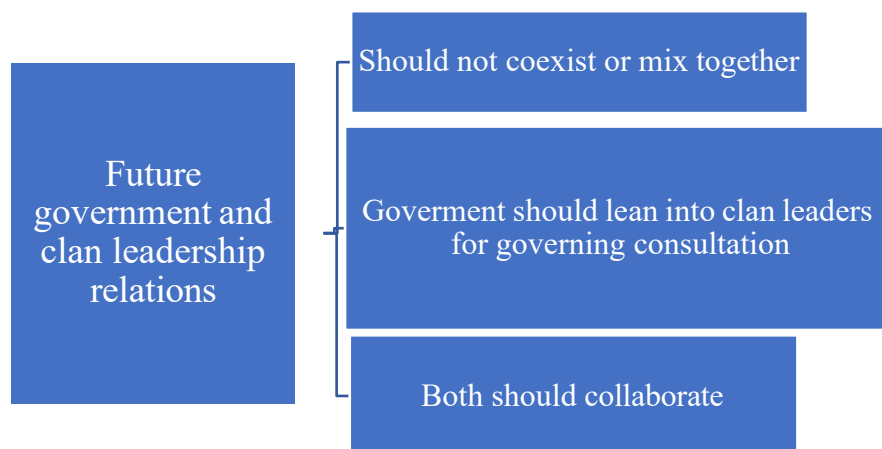
clan affiliation. Further, government is also seen as a means to national security and threats, both internal and external, which is different from the clan's own members' security. Thus, government is for the people and safeguards any rising issues of geopolitics or international relations. In addition, government is also considered to be the guardian of peace, bringing people together and building consensus about the nation's interests through reconciliation.

That being said, the research findings reveal that while the Somali diaspora hopes for a functional governing institution in their homeland, they largely lack trust in the post-civil war government. This distrust stems in part from the government's failure to fulfill its mandate due to corruption, as well as lingering mistrust rooted in the country's history of civil strife. For instance, the participants would say, "Today's governing body can not be trusted or are dysfunctional and cannot agree on anything" They are unsure if they have the capacity to earn the trust of the people. This research did not focus on the current Somali political and governing status.

"We are shaping the world faster than we can change ourselves, and we are applying to the present the habits of the past." (Winston Churchill).

Figure 8

The Future Relations Between Clan and Government



My research finds that collaboration and consultation are key to the future of Somali governance. The findings suggest that the Somali diaspora prefers the traditional clan model to remain within its customary roles while collaborating with the government on behalf of their constituencies. Clan leaders, deeply familiar with local politics and social issues, have insights that surpass those of national institutions. At the same time, the government should actively seek support from clan leaders, leveraging their proven ability to maintain societal cohesion through relational leadership. This underscores the need for Somalia's leadership to be rooted in cultural values and leadership strategies that reconnect people with institutions—moving away from the politics of survival and toward governance that aligns with traditional values.

Summary of the Original Contribution to Knowledge and Practice:

Abdullahi (2001), Cassanelli (1982), Hess (1966), Issa-Salwe (1994), Kapteijns (2012), Lewis (1987, 1994), Menkhaus (2003), Mohamoud (2006), Laitin and Samatar (1987), Samatar (2016), Touval (1963), and Tripodi (1999) examined the culture and people of Somalia. The current study extends existing literature on Somali society's traditional clan leadership in terms of how it differs from a moderate government leadership style by empirically investigating factors that influence the leadership used by Somali tradition or clan leaders. In particular, this study adds to our understanding of how Somali clan leaders use relational leadership to engage with their lineage and keep their loyalties to the clan membership. It also adds to our understanding that national governing leadership is not considered leadership in the same manner as clan leadership but rather as instruments of social and national services. Insofar as the Somali diaspora living in Ottawa, Canada, is concerned, this study adds to the existing literature by illuminating how Somalis in Ottawa have close connections to their cultural heritage and clan affiliation. What is

also illuminated is how Ottawa's Somalis are lacking intergenerational bonds, thereby experiencing difficulties passing their traditional values to their children. Cultural identity is part of people's social identity. Brislin (2000) defines culture as "shared values and concepts among people who most often speak the same language and live in proximity to each other" (p. 4).

Therefore, it is important that policymakers and local immigrant-serving organizations, when engaging the community, understand the cultural, historical, and social-economic dynamics of the Somali community and similar communities. An accounting for these communities' unique characteristics of their lived experiences is required. Further, the study provides a conceptual framework that helps to explain the cultural nuances that are exposed by this research to support future policies and practices for this community. My study suggests that there should be a form of leadership that can re-establish relational practices across the social spectrum and keep the country united if a political crisis or relapse into civil chaos is to be avoided. Relational practices, noted by Gergen (2009a), include "adding value, appreciation, collaboration, connectivity, continuous learning, dialogue, distribution, environment, horizontal decision-making, image building, networking, and positive sharing" (p. 149). This approach will require future governments to incorporate shared decision-making by establishing advisory committees composed of traditional leaders. These committees would function in a supportive and consultative role within the existing executive branch of the Somali government. However, this does not imply that clan leaders should participate in co-governing. Instead, their role would be to provide consultation, given their influence over a sizable constituency. By doing so, they can serve as valuable allies in the nation's rebuilding process while ensuring that governance remains inclusive and culturally grounded.

Contribution to practice:

Non-profit originations are remarkably prolific, serving all types of communities, and their services are crucial to those communities whom they serve. According to Browne (2002),

Common to many places is the need and struggle to shift from single sector problem solving to focusing on what communities' value and how to organize productive partnerships within which those values can be shared and lived. This involves helping professionals shift from an identity as competent experts with answers, rather than as community partners with questions. (p. 14)

Local organizations play a crucial role in implementing strategic goals, making them essential in aligning programs and practices with the needs of the communities they serve. The findings from my study support efforts to ensure that organizational development reflects these community needs. McNamee (2015) described the creation of organizational culture as “Constructing a World” (p. 378), emphasizing that as people coordinate their activities, patterns and rituals emerge, establishing shared standards and expectations (p. 377). The following section will present a series of recommendations based on the study's findings.

Implications for policy:

Federal government level:

The federal government of Canada funds local non-profit organizations to support the integration of new Canadians. According to the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) website, its policy aims to provide newcomers with essential information for informed decision-making, facilitate language skill development for successful settlement, and help them build community networks. It is recommended that this policy be expanded in scope to better address integration challenges. Additionally, implementing

a robust accountability mechanism and strengthening community networks would be essential steps in reducing socio-economic disparities and ensuring more effective newcomer integration.

State and local government levels:

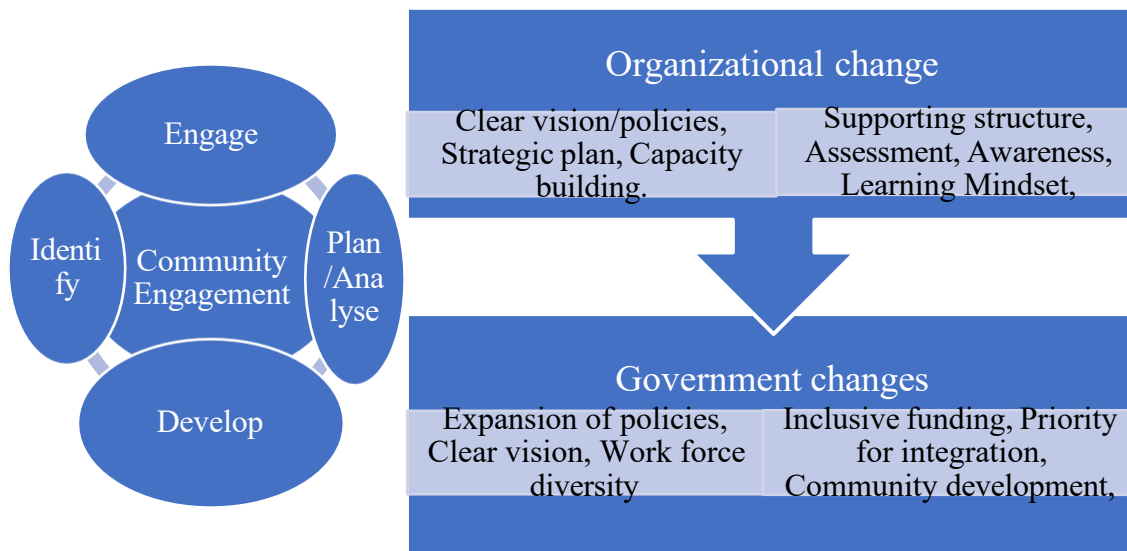
It is recommended that provincial and municipal governments establish clear policies and guidelines for funding allocation. A structured approach should be developed to foster connections between newer and older immigrants, both within their communities and the broader Canadian society. Local government representatives and politicians should actively engage with their communities, gaining deeper insights into local issues and maintaining an ongoing community engagement policy.

Implications for Professional Organizations:

The following section outlines key recommendations for organizations and various levels of government (Figure 11). These recommendations aim to support governmental and organizational efforts to enhance immigration policies. Adequate funding should be allocated to initiatives that strengthen community relations, ensuring that programs operating at the grassroots level receive the necessary resources to effectively connect with and support immigrant communities.

Figure 9

Community Engagement, Organization, and Government Changes



Organizational change and leadership:

Effective leadership is essential to shaping an organization's vision, mission, strategic planning, and values. Strong leadership ensures alignment between available resources and the services provided, enabling organizations to remain adaptable and resilient in the face of change. By fostering a diverse skill set and knowledge base, leadership also brings fresh perspectives, allowing organizations to better understand and address the needs of migrants.

Community Engagement:

Community leaders play a vital role in raising awareness about programs and strengthening community relations. Their commitment to continuous reflection and assessment ensures that organizational initiatives remain relevant and impactful. Community engagement is about active participation and a genuine investment in the well-being of the community.

To build stronger connections, organizations should:

- Guide and support diverse community groups, including youth and adults, in fostering better relations between communities and the organizations that serve them.
- Establish liaisons within local agencies to collaborate with other community groups, facilitating knowledge-sharing and best practices.
- Critically examine existing policies, practices, training programs, and development initiatives to ensure that immigrant voices are heard and their needs are effectively addressed.

Contribution to the Development of Professional Practice

As a community program consultant, I have actively promoted cultural education and a deeper understanding of the Somali community in Ottawa and internationally. Over the past four years, my contributions to the field have included:

- Supporting and continuing to support new community programs.
- Conducting workshops through local community agencies.
- Advising various community boards on program development.
- Presenting at conferences organized by the Somali community.
- Publishing an article on the values of non-profit organizations.

Methodological Issues and Future Research Directions: The evolution of the research questions:

During my master's degree research, I became aware of educational disparities between Somali boys and girls. Upon completing my degree, I became actively involved with the Somali community, gaining a deeper understanding of not only the cultural nuances but also the influence of clans on Somali political dynamics. I discovered that some Somalis were wary of clan involvement in national politics due to the country's history of civil strife and the atrocities

committed within and between clans. However, after engaging in discussions with clan leaders, I grew increasingly curious about the structure of clans, particularly in relation to leadership.

While academic literature covered aspects of Somali clan and governing structures, the specific type of leadership practiced within these structures had not been extensively researched. This gap in knowledge led me to formulate key research questions: What insights about leadership and governance can be gained by examining Somalia's clan structure? Can the Somali clan system be understood as a form of relational leadership? How have traditional leadership and governance contributed to ongoing conflict in Somalia, and what implications does this have for sociocultural tensions more broadly? The overarching objective of my research is to explore how clan and government institutions interact and collaborate—and how this interaction might impact the reconstruction of Somalia's future.

As I began exploring professional practices within the Somali community, I became interested in understanding community perceptions of their cultural identity and the challenges of navigating cultural duality. My small-scale research project served as a preliminary study, testing the feasibility of broader research endeavors. This project focused on the Somali diaspora in Ottawa, Canada—individuals who grew up in Somalia and are now raising children in Canada. The research questions included: How do male parents and elders perceive their roles as cultural transmitters and community leaders? Do they see themselves as central figures in preserving cultural identity and stability?

The literature review revealed that Somali clans share characteristics with relational leadership models and that the clan system remains a core aspect of Somali identity. Findings from the Applied Research Project indicated that while clan structures and cultural values remain embedded in the Somali diaspora, there is a distinct separation between clan leadership and

governance. Participants expressed a desire for institutional collaboration between clan leaders and the national government to facilitate Somalia's progress.

Given these findings, my professional project aimed to expand upon both the small-scale and applied research studies. The key research question became: What role, if any, do community agencies play in developing culturally tailored programs that align with Somali traditional values, such as cultural events, food, and social connections? This inquiry seeks to bridge the gap between cultural preservation and community integration, ensuring that programs designed for the Somali diaspora reflect their unique cultural heritage while fostering engagement within their host society.

Reflection on research method:

The preliminary study played a crucial role in encouraging both community members and organizations to participate in the Applied Research Project and professional practice. Many community members were initially hesitant to discuss clan or government institutions—especially clan affiliation—due to concerns that they might be perceived as engaging in clannism. Engaging in in-depth, personal interviews on clan-related issues is not common within the Somali community, as such discussions are often considered private and sensitive. Consequently, there was a level of discomfort surrounding these topics. To address these concerns, I used the preliminary study to reframe the scope of the research in a way that mitigated participants' apprehensions. Rather than focusing on clan structures themselves, I positioned the study as an exploration of participants' perspectives on the historical relationship between clan and government leadership, as well as their knowledge and experiences with these institutions. This approach reassured participants that the study was not about promoting clan divisions but rather

about learning from history to inform future efforts toward Somalia's reconstruction. This shift in focus provided participants with the confidence needed to engage openly in the study.

Given these challenges, I recommend that researchers dealing with sensitive topics—especially within immigrant communities—utilize preliminary studies as a testing ground. These studies can help researchers identify and navigate political or personal sensitivities within the community before conducting the main research. As both a member of the community and a researcher, I was able to engage deeply with local organizations and Somali community members to understand their perceptions and lived experiences. This dual perspective provided valuable insight into critical issues affecting the community, including concerns over inadequate services from local agencies. Many Somali diaspora members expressed a desire for services that not only support their integration into their host country but also help them maintain a connection to their homeland. Being both an insider and a community practitioner allowed me to approach these issues with a more nuanced understanding, bridging the gap between community concerns and the research process. This insider perspective was instrumental in fostering trust, gaining access, and ultimately advancing the research project in a way that was both respectful and impactful.

Qualitative research method analysis:

This research took an exploratory direction and employed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research utilizes a broad range of interconnected, interpretive practices aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the subject matter. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explain, “It is understood, however, that each practice makes the world visible in different ways, hence, there is frequently a commitment to using more than one interpretative practice in any study” (p. 4). A narrative approach was particularly useful in this study, as it allowed participants to share their lived experiences in their own words. Creswell (2013) notes that “in narrative study, one needs to find

one or more individuals to study—individuals who are accessible, willing to provide information, and distinctive for their accomplishments and ordinariness or who shed light on a specific phenomenon or issue being explored” (p. 147). One of the most effective ways to gain insight into an individual's inner world is through their personal stories and verbal accounts. Narrative exploration places the central phenomenon within its broader context, making it an effective way to examine social networks and their interconnections (Halinen & Törnroos, 2005).

Case study methodology further complemented this research by providing an in-depth focus on individual and group contributions, offering practical insights into the research questions. Yin (2018) describes both single and multiple-case study designs, explaining that a key rationale for these designs is to explore extreme or unique cases. A single-case study may involve a single unit of analysis or multiple units, depending on the research focus. Case studies are particularly valuable in examining inter-organizational relationships, as they capture the dynamics of the studied phenomenon within a specific context (Halinen & Törnroos, 2005). By combining narrative and case study approaches, this qualitative research enabled me to draw on over two decades of community work experience, allowing for a deeper appreciation of participants' perspectives and experiences. Additionally, this approach provided an opportunity to critically reflect on and check my own unintended assumptions, ensuring a more nuanced and informed interpretation of the data.

Limitations:

This thesis explores professional practice by examining the experiences of the Somali diaspora, particularly in relation to intergenerational relationships with their children and the transmission

of cultural values. Additionally, it investigates the professional services provided to the community by local service organizations. The findings are based on an analysis of two primary data sources: interviews and documents. The study also examines the diaspora's perspectives on their home country's clan-based and governmental leadership structures, including the leadership traits inherent in the Somali clan system. Participants included members of the Somali diaspora and a representative from a local resettlement agency with expertise in community engagement and program development for the Somali population. Secondary sources, including scholarly books, articles, archives, policy documents, and strategic program planning materials, were analyzed to understand how the agency implements culturally tailored programs. A key limitation of this study is its exclusive focus on the Somali diaspora's perspectives on Somali clan culture and governance, without considering the views of Somalis residing in Somalia, including their clan and government leaders. Additionally, the study did not examine other service providers with similar mandates to support the Somali diaspora. Including these perspectives could have provided valuable insights into diverse program approaches, their effectiveness, and their impact on immigrant communities.

Reflection on future research directions:

This research also explored the perspectives of the Somali community's cultural institutions, highlighting how they have navigated the adoption of a vastly different culture while simultaneously integrating and maintaining their cultural duality. On a professional level, future research could be expanded to include other organizations serving the same community with a similar focus on cultural programming. It would also be valuable to examine the perceptions of Somali diaspora communities living outside Western countries and explore how they experience life among different societies, as well as the changes they undergo over time.

Additionally, investigating how Somalis living in Somalia perceive their relationships with their families, as well as their understanding of institutions—both clan-based and governmental—would offer important insights.

Examining Somali culture and institutional structures will contribute to the current body of knowledge within academia and among governing bodies that support Somali society. Given the current state of the Somali nation, there is much to be learned from its history, which is intricately connected to its future. Both clan and national governing institutions form the structural context that shapes the identities, interests, and political mobilization of Somali communities, offering a deeper understanding of how they organize and engage with broader societal forces.

Impact on researcher:

Although this research does not extend to the current Somali governing institutions, it provides a framework for their future reconstruction or rebuilding, based on the insights highlighted in the findings. My work in this research emerged from a curiosity about how clan culture leadership functions and its interplay with broader governance structures. This process has deepened my understanding, particularly as a community consultant, of how I've been supporting local agencies with program development and workshops. However, connecting directly with the Somali community and gaining their perspectives on service barriers has heightened my awareness—not only of my own cultural learning but also of how I can approach consulting with a more nuanced understanding of community needs rather than generalizing services. I've also learned the importance of engaging with communities that can share their own experiences, which is a key first step in developing effective programs and services.

My hope is that this research will be valuable to organizations, especially those serving immigrant communities, by encouraging them to allocate resources for meaningful community

engagement when developing programs. As a consultant, I am committed to using the knowledge and skills gained through this research process to continue supporting ongoing efforts with local agencies. As Gsir et al. (2015) state, “Socio-cultural integration occurs, not only through immigrants’ endeavors to learn a new language and culture, but also through the articulation or interaction with the host society and in relation to opportunities to participate in the socio-cultural activities of the receiving society” (p. 12). I look forward to continuing my communication with the community about their challenges and searching for opportunities to increase culturally sensitive and appropriate programs.

Additionally, reading research literature and interviewing community members about their perspectives on culture and institutional leadership has expanded my own cultural understanding. Growing up in Somalia, I had long assumed that clan systems were unified under a single leader. However, I have come to realize that the clan system is far more complex than I initially perceived. Clan leadership is multi-layered, and the roles such as Garaad, Ugaas, Boqor, or Islan are more ceremonial, where the leader primarily represents the consensus of the members, rather than exercising unilateral authority over the entire clan. This is where relational leadership intersects with clan leadership. Throughout this research, both from literature and interviews, I learned that clan leadership operates through consensus and dialogue, with no individual leader having authority over others. Over the coming years, I plan to continue engaging with the Somali community in the following ways to advance resources and knowledge, both in Canada and abroad:

- Developing research agendas focused on community relations and leadership.
- Supporting community efforts to connect with cultural values and engaging with the agencies that serve them.

- Advocating for increased investment from all levels of government to strengthen immigrant community programs and ensure accountability.
- Creating and sharing educational workshops and training programs that address the central needs of immigrant communities, in collaboration with supporting institutions, including government funders.

Thesis Conclusion:

This research aimed to understand how traditional institutions—particularly the Somali clan system—function and lead, and how they compare to other governing institutions in Somalia. The literature review highlighted that the Somali clan structure has existed for centuries and remains an integral part of the social fabric. It also revealed that the very factor that sustains clan cohesion—its governance structure—is rooted in relational leadership, where decision-making is a co-constructed process among its members. Four research studies, including a literature review and a preliminary study, were conducted to explore the perspectives of the Somali diaspora in Ottawa, Canada. The primary focus was their views on cultural and governing institutions, particularly the historical interaction between clan leadership and government, as well as their lived experiences in a new cultural environment. A qualitative approach, using narrative for the preliminary and main studies, allowed participants to share their experiences in their own words. The case study examined how the Somali diaspora in Canada perceives raising children in an adopted country, the challenges of cultural transmission, and the complexities of intergenerational relationships.

Findings from semi-structured interviews and document analysis revealed that the Somali diaspora maintains a strong connection to their homeland and cultural heritage but struggles with intergenerational relations due to a lack of resources. This underscores the need for community

engagement and culturally tailored programs that incorporate their input into policy development. The research also found that while the diaspora supports clan leadership for its emphasis on relational governance and reconciliation, they do not wish for clan leaders to directly engage in national politics. Instead, they prefer a consultative role for clan leaders in advising the national government. This study identified gaps in existing literature, particularly the absence of migrant perspectives and insufficient attention to structural and cultural barriers affecting the Somali diaspora. It also examined professional practice, analyzing one local organization's efforts to improve cultural programming by embedding community input. The research highlighted that culturally responsive programs are essential for fostering social, political, and economic cohesion among immigrant communities. Without such initiatives, organizations risk perpetuating the very cultural barriers they seek to address.

Despite the challenges they face, the Somali diaspora has demonstrated resilience and a deep commitment to both their homeland and adopted country. Given Somalia's prolonged governmental collapse, rebuilding a stable state requires a bottom-up, community-driven approach. Strengthening local governance structures and fostering collaboration between traditional clan leaders and government institutions is crucial for national reconciliation and sustainable state-building. A comprehensive national strategy—integrating local governance, non-profit organizations, and community development efforts—should emphasize inclusivity, particularly in youth and gender equity. Furthermore, implementing accountability measures to address corruption and human rights violations is essential for Somalia's future stability and governance.

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