

Visible and Invisible Diasporas: Ethiopian Somalis in the Diaspora Scene*

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I. Introduction

In this article I seek to locate — in space and time, and in Somali diaspora studies — that group within the ethnic Somali diaspora that identifies its “homeland” as the eastern part of Ethiopia, which in 1995 became Somali Regional State under Ethiopia’s federal constitution. “Ethiopian Somali” remains for many Somalis a contested identifier, and yet as Hagmann and Khalif argue, the “invention” of such an identity “bears symbolic significance, as it had hitherto been regarded as something out of the question.”¹ “Ethiopian” seems, for many Somalis as well as in much of general public consciousness in the West, primarily a reference to highland Amhara, Tigrayan, and related populations. In numerous studies of populations from the broader Horn of Africa now living abroad, the dichotomy has tended to reinscribe Somali and Ethiopian groups as separable, under the assumption that Somalis are from Somalia and that Ethiopian “ethnicity” is defined by the highland groups known as *Habesha* (or Abyssinian). To distinguish ethnicity from nationality, I will use the term “Somalian” to denote nationals of the Somali Republic. More generally, such approaches tend to treat diasporas (and ethnic groups) as always-already-existing communities. An approach to diaspora as a category of identification that can be defined and mobilized in various ways, by various actors, provides a more nuanced framework to investigate the interplay of Ethiopian and Somali identities and identifications in diaspora.²

It seems standard practice in studies of ethnic Somalis outside the Horn of Africa to note somewhere in an introductory or “background” section that ethnic Somalis make up significant proportions of the population in Djibouti and in the eastern parts of Ethiopia and Kenya — and then to proceed by deploying the term “Somali” in a dual sense of both Somali ethnicity and Somalian nationality. To some extent, this reflects the reality that during the 1960s all ethnic Somalis were in principle granted Somalian citizenship — and furthermore that many ethnic Somalis born and raised in Ethiopian territory moved to Somalia prior to going abroad (including a large population of ethnic Somali refugees that left Ethiopia for Somalia in 1977–78 as refugees). The question of an Ethiopian Somali (or Somali Ethiopian)³ — that is, ethnically Somali, nationally Ethiopian — political identity has recently come to the fore in emerging regional political formations explored by Hagmann and Khalif as well as Markakis.⁴ Yet such shifts in identity are not confined to Ethiopia’s full-time residents: Ethiopia’s implementation of fiscal decentralization has proceeded in tandem with increasing efforts at diaspora engagement. The Ethiopian government began issuing Ethiopian nationality documents, “Yellow Cards,” to diaspora members in 2002. Regional governments have offices devoted exclusively to mobilizing “their” diasporas. The assertion that, as one man in Atlanta, Georgia, told me, in the wake of ethnic-federal decentralization, “We are more Ethiopian than before,”⁵ is reflected in a large influx of Somali diaspora return to Somali Regional State (SRS) and increasing efforts of the SRS government to encourage diaspora return and harness diaspora finance for regional development.⁶

The mobilization of an Ethiopian-Somali diaspora defined by a new “ethnicized” state structure in Ethiopia provides an opportunity to examine more carefully the social construction and deployment of the categories of Ethiopian and Somali, and to explore their overlaps and disjunctures. In the analysis that follows, I focus on one small slice of this problem, first by reviewing whether and how Ethiopian Somalis feature in Somali diaspora studies, and second by analyzing datasets on immigration and ethnicity in the United States to discern whether Ethiopian Somalis are “visible,” so to speak, in such population statistics. My purpose is not to propose a sharp analytic differentiation of the Somali diaspora into distinct national groups such as “Somalian Somalis,” “Ethiopian Somalis,” “Kenyan Somalis,” and so on. Such a task is neither possible nor desirable, and while complicating an overly simplistic view of the Somali diaspora, would reinscribe the “national order of things” in scholarship in a different way.⁷

Confronting this problem from one side is evidence that many ethnic Somalis outside of the Horn retain a sense of identity in terms of a broad Somali diaspora.⁸ On the other side is evidence in certain contexts that claims to “Somaliness” have been deployed by ethnic Somalis from Ethiopia and Kenya — and even by individuals identifying themselves as belonging to non-Somali groups from the Horn — because Somalis are so widely recognized as a refugee population with “legitimate” cause for migration.⁹ Ethnic and national categorizations are often flexible and may become salient in certain contexts or even in relation to particular questions posed by researchers or government officials. Thus, it is crucial to focus on how such categorizations are deployed by various interest groups (including migrant groups, researchers, government officials, and others), the extent to which such categorizations mask potent realities, and the circumstances under which categories shift.

In the first section, I briefly review academic approaches to Somali diaspora studies, with a focus on how the interplay of Somali ethnicity and Somalian nationality has figured in the literature. I argue that studies of the Somali diaspora have tended to naturalize connections between Somalis and Somalia, reinscribing a “national order of things” in much of the academic literature. Although Somali ethnicity and nationality are not neatly separable, one significant problem with this trend is that it affirms the idea that nation-states are homogeneous spaces and by extension that, for example, people from Somalia deserve opportunities to migrate as refugees because they come from a “failed state,” whereas other people whose states have allegedly not “failed” have less reason or right to move across international borders. This assumption disregards their individual experiences or the degree of marginalization of their “home community” in the country of origin. Another is that such a framework has difficulty accounting for shifts in identity accompanying political changes such as the redrawing of political boundaries.

In the second section, I look at the ways that people who were born in, or trace their ancestry to, countries of the Horn of Africa have been categorized according to ethnicity and nationality in U.S. population estimates, and what the discrepancies among ethnic and national categories reveal about the Ethiopian-Somali diaspora. My analysis of these quantitative data, corroborated by interviews from an ongoing study among Somalis in Atlanta and diaspora returnees in Jigjiga, Somali Regional State, indicates the substantial presence of non-Soma-

lian Somalis in the United States. It further suggests that in recent years a growing segment of this population has begun explicitly identifying itself as Ethiopian *and* Somali. These indications should challenge both academic research on the Somali diaspora and popular and political discourse about Somali refugees in order to pay attention to patterns of identity, allegiance, and migration that cross-cut the ethnic Somali diaspora and complicate overly simplistic portrayals of Somalis.

II. Somalis and Somalia in Diaspora Studies

Following the collapse of Somalia's government in 1991, an existing body of literature on regional sociopolitical trends in the Horn expanded into a rather enormous body of literature focused on "Somalis," "Somali refugees," and "Somali migrants" in refugee camps and in countries of settlement from the Middle East to southern Africa to North America and Australia/New Zealand. The diversity of topics and scopes within this large body of literature makes it difficult to generalize trends or compare across studies. Many studies limit their scope such that the differentiation of Somali migrants into different national, regional, or clan groups, and discussion of such differentiation are largely irrelevant.

Recognizing the important merits of previous studies and the (often major) differences in focus between my analysis and that of other researchers, I reviewed a selection of recent studies of Somali migration, simply asking three questions of each publication: (1) does the study mention Somalis indigenous to Djibouti, Ethiopia, or Kenya; (2) does the study recognize the ambiguity of the term "Somali" as denoting ethnicity *and* nationality; and (3) does the study mention Somalis from Djibouti, Ethiopia, or Kenya as members of Somali migrant and diaspora groups? In addition to these three questions that I consider key issues relating to studies focused on Somalis, I also asked whether the study mentioned Oromos, since significant numbers of Oromos live in what are often termed Somali areas in the literature (for example, Cedar-Riverside, Minneapolis; Mayfair, Johannesburg; and Eastleigh, Nairobi). I have separated this question from the others because it may be outside the scope of some studies that purport to limit themselves to studying Somalis, and also because among the publications reviewed, only studies that answered all three main questions in the affirmative also mentioned the presence of Oromos.

The selection includes fifty-two books, peer-reviewed academic articles, and reports funded by governments and development agencies, all published between 1991 and early 2017. The entire selection fell generally into three social-scientific categories: studies of forced migration trends; development and livelihoods at “home” and in diaspora; and assimilation, identity formation, and exclusion in host societies. It was intentionally selected to represent studies across four continents (North America, Europe, Australia/New Zealand, and Africa) and sixteen countries, and include works by Somali academics. Many of the works were read closely as they are informing the background of a broader ongoing study. However, given the volume of literature, I used indexes, electronic search tools, and skimming of relevant sections for some of the works. That is to say, what is presented here is a suggestion of trends rather than purporting to be a complete analysis of every published work on the Somali diaspora. Twenty-nine of the fifty-two publications (56%) did not mention the historical presence of ethnic Somalis in countries neighboring Somalia, used “Somali” without noting the ambiguity of the term as denoting ethnicity and nationality, and they appeared to assume — implicitly or explicitly — that Somalis in diaspora were from Somalia, rather than potentially from Djibouti, Ethiopia, or Kenya (see Table 1). Only six publications (12%) were given a positive indication in all three categories. Of these, five also mentioned Oromos living alongside Somalis in the Horn or in diaspora.

Table 1: Mentions of Non-Somalian Somalis and Mentions of Oromos in Studies of the Somali Diaspora

Total studies reviewed	52
Mentions Somalis as indigenous in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and/or Kenya	18
Distinguishes Somali as ethnicity from nationality, or recognizes ambiguity of term	10
Recognizes ethnic Somalis from Djibouti/Ethiopia/Kenya among diaspora	11
Mentions all of the above	6
Mentions none of the above	29
Mentions Oromos as frequently living in same locations as Somalis	5

In terms of providing nuance to the “national order of things,” the most common approach in selected studies of the Somali diaspora appears to be: (a) mention of the presence of ethnic Somalis in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya; and then (b) proceeding to discuss Somalis as if all come from Somalia. Where the literature notes the presence of Somalis in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya, it is often discussed in somewhat vague terms that imply that these may have already been refugees from Somalia, rather than indigenous inhabitants of these territories. In one description, after 1991, Somalis became “refugees, scattered in Kenya, Ethiopia, Western Europe, North America, and Australasia.”¹⁰ Where indigenous populations of ethnic Somalis are recognized, there is a frequent tendency to represent their existence as somewhat anomalous: “many people who have lived all their lives in Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti,” writes one author, “still consider themselves as Somalis.”¹¹

When the presence of ethnic Somalis from Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya among the Somali diaspora is recognized (which is much less frequent than noting that ethnic Somalis live in these countries), it is often mentioned in passing or as an aside. Three studies from South Africa are revealing in their different modes of recognizing the mixed national origins of the Somali diaspora. A report on Somali businesses in Cape Town’s townships notes that, “Somalis also fled from the Somali region of Ethiopia.”¹² This reflects a general recognition that this population exists as a subset of Somalis in South Africa, but also the reality that this population is difficult to separate from Somalians unless research informants are explicit about their background. In an article on Somalis in Johannesburg, one informant is forthcoming, but it appears in the article almost as an afterthought. “The British gave our own part to Ethiopia,” the author quotes this informant as saying; “these Somalians they do not say we are Ethiopians . . . even the government does not recognize us as Ethiopians.”¹³ My own previous research in South Africa suggests that ethnic Somalis from Ethiopia and Kenya sometimes seek and receive the same legal status as refugees from Somalia under the assumption by immigration officials that if someone speaks Somali, they must be from Somalia.¹⁴ The study also indicated the significant presence of ethnic Oromos from Ethiopia and Kenya in the neighborhood of Mayfair that other authors describe only in terms of ethnic Somalis. The presence of non-Somalian Somalis in South Africa, and of Oromo, Gabra, and other ethnicities among the

Somali community in these spaces, raises the issue of the extent to which similar conditions are discernible elsewhere.

A. The Somali Diaspora and the Ethiopian Diaspora

Though I reviewed Ethiopian diaspora literature much less thoroughly than that of the Somali diaspora, studies of Ethiopians abroad often succumb to similar pitfalls as literature on Somali migration. A number of studies of the Ethiopian diaspora employ the term “Ethiopian” loosely to denote both nationality and ethnicity.¹⁵ A few more nuanced studies recognize the diversity of ethnicities covered within the term “Ethiopian” or explicitly mention various ethnic groups.¹⁶ In general, the ethnic identification of an Ethiopian diaspora appears to correspond largely with Abyssinian/Habesha ethnicity (Amhara and Tigray). Where Somalis are mentioned in studies of Ethiopians, it tends to be as a group compared to “Ethiopians.”¹⁷ The complexity of how groups like Oromo and Somali, historically marginalized in the Ethiopian state, might fit into these identifications is captured by one outspoken Oromo nationalist. “Ethiopia is a symbol of racial/ethnonational oppression and exploitation,” he writes, and Oromos “never assumed an Ethiopian identity for themselves.”¹⁸

The issues of Oromo and Ethiopian-Somali populations in diaspora are intertwined not only with regard to the seeming invisibility of these groups in many studies and statistical datasets, but also with regard to the practical fact that ethnic Oromo — especially Muslim Oromo from eastern and southern Ethiopia — frequently live and work in the same neighborhoods as Somalis in diaspora. Indeed, both in the Horn and in diaspora the borders between these groups are extremely fuzzy, with ethnic Oromo living in Somalia and Kenya, significant mixing between Oromo and Somali, and a number of smaller ethnic groups that self-identify with one group or another while speaking the other’s language or engaging in cultural practices identified with the other group (e.g., Garre, Geri, Jarso). In their focus on one group or another, many studies of migrant groups from the Horn have elided the overlaps and interactions among such groups. For example, one could read a number of studies about Somalis in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood of Minneapolis, Minnesota — or the 8th Avenue, Mayfair area of Johannesburg, South Africa — and never realize that a large number of Oromo live and interact closely with Somalis in these spaces.

B. Political Effects of Categorizations and Generalizations

The point to be made is that these trends have a tendency to reinscribe a sort of “national order of things” in conceptualizations and discussions of Somali and Ethiopian diasporas. By reinscription, I intend, following Gupta, the reproduction of links between boundaries of identity groups and geopolitical/territorial formations. Gupta argues that, “we need to pay attention to the structures of feeling that bind people to geographical units larger or smaller than nations or that crosscut national boundaries.”¹⁹ I would add that we need to pay attention to how such identifications of people with places come to the fore in certain instances; how they are mobilized by people in their own interests; and how they are utilized as mechanisms of monitoring and control, for instance by governments. In general, three such modes of reinscription are worth mentioning with regard to how conceptualizations of diaspora groups generate political effects.

First, there is the well-researched issue of racial-national stereotyping that underpins anti-migrant discourse and sometimes violent attacks on migrant groups. Research on Somalis reveals the prevalence of such stereotypes in media portrayals of Somalis as “pirates,” “terrorists,” or otherwise disorderly people.²⁰ In South Africa, public discourses accuse Muslim migrants from the Horn of financing terrorism and threatening to destroy South Africa “the way they destroyed their countries.”²¹ Strikingly, in South Africa such discourses have served in some contexts to organize and legitimate anti-migrant violence. In the U.S., similar dynamics threaten to break out: in October 2016, in the context of broader public anti-immigrant discourses voiced by presidential candidate Donald Trump and some of his supporters, three middle-aged white Americans were arrested in Garden City, Kansas, and charged with “conspiring to set off a bomb where about 120 people — including many Muslim immigrants from Somalia — live and worship.”²²

Second, official categorizations of people according to ethnicity and nationality can be used as mechanisms of state control in ways that reinscribe stereotypes and reproduce the very characterizations that are deemed to be “natural” (or, perhaps not much better, “cultural”) aspects of particular groups. With regard to Somalis, a fascinating example of this is the way in which Swedish migration officers have tested Somali asylum applicants to see if they are “really Somali” by asking applicants questions about local places and about their clan

lineage — a supposedly ubiquitous feature of Somali culture. In such cases, officials have documents containing “local” information about locales in Somalia and clan lineages against which they test applicants’ answers.²³

Third, indigenous categorizations are often much more flexible and multi-layered than either simplistic stereotypes or official labels, and yet interact with these two previously considered modes of inscription. Exclusionary discourses may reinforce boundary-making and self-exclusion among foreign-born populations,²⁴ and state categorizations of certain people as belonging, or having more rights to movement than others, clearly have an impact on the structure of diaspora groups by shaping continued patterns of migration.

There are numerous practical and theoretical reasons to challenge the “national order of things” as an overly simplistic view of reality. In the remainder of this article, I use quantitative data on migration and ethnicity, along with data from interviews with Somalis in Atlanta and Jigjia, to reveal two trends among populations in the United States that complicate the idea of distinct ethnic identities isomorphic with national origins. After introducing the general trends and estimates of Somalis and Ethiopians in the U.S., I will argue that data from the American Communities Survey (ACS) indicate a substantial population of non-Somalian Somalis and a sharp uptick in the population reporting Ethiopian and Somali ancestry over the past decade.

III. Visualizing the Ethiopian-Somali Diaspora²⁵

Amidst the political turmoil surrounding the end of the Cold War, population movements across national borders in the Horn created a maze of migration trajectories within and beyond the region. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the bulk of documented migrant populations from countries in the Horn were within the region. In 1990, Somalia’s Ethiopia-born population was estimated at 460,000, because refugees — including thousands of Somalis — had fled the ongoing war against the Derg. It is revealing of the turmoil in the Horn that in the same year, Ethiopia’s Somalia-born population was estimated at over 600,000, many of whom were fleeing political violence in Somaliland and increasing repression in southern Somalia (Figure 1). After 1991, both of these populations declined. In 1995, the Ethiopia-born population in Somalia was estimated to be only 18,000, and the Somalia-born population in Ethiopia had also dropped significantly to 460,000.

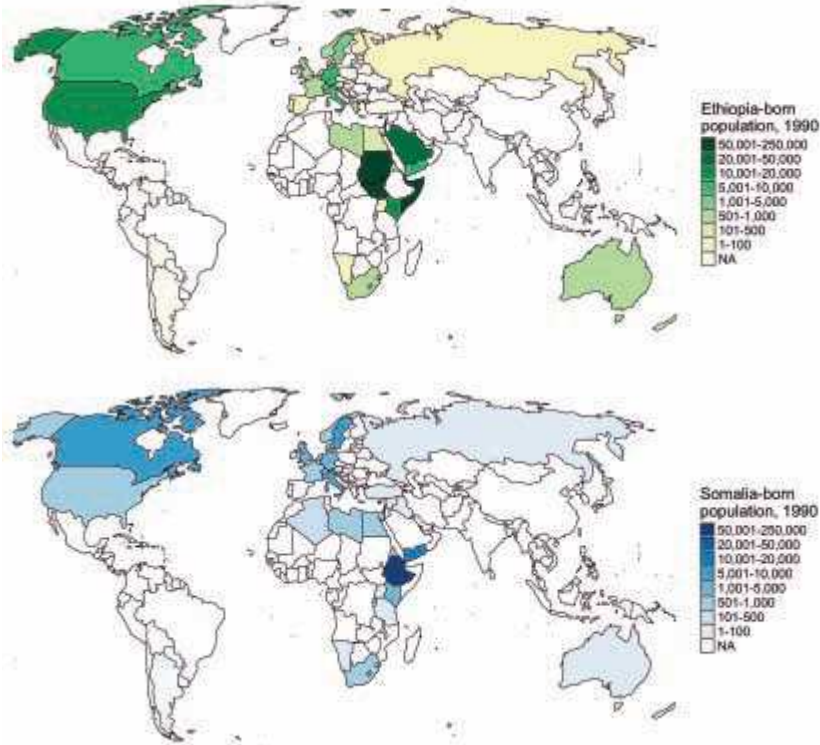


Figure 1: Ethiopia-Born (top) and Somalia-Born (bottom) Populations Living Abroad, 1990. Map by author, using data from UNDESA (2015).

While there were a small number of earlier migrations, Ethiopians began arriving in the U.S. by the thousands after the 1974 revolution overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie. The number of refugee arrivals climbed in the 1980s as war against the socialist Derg regime accelerated, ravaging large parts of Ethiopian territory. Poverty and political upheavals in the province of Eritrea (part of Ethiopia from 1952 until 1993), in Djibouti, and in Somalia after the 1977–78 Ogaden War, led to dramatic population movements within the region as well as large-scale migration abroad. By 2015, the U.S. had the largest Ethiopia-born population outside of Ethiopia (184,022) as well as the largest Eritrea-born population outside of Africa (30,305). By 2015 the Kenya-born population in the U.S. had multiplied sevenfold since 1990. The Somalia-born population in the U.S. was estimated at 2,400 in 1990 (compared to 34,800 Ethiopia-born) but jumped to nearly 19,000 by

1995. In 2015, UN estimates place the U.S. as having the fourth-largest Somalia-born population (145,579) after Kenya, Ethiopia, and Yemen.²⁶ (Figures 2 and 3).

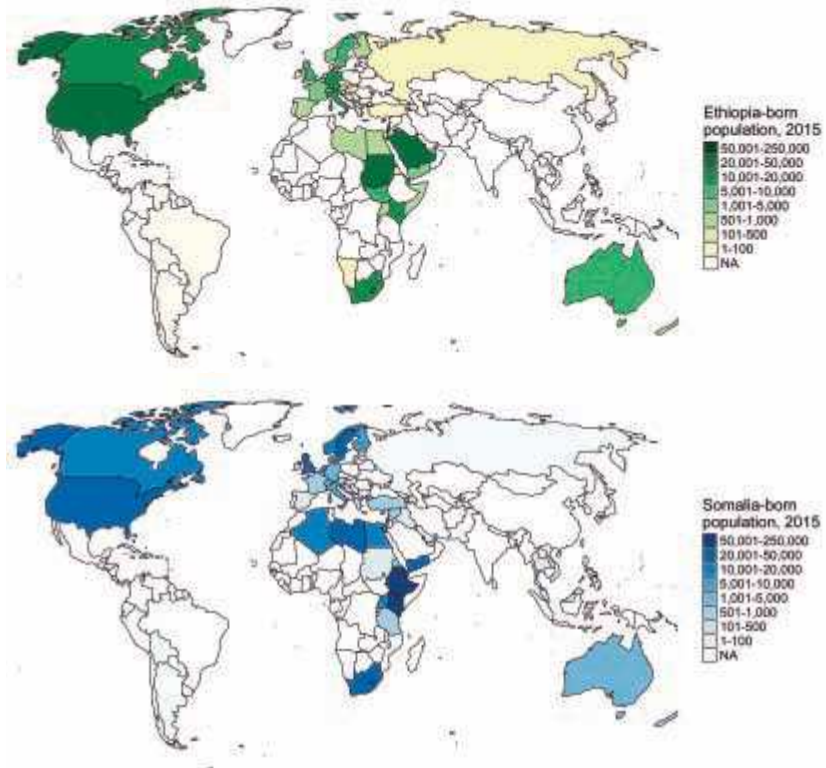


Figure 2: Ethiopia-Born (top) and Somalia-Born (bottom) Populations Living Abroad, 2015. Map by author, using data from UNDESA (2015).

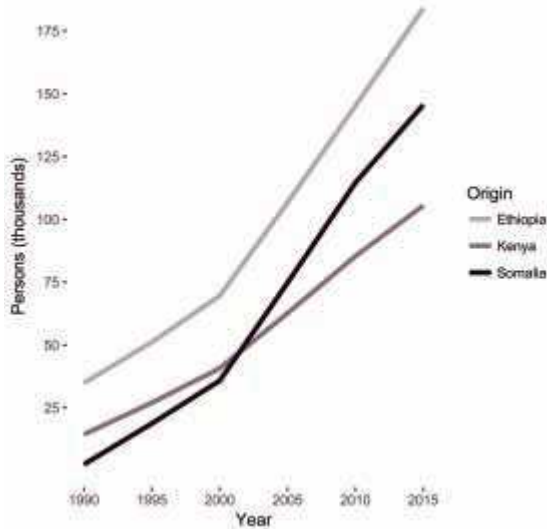


Figure 3: Total U.S. Resident Population Born in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, 1990–2015. Data from UNDESA (2015).

Within the United States, the bulk of eastern-Africa-born populations are concentrated in a relatively small number of metropolitan regions. Estimates from the 2015 American Communities Survey show populations of over 10,000 people born in eastern Africa in eight counties: Montgomery County, Maryland, and Fairfax County, Virginia (metro Washington, D.C.); DeKalb County, Georgia (metro Atlanta); Franklin County, Ohio (Columbus); Hennepin County, Minnesota (Minneapolis); Dallas County, Texas; King County, Washington (Seattle); and Los Angeles County, California. Counties with populations of at least 5,000 eastern-Africa-born are clustered around these areas as well as in Boston, Chicago, Phoenix, Las Vegas, San Diego, and Houston. Of these, Montgomery County, Maryland, and King County, Washington, both have Ethiopia-born populations of over 10,000, while Hennepin County is the only U.S. county with an estimated Somalia-born population of more than 10,000 in 2015.

According to Somali community leaders and Ethiopia-born Somalis who arrived during the 1980s and early 1990s in DeKalb County, Georgia, Ethiopian Somalis were in many cases among the first Somalis to settle in areas that are now known as hotspots of Somali populations in the U.S. One Somalia-born business owner and community leader in Atlanta estimates the following numbers:

When I came here in 1993, it was probably 80% Ethiopian Somalis, mostly Jigjiga people and others from that part of Ethiopia. Now a lot of people came from Somalia, so probably 80% of people in this area now are from Somalia, and 20% from Ethiopia and Kenya. People from Ethiopia were the first wave — you know, after the 1977 War, they were in refugee camps in Somalia and some got a chance to come to the U.S.²⁷

Indeed, amidst the diversity of backgrounds and migration trajectories among ethnic Somalis in metropolitan Atlanta, the bulk of those who arrived earliest and are seen as having established the ethnic Somali community are people from Ethiopia's Somali region who arrived through various means (refugee resettlement, educational visas, family sponsorship) in 1982–85. Oromos arriving in the same years frequently settled in the same neighborhoods. One Somali informant originally from Jigjiga arrived in Atlanta in 1992 and soon thereafter went to visit a contact in Minneapolis to ascertain employment opportunities. He recalls his perception of what is now a well-known bastion of Somali settlement, Cedar-Riverside: "You know Cedar? Only Oromo were there; no Somali. The old Minneapolis Somalis had one, two families, and I think three or four singles. That's it. And then the two families, even they moved from Atlanta."²⁸

Both in terms of numbers and in terms of paving the way for the influx of Somalian refugees after 1990, the population of Ethiopia-born Somalis as well as Muslim Oromos, who arrived in North America in the 1970s and 1980s, are too significant to overlook if one is researching the Somali diaspora. Given the diversity within the Somali diaspora, it is worth recognizing that some groups of Ethiopian Somalis may be clustered in certain areas more than others. As the informant quoted above notes, among the first Somalis to settle in the Clarkston and Stone Mountain area of DeKalb County, Georgia (metro Atlanta) were Jigjiga people of the Bartirre and Yeberre clans (sometimes termed "junior clans"²⁹ of the Darood clan family). These groups have a complex history of relationship with Ethiopia, since agricultural sections of the Bartirre appear in written records as probably the earliest Somali sociopolitical group to come under Ethiopian control (around 1890). Other Somali clans that identify themselves with territories that straddle the Ethiopia-Somalia border may be even less likely to identify themselves as originating in Ethiopian territory unless questioned in detail about their origins, let alone to identify themselves as "Ethiopian Somali."

While a community-level analysis of the numerical proportions of Ethiopian Somalis in the Atlanta Somali population is beyond the scope of this study (and in any case would not necessarily correspond with Ethiopian-Somali populations elsewhere in the U.S.), I undertook to determine the extent to which Ethiopian Somalis may be visible in the American Communities Survey data, published through the U.S. Census Bureau. These aggregated data have county-level estimates of populations reporting ethnicity and nationality, but not of specific overlaps between the two; for example, of Ethiopia- or Kenya-born ethnic Somalis. Thus, in considering the presence of such populations in the data, I rely on the relationships between reported ethnicity/ancestry and nationality, using geographical statistical regions rather than individuals as units of analysis. In the following subsections, I argue first that differences between Somalia-born and Somali-ancestry populations corroborate accounts suggesting that a significant portion — about 20% or more — of the Somali population of the U.S. traces their ancestry (nationality by birth, among first-generation immigrants) to Ethiopia or Kenya rather than Somalia. Furthermore, analyzing ACS data on multiple ancestry tentatively indicates that the population explicitly identifying itself as Ethiopian *and* Somali has increased sharply in recent years, during the same time that a wave of return migration to Somali Regional State of Ethiopia has accelerated.

The 2009–2014 ACS datasets³⁰ available through the U.S. Census/ACS Application Programming Interface (API) for R³¹ include estimates of populations born in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, and “other eastern African countries,” as well as estimates of populations of Eritrean, Ethiopian, Kenyan, and Somali ancestry, categorized into individuals reporting single ancestry and individuals reporting multiple ancestry.³² Notably, estimates of populations born in Somalia are not available in these data for years prior to 2015. Using these data, I employed two approaches to assess whether non-Somalian ethnic Somali populations were discernible. The first analyzes relationships between estimated foreign-born populations from the Horn of Africa and estimates of populations claiming ancestry from countries in the Horn. The second examines relationships between single- and multiple-ancestry populations of Somali and Ethiopian ancestry.

A. Estimates of Ancestry and Country of Birth in U.S. Statistics

Discrepancies between reported ancestry and reported birth nationality probably arise from two sources. Using Ethiopia as an example, if

people report Ethiopian ancestry but not Ethiopian birth, this indicates the presence of “ethnically” Ethiopian populations born either in the U.S. or in a third country. Conversely, if people report Ethiopian birth but not Ethiopian ancestry, this indicates the presence of individuals who were born in Ethiopia but identify themselves with non-Ethiopian ethnicities. To control for large variations in the ethno-national populations among counties, I use the basic proportion of ancestry to birth, obtained by dividing the total population reporting Ethiopian, Kenyan, or Somali ancestry by the total estimated population born in the respective country, for each county in the U.S. (total=3,074 counties) which reported the presence of these populations.³³ To return to the illustration, a county reporting more people of Ethiopian ancestry than of birth in Ethiopia has a proportion greater than 1, whereas more people of Ethiopian birth than ancestry in a county is indicated by a proportion between 0 and 1. (Again, for Somalia, the statistic of reported Somalian birth was only available for 2015.) Results are tabulated in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean Proportions of Ancestry to Birth in U.S. Counties with Populations Reporting Ethiopian, Kenyan, or Somali Ancestry or Birth

Country of Ancestry/ Birth	Year	N	Mean Proportion, Ancestry to Birth	Median Proportion
Ethiopia	2009	454	1.239	1.0
	2010	497	1.417	1.0
	2011	610	1.363	1.0
	2013	682	1.266	1.0
	2014	726	1.237	1.0
	2015	754	1.331	1.0
Kenya	2009	498	0.465	0.299
	2010	521	0.529	0.333
	2011	568	0.552	0.328
	2013	599	0.529	0.348
	2014	618	0.494	0.336
	2015	654	0.526	0.332
Somalia	2015	289	1.424	1.0

The proportion of Ethiopian-ancestry to Ethiopian-born populations across counties that reported these numbers was essentially consistent.³⁴ The proportion of Kenyan-ancestry to Kenyan-born populations was similarly consistent, but much lower than for Ethiopians or Somalis. This makes it more difficult to compare, so I will focus on Ethiopians and Somalis. While the proportion of Somali ancestry to birth in Somalia appears higher than the proportions for Ethiopia, an independent t-test suggests the difference is not statistically significant. In other words, the proportion of Ethiopian-ancestry to Ethiopian-born is similar to the proportion of Somali-ancestry to Somalia-born across U.S. counties reporting these populations. Such general tests, however, elide the different histories of these groups. Given that the Ethiopian-born population was ten times larger in 1990 than the Somali-born population — and only 1.2 times larger in 2015 — I would expect a higher proportion of native-born Ethiopians than native-born Somalis to be captured in the data. The high proportion of Somali ancestry to Somali birth indicates that a significant portion of ethnic Somalis in the U.S. report birth/national origins in locations other than Somalia, and considering the relatively recent influx of Somalis to the U.S., probably outside of the U.S. as well.

In order to eliminate possible bias from counties with very small populations of Somalis or Ethiopians, I subset the above dataset into two separate groups of counties, one of which includes only counties for which the estimated populations of Somali ancestry and of Ethiopian birth were at least 50 ($n=93$), and a second including only counties for which the estimated population of Somali ancestry and the population of Kenyan birth were both at least 50 ($n=111$) in 2015.³⁵ There is significant overlap between these two subsets, so it is unsurprising that the mean proportion of Somali ancestry to Somali birth is approximately equal in each of them (Table 3). What is notable is that the proportion of Somali ancestry to Somali birth within these subsets of counties is higher than the proportion in the wider set of counties. Within both subsets, the estimated population reporting Somali ancestry is nearly twice the estimated Somalia-born population. For both subsets, the proportion for Somalis is significantly higher than the proportion for Ethiopians/Kenyans ($p<0.001$). For the Ethiopia-born population subset, the 95% confidence interval indicates that the mean proportion for Somalis is 0.22-0.72 (16–52%) higher than for Ethiopians. If one assumes an approximately equivalent proportion of U.S.-born second- and third-generation individuals among both populations (a

conservative assumption given that the longer history of Ethiopians in the U.S. would suggest a higher proportion of U.S.-born Ethiopians), the data suggest that at least 16% of first-generation people identifying themselves as ethnic Somalis — and likely upwards of 20 or 25% — in the U.S. are not Somalia-born. This would include Somalis from Ethiopia and Kenya as well as those born in third countries.

Table 3. Mean Proportion of Ancestry to Birth, Selected Counties

Country of Ancestry/ Birth	Year	N	Mean Proportion, Ancestry to Birth	Median Proportion
(Counties with Somali-ancestry and Ethiopia-born population both at least 50)				
Somalia	2015	91	1.835	1.552
Ethiopia	2015	92	1.364	1.282
(Counties with Somali-ancestry and Kenya-born population both at least 50)				
Somalia	2015	108	1.858	1.595
Kenya	2015	110	0.412	0.402

If some of the ethnic Somali population not born in Somalia is comprised of Ethiopian Somalis who have reported Ethiopian birth in surveys, I would expect a negative correlation between the proportion of Somalis to Somalia-born and the proportion of Ethiopians to Ethiopia-born. That is, in counties with high populations of Ethiopia-born Somalis, there should be a relatively high proportion of Somali ancestry to birth in Somalia, and a relatively low proportion of Ethiopian ancestry to Ethiopian birth. Plotting the set of 92 counties, this is indeed what the data suggests, although the correlation is weak ($R^2 = 0.035$), influenced in part by the skewed distribution of counties in which some report extremely high Somali or Ethiopian proportions (Figure 4).

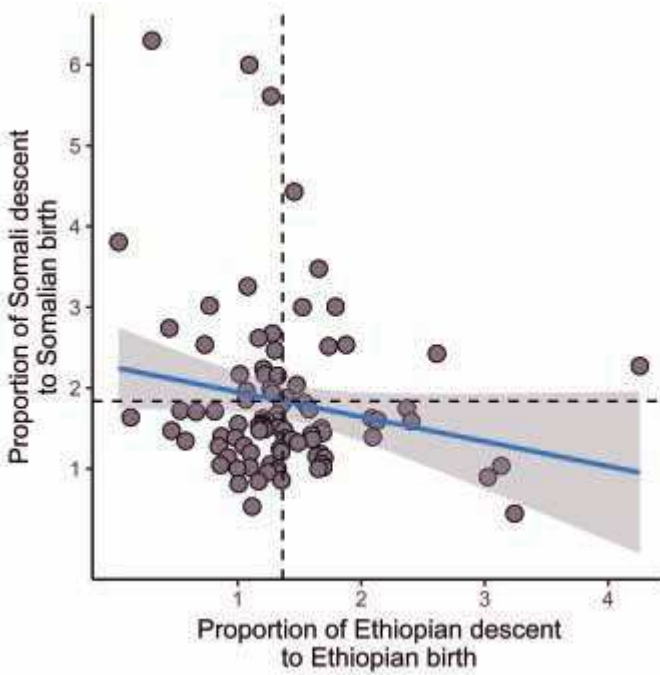


Figure 4: Proportion of Somali Descent to Somali Birth Plotted against Proportion of Ethiopian Descent to Ethiopian Birth for 93 U.S. Counties. Dotted lines indicate the mean proportion for each population. Blue trend line indicates linear regression fit ($R^2=0.035$) and shaded area is 95% confidence interval for regression line. Data from 2015 ACS estimates.

Plotting this subset of counties on a map of U.S. counties reveals some geographic trends that are hardly surprising given what is known of the distribution of Somalis in the U.S. The maps in Figure 5 are shaded in relation to the distribution of proportions for the Somali and Ethiopian populations, the mean and median of which are given above in Table 3. Counties shaded red and orange indicate a proportion of below 1; shades of yellow indicate first and second quartile; the lightest shade of green indicates a proportion falling in the third quartile but below the mean, and darker shades of green indicate a proportion falling in the third quartile and above the mean, and a proportion falling in the fourth quartile. From the maps, it can be seen, for example, that every county in Minnesota falls above the median proportion for Somalis, and four of nine counties in Minnesota fall above the mean for Somalis, whereas four of nine fall below the median for Ethiopians, and six of nine below the mean.

Taken together, this analysis indicates at a high level of confidence that Ethiopian Somalis (and likely Kenyan Somalis as well, although the data for Kenya are less comparable) make up a significant portion of the ethnic Somali population in the U.S. and are discernible in aggregate population data.

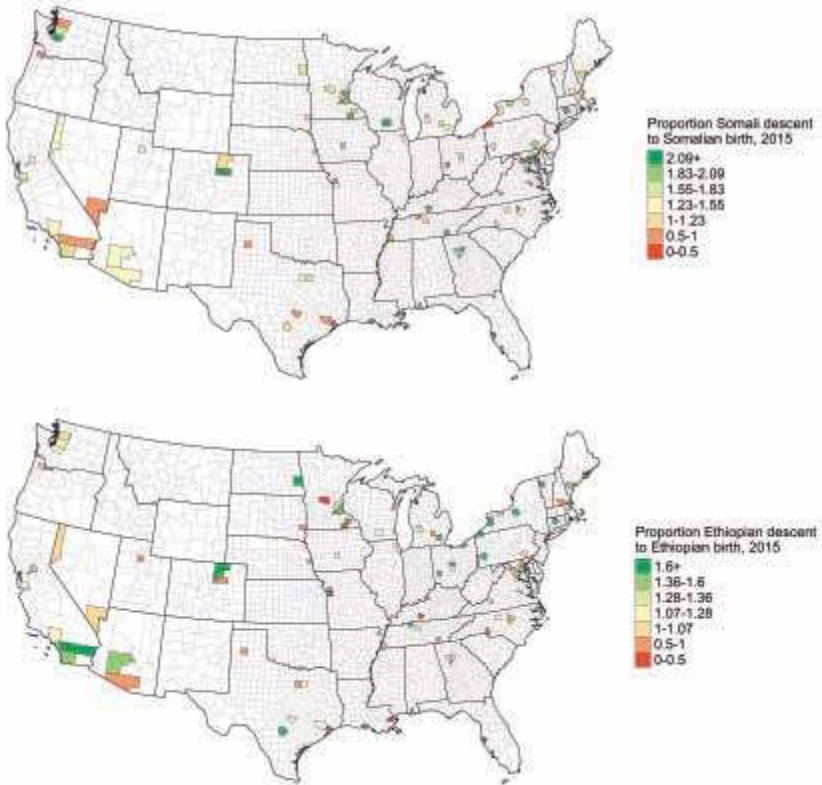


Figure 5: Map of 93 U.S. Counties Reporting Populations of at least 50 with Somali Ancestry and at least 50 of Ethiopian Birth in 2015, Showing Proportion of Somali Ancestry to Somalian Birth (top) and Ethiopian Ancestry to Ethiopian Birth (bottom).

B. Multiple Ancestries in the U.S.

A second method of attempting to discern non-Somalian ethnic Somali populations is enabled by 2009–2015 ACS data on ancestry which can be broken down into populations reporting single and populations

reporting multiple ancestry. Analyzing the same subset of counties employed above with Somali-ancestry and Ethiopia-born populations of at least 50 in 2015 ($n=93$) may suggest whether this second approach supports the indications in the previous section regarding the presence of non-Somalian Somalis in the ACS data.

To situate the reporting of multiple ancestries within this subset of counties in the larger context, there is no discernible indication in the data that people in the U.S. are increasingly reporting multiple rather than single ancestries. The *total* population reporting multiple ancestry of any type (not just Somali or Ethiopian) across 2,975 counties in the continental U.S. remained relatively consistent and even declined slightly from 26.1% in 2009 to 24.7% in 2015 ($t=-18.75$, $p<0.001$). For the 93 counties in the subset, the total population reporting multiple ancestry of any type also decreased slightly from 28.6% to 28.2% ($t=-1.99$, $p<0.05$). During the same period, the population reporting multiple-ancestry-Ethiopian rose from 9.3% of the total population reporting Ethiopian ancestry in 2009 to 14.9% in 2015 ($t=2.2$, $p<0.05$). The population reporting multiple-ancestry-Somali rose even more sharply from a very low 3.7% of the total Somali-ancestry population in 2009 to 11% in 2015 ($t=3.15$, $p<0.01$). On average across all 93 counties, this shift took place between 2009 and 2012, with the proportion of the Somali-ancestry population reporting multiple-ancestry-Somali increasing nearly fourfold (Figure 6).

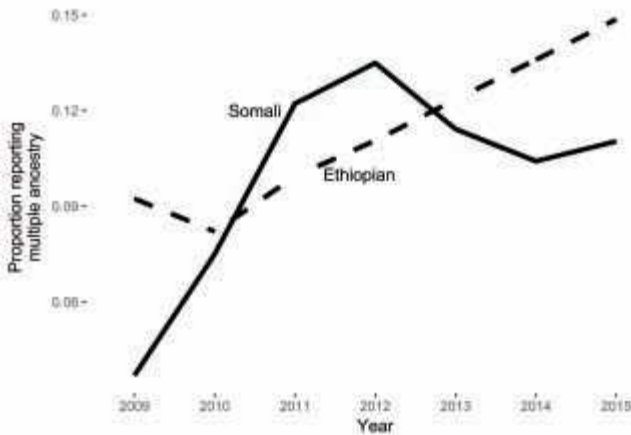


Figure 6: Average Population Reporting Multiple-Ancestry-Somali and Multiple-Ancestry-Ethiopian, as a Proportion of the Total Population Reporting Somali and Ethiopian Ancestry, respectively. Data from ACS 2009–2015, 93 counties with Somali and Ethiopian populations of at least 50.

Considering only the fourteen counties for which Somali-ancestry and Ethiopia-born populations are each estimated at over 1,000, the trend is consistent, although populations reporting multiple ancestry make up a lower percentage of the overall Somali- and Ethiopian-ancestry populations (Figure 7).

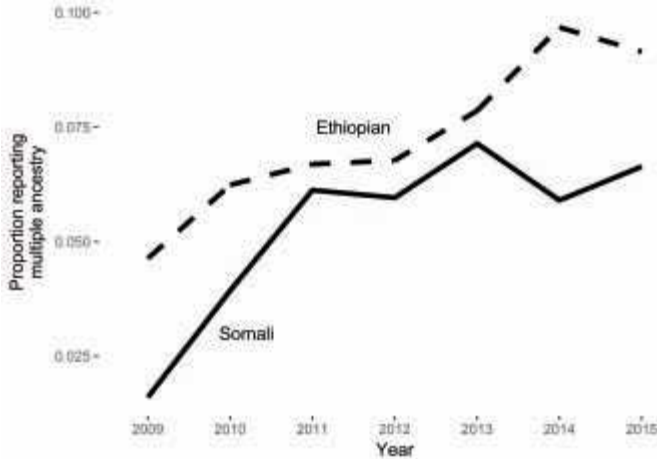


Figure 7: Average Population Reporting Multiple-Ancestry-Somali and Multiple-Ancestry-Ethiopian, as a Proportion of the Total Population Reporting Somali and Ethiopian Ancestry, respectively. Data from ACS 2009–2015, 14 counties with Somali and Ethiopian populations of at least 1,000.

A few scenarios could give rise to such a sharp increase in reports of multiple ancestry among Somalis. First, the increase could reflect the expansion of a locally born population of mixed Somali ancestry in locations where relatively high populations of Somalis have settled in the U.S. (perhaps reporting multiple-ancestry-Somali and multiple-ancestry-American). Nevertheless, even assuming a high birthrate, such an increase is unlikely to generate such a sharp jump in the proportion of the Somali-ancestry population reporting multiple ancestry, given the continued arrival of Somalis from Somalia during this period. Second, the increase could reflect the arrival in these counties from elsewhere of populations of mixed Somali ancestry, whether born in the U.S. or perhaps ethnic Somalis from Kenya and Ethiopia. Again, I would expect this to be offset proportionally by the continued arrival of Somalian Somalis during this time, which was equal to or greater

than the arrival of Ethiopian- and Kenyan-born populations (Figure 3). A third possibility is that a population of ethnic Somalis tracing their national origins outside of Somalia (e.g., Ethiopia and Kenya) began to explicitly identify themselves with such multiple origins in surveys.

If Somalis who had previously identified as single-ancestry-Somali were shifting identification to multiple-ancestry-Somali and multiple-ancestry-Ethiopian, this would entail an increase in the population reporting multiple-ancestry-Ethiopian combined with a sharper increase in the proportion of the Somali-ancestry population reporting multiple-ancestry-Somali. This is consistent with trends in the dataset. Perspectives of return migrants indicate that these years were precisely when return migration to Somali Regional State began to accelerate. One Ethiopian Somali who arrived in the U.S. in 1984 first returned to Jigjiga in 2004. I asked him if a lot of people started going back around that time. He responded, “Not a lot of people . . . in Somali Region, most people went back maybe 2009, 2010. A lot of people went back then.”³⁶ Diaspora returnees in Jigjiga confirmed this assessment: In 2010, Abdi Mohamoud Omar, the president of Ethiopia’s Somali Regional State, visited the U.S. to invite the Ethiopian-Somali diaspora home. According to one returnee from Columbus, Ohio, “he gave us a lot of confidence,” which encouraged people to apply for Ethiopian diaspora IDs and return to their country of birth.”³⁷

The proportional change in estimates of multiple-Somali and multiple-Ethiopian ancestry from 2009–2015 support indications that a number of Somali Ethiopians may have begun to identify themselves more explicitly as both Somali and Ethiopian during this time period. For the 93 counties in the dataset, the estimated population reporting single-ancestry-Ethiopian increased by an average of 177%, while the estimated population reporting single-ancestry-Somali increased by an average of 86% (Table 4). These numbers are heavily influenced by some counties that saw more than tenfold increases in single-ancestry-Ethiopian or -Somali populations during this time. Nevertheless, the average increase in multiple-ancestry populations was higher than the increase in single-ancestry populations — although, especially among Somalis, the increase in reported multiple ancestry appears to be driven by a sharp increase in relatively few counties.

Table 4. Proportional Changes in Reported Ancestries, 2009–2015

Ancestry	Variable	N	Mean	Median
Ethiopian	Single ancestry	84	1.766	0.706
	Multiple ancestry	58	3.460	1.548
Somali	Single ancestry	74	0.866	0.337
	Multiple ancestry	28	2.808	0.275

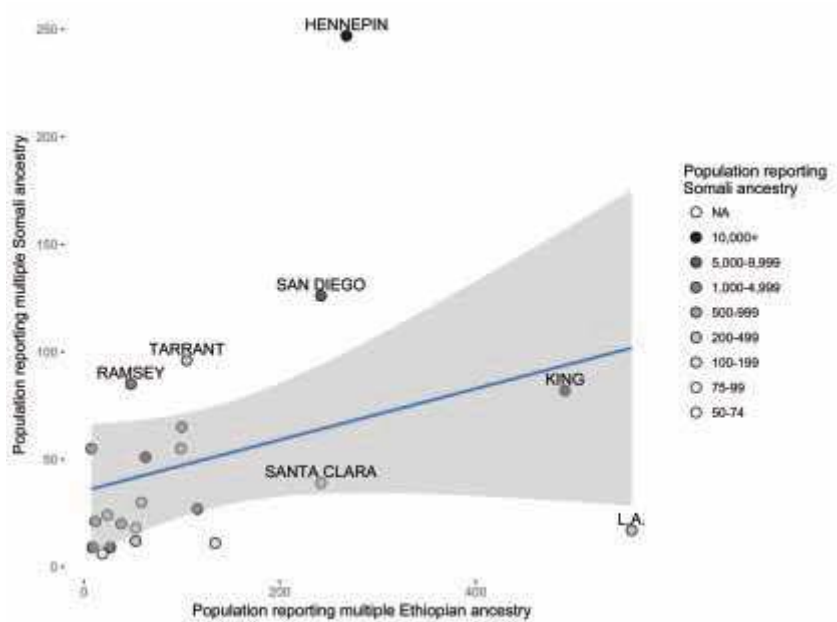
It is revealing to consider how these shifts appear in counties that had well-established Somali and/or Ethiopian populations by 2009. I took a subset of counties with large Ethiopian and Somali populations from metropolitan Los Angeles (Los Angeles County), Atlanta (DeKalb), Washington, D.C. (Montgomery, Maryland and Fairfax, Virginia), Minneapolis-St. Paul (Hennepin and Ramsey), Las Vegas (Clark), Dallas (Dallas), and Seattle (King). While this subset yields a small number of cases, the same patterns are visible as in the larger set. Furthermore, despite the small sample, the difference in the mean proportional change in reported ancestry between single-ancestry-Ethiopian and multiple-ancestry-Ethiopian was statistically significant at 95% confidence. Tentatively then, given the small sample size, the proportion of the Somali and Ethiopian populations reporting multiple ancestry in counties with relatively large populations of Somalis and Ethiopians appears to have at least doubled between 2009 and 2015.

Table 5. Change in Reported Ancestries 2009–2015 as Proportion of 2009 Population, Selected Metro Area Counties

Origin	Variable	N	Mean	Median
Ethiopia	Single ancestry	9	0.458	0.407
	Multiple ancestry	9	4.199	1.998
Somali	Single ancestry	9	0.622	0.372
	Multiple ancestry	6	3.567	2.543

A final way to visualize and compare these multiple-ancestry populations is to plot the multiple-ancestry-Somali and multiple-ancestry-Ethiopian populations against each other for the set of counties with populations of at least 50 Somalis and Ethiopians (n=93). In 2009, there

was a positive trend in the data with a relatively weak correlation ($R^2=0.119$). The correlations for every subsequent year are higher. In 2015, the correlation was strongest ($R^2=0.226$) (Figure 8). Individual counties have been labeled in Figure 8, plotting multiple-ancestry populations in 2009 and 2015, to show the growth of estimated multiple-ancestry-Somali and -Ethiopian populations in these areas. The increasing correlation and dramatic growth of populations reporting multiple ancestry supports the suggestions voiced by Ethiopian Somalis I have interviewed that a portion of the ethnic Somali population in the U.S. is increasingly identifying itself explicitly as having both Somali and Ethiopian ancestry — becoming “more Ethiopian than before.”



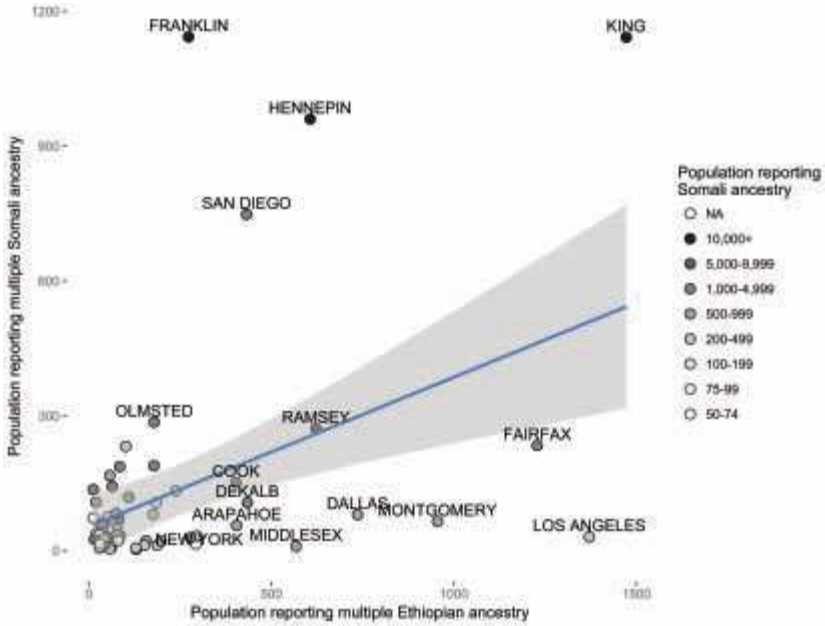


Figure 8: Population Reporting Multiple Ancestry-Somali as a Function of Population Reporting Multiple-Ancestry-Ethiopian, 2009 (left) and 2015 (above). Graphs indicate linear regression fit (blue line) and shaded 95% confidence interval for regression line. Graph points are shaded by the total county population reporting Somali ancestry.

In sum, data on multiple ancestry support indications that Ethiopian Somalis (and probably Kenyan Somalis as well) make up significant populations among ethnic Somalis in the U.S., and further indicate that the population of ethnic Somalis reporting Somali and Ethiopian ancestry increased dramatically within the past decade. Data from Somali Regional State substantiate this interpretation of ACS data. Electronic records of registered returnees available from the SRS Ministry of Diaspora were available for returnees registering in 2015.³⁸ The records document 595 returnees in 2015, with 147 from the U.S. This registry is of first-time returnees and it is worth keeping in mind that according to multiple sources, diaspora return began to expand in scale from about 2009 onwards. Three of my key informants in Atlanta had already returned to Jigjiga at least once by 2005. Among returnees registered in 2015, 98 people had registered phone numbers with discernible U.S. area codes in the records.

Minneapolis area codes were predominant (32 numbers), followed by Columbus, OH (9), Seattle (6), San Diego (3), and Rochester, MN (2). These locations *exactly* correspond to the six counties with the highest populations reporting multiple-ancestry-Somali and significant populations reporting multiple-ancestry-Ethiopian in 2015 (Figure 8, bottom graph): Hennepin/Ramsey, MN; Franklin, OH; King, WA; San Diego, CA; and Olmsted, MN. This correspondence in a separate source of data confirms that at least some Ethiopian Somalis in these counties are asserting this multiple identity by registering as members of the Ethiopian diaspora in Somali Region. Such indications also suggest that the dramatic increase in the estimated population reporting multiple-ancestry-Somali and multiple-ancestry-Ethiopian in these counties are likely at least in part the result of the ongoing mobilization of the Ethiopian Somali diaspora.

IV. Conclusion: Somali Regional State and the Emergence of an Ethiopian-Somali Diaspora

Ethiopia's ethnic-federal decentralization in 1995 appears to have begun the process of mobilizing a subset of the ethnic Somali diaspora across the globe to explicitly recognize their Ethiopian roots, take up their Yellow Card (proof of Ethiopian origins), and return to their region of origin — or region of their parents' origins. The Somali Regional State President, Abdi Mohamoud Omar, has made a number of trips abroad in recent years to drum up diaspora support for the regional administration. The SRS Ministry of Diaspora promotes return migration and diaspora support for the regional administration, including hosting diaspora events in Jigjiga as well as sending representatives to key locations abroad to meet with diaspora community leaders. According to one returnee who invested significant capital in a farm outside Jigjiga, "this current government of Ethiopia opened up opportunity for the diaspora to invest, and they give you a tax break, and — you know, encourage the Ethiopian diaspora to come back to the country and invest."³⁹

This diaspora mobilization that draws together Somali ethnic and Ethiopian national identity appears to be showing up in large-scale survey data in the U.S. as an increase in people identifying themselves as multiple-ancestry-Somali and multiple-ancestry-Ethiopian. The increasing relevance of the hybrid identity "Ethiopian Somali" appears as a trend not only among ethnic Somalis in eastern Ethiopia, as Hag-

mann and Khalif argue,⁴⁰ but also among diaspora Somalis. This trend, as well as the general indication of the prevalence of non-Somalian Somalis among ethnic Somalis abroad, should challenge academic studies as well as news accounts to pay attention to the multiple identities and political affiliations that cross-cut the broader ethnic Somali diaspora. The phenomena described here are certainly not isolated to the U.S. context. Though it is beyond the scope of this endeavor, an estimate of 20–30% non-Somalian Somalis among ethnic Somalis in North America is corroborated by data from Canada's 2006 census. The SRS Ministry of Diaspora records from 2015 also document diaspora returnees from twenty countries outside of North America.

The invisibility of non-Somalian Somalis in diaspora stems from a combination of at least two elements. Strategic deployment of claims to Somalian origins among ethnic Somalis — abetted by the fact that many Ethiopian Somalis fled abroad via Somalia — may enable marginalized groups from the Horn to gain access to spaces of opportunity from which they otherwise might be excluded.⁴¹ Personal (and perhaps some apocryphal) accounts abound of Kenyan Somalis boarding airplanes using Kenyan passports and then destroying the passports en route to claim asylum as Somalis (therefore ostensibly Somalians) in a Western country upon arrival. Another type of invisibility stems from forms of social erasure associated with state practices of documentation and the popular assumption (evident in academic literature on the topic as well) of correspondence between ethnicity and nationality in the case of relatively ethnically homogenous spaces such as Somalia. This assumption creates falsely precise boundaries around “the Somali diaspora” as a group identifiable with national origins, eliding the diversity of national origins, migration trajectories, and potential political affiliations among Somalis across the global scene. Such simplistic ideas also undergird anti-immigrant discourses in various contexts that describe Somalis as chaotic populations of state-destroying terrorists or as dependent refugees who drain the social system.⁴² Further, they render virtually invisible non-Somali groups such as Oromo, who often live in the same spaces, worship in the same mosques, and interact on a daily basis with Somalis.

One irony of the Ethiopian Somali situation is that it is precisely the political definition of territories within Ethiopia along ethnic lines that has driven the discernible, though contested, emergence of an Ethiopian Somali identity at home and in diaspora. It remains to be seen the extent to which this shift in identification among Somalis in

diaspora and the recent acceleration in temporary return migration may influence identities in Somali Regional State, as well as how new links between the Ethiopian state and Ethiopian Somalis abroad may generate new directions in political and economic development for the historically marginalized Somali Region of Ethiopia.

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Notes

1. Hagmann and Khalif 2006, p. 26
2. Kleist 2008.
3. I use these terms interchangeably.
4. Hagmann and Khalif 2006; Markakis 1996, 2011, 56ff.
5. Interview, 23 January 2017.
6. This hybrid identification is not strictly a new phenomenon. Recent historical research reveals the complexities of dissecting ethnic, regional, and national allegiances in eastern Ethiopia, where support for pan-Somali nationalism was not ubiquitous among ethnic Somali populations and some groups historically identified themselves and their interests with the Ethiopian state (Barnes 2007).
7. Malkki 1992.
8. Cawo M. Abdi 2015.
9. Thompson 2017.
10. Valentine, Sporton, and Nielson 2009, p. 235.
11. Fangen 2007, p. 79.
12. Gastrow 2013.
13. Sadouni 2009, p. 245.
14. Thompson 2016, p. 125; 2017, p. 87.
15. Chacko 2003; Zack and Estifanos 2016.
16. Kassahun Kebede 2017.
17. Danso 2001.
18. Asafa Jalata 2002, pp. 135, 136.
19. Gupta 1997, p. 181.
20. Kassaye, Ashur, and van Heelsum 2016.
21. Thompson 2017.

22. Tim Potter and Amy Renee Leiker, "Three charged in Kansas plot to bomb homes, worship center for Somalis," *The Kansas City Star*, 14 October 2016, accessed online.
23. Wettergren and Wikström 2014.
24. Thompson 2017.
25. Formatted data used in this analysis are available from the project dataverse: <https://dataverse.unc.edu/dataverse/capitalintheborderlands>.
26. UNDESA 2015.
27. Author's field notes, 30 May 2017.
28. Interview, 23 January 2017.
29. Barnes 2000, p. 184.
30. 2012 data was not available through the API at the time of this writing.
31. Glenn 2016.
32. ACS methodology notes that for ethnically diverse countries, reported ancestries were grouped by national origins. Thus it is likely, for example, that individuals reporting Oromo or Amhara ethnicity, etc., were grouped under "Ethiopian." Data used here are from the total ancestry data Table B04006, for which individuals could report more than one ancestry, and Table B05006, reporting a single country of origin.
33. Counties in which people reported Ethiopian, Kenyan, or Somali ancestry but no one reported birth in the respective country have a proportion of infinity since the denominator is 0. These were dropped and the number of counties used in each calculation is reported in the tabular results.
34. For all differences in means reported in the following analysis, the base t-test package in R was employed, with paired t-tests used for populations of the same ancestry/birth and independent t-tests used to compare different ethnic populations. Results are reported where statistically significant.
35. Clayton County, Georgia, was an outlier with a very high proportion of Somali ancestry to Somali birth, and was removed from both subsets for calculations in this section.
36. Interview, 7 October 2016.
37. Author's field notes, 17 September 2017.
38. 2007 Ethiopian Calendar.
39. Interview, 7 October 2016.
40. Hagmann and Khalif 2006.
41. Thompson 2017.
42. Wettergren and Wikström 2014.

Statistical Data Sources

American Communities Survey (ACS) 2009–2015, Table B04006, "People Reporting Ancestry."

———. Table B05006, "Place of Birth for the Foreign-Born Population in the United States."

———. Table B04004, "People Reporting Single Ancestry."

———. Table B04005, "People Reporting Multiple Ancestry."

SRS Ministry of Diaspora, spreadsheet list of diaspora returnees provided to author in June 2016, in author's possession.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015). "Trends in International Migrant Stock: Migrants by Destination and Origin." United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2015.

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