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‘No! I'm Not a Refugee!’ The Poetics of Be- Longing among Young Oromos in Toronto

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Abstract

This paper presents some findings from an empirical study carried out with young Oromos living in Toronto. To capture the complexities of negotiating be-longing, the paper offers *dispersal–affinity*—a new conceptual framework empirically grounded in an innovative methodological design.

Using participants' narratives in the empirical material, the paper contests the dualism created between essentialist and constructionist perspectives. It employs *dispersal–affinity* to explore participants' understandings of 'the refugee' and the wider processes of refugeeization and refugee be-longing. Findings suggest that be-longing is a project of selfhood that is both fixed and constantly shifting. It is argued that be-longing is constructed from the same movements of selfhood within and through social relationships. Young Oromos employ both essentialist and constructionist discourses to weave multiple layers of fixed and mobile be-longing. Implications for refugee studies are discussed wherein *dispersal–affinity* is offered to critically engage the recent debate on 'deceit and trickery' among refugees.

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