ABSTRACT
Immigration to Western Wisconsin is dynamic and challenging for the immigrant and non-immigrant communities alike. Somali refugees, who settled in Western Wisconsin, settled particularly in the Barron, Wisconsin area. They were attracted to jobs in the meat packing industry and to the small-town pace of Barron. The recent immigrants faced challenges in their claim to space and in their interaction with the host community. Participation in placemaking is an important element of belonging. The research explores sociospatial relationships between recent immigrants and the host community to understand the nature of, and the extent to which Somalis are making Western Wisconsin home. The research draws from personal interviews with Somali immigrants, data from businesses and public sources, local news accounts, and field observations of Somali semantics within the landscape. The immigration of Somalis to Barron is ongoing. Our research will help us understand migration dynamics and evaluate the relationships between immigrants and non-immigrants, the sense of place, and the level of culture preservation and partnerships the Somali community is developing in Barron.

INTRODUCTION
As Somalis migrated from Minneapolis and, more recently, directly from Somalia, awareness to placemaking, sociospatial patterns, and theories in immigrant to host-community fusion emerged. In order to have harmony in the community, all residents must feel comfortable within the community; they must have easy access to important places; there must be a basis for social interactions, and there must be a sense of pride in, and stewardship of the community. All residents’ sense of place contains certain preconceived sociospatial patterns, which include models of interactions both positive and negative. Also, this sense of place includes ideas on how new residents should fit into the community, such as the ideas of assimilation, multiculturalism, and transnationalism.

Though Somalis are migrating to other parts of Minnesota and to Barron County seeking the slower pace of small-town life and for jobs in manufacturing, Barron County, per the map below, displays a lower percentage of Somalis than parts of Minnesota. Through interviews and field observations, respondents believe nearly 1,000 Somalis, or one third of the total population, live in Barron County. Although, based on recent data from the U.S. Census from the American Community Survey conducted between 2005 and 2009, only sixty-two Somalis were identified in Barron County. Yet through our experiences we believe more Somalis live in Barron County than identified by the U.S. Census.

CONCLUSION
Somali Migration to Eau Claire
Currently there are only a few Somali students attending Chippewa Valley Technical College and University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, as well as only several Somali families currently living in Eau Claire. This is a small number, considering that the Eau Claire population stands at just over 60,000. But Eau Claire is currently progressing towards preparation of Somali migrants. University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire recently created an intercultural immersion project for purposes of training future teachers in creating the cultural bridge between the host community and Somali immigrants in the classroom. These programs happen on site in the Minneapolis/St. Paul schools, where cultural dynamics exist at a higher rate over Eau Claire schools. These immersion experiences can help future teachers understand and work with the complexities of diversity, as well as increase the awareness and advocacy in Somali culture. Positive portrayals in the news media regarding local Somali culture has also been brought to our attention. This is important for our understanding of a Somali culture, especially as dynamic and unfamiliar, their culture may be to us. Perhaps Barron can serve as a model for Eau Claire. We have much to offer the immigrants to our community, and they have much to offer in turn.

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From Cultural Bridge-Making to Sociospatial Patterns, Placemaking, and Incorporation
Upon first settlement of Somalis in Barron in the late 1990s there was little cultural support in place. However, the host community desired to assist in the Somali community's adjustment. Jenni-O, the initial draw for Somalis, took steps to allow breaks for prayer; a key part of the Somali’s faith. At the school level, the increasing population of Somali students required an urgent need for English as a Second Language programs. Furthermore, faculty members of the Barron school district underwent cultural diversity training. Finally, because soccer is a popular sport among Somalis, a high school team was formed creating further positive bonds between Somalis and the greater Barron community.

Sociospacial Patterns
Through training and awareness the routines of daily life and the interaction between immigrants and non-immigrants started to shape in many positive ways. English programs and cultural training were started to assist with not only with Somali skills in English and translating for parent-teacher conferences, but to assist the host community with the cultural dynamics in the classroom. Social interaction was also important within the Somali and Barron community; thus a successful soccer team was created. Somalis’ women’s issues were also addressed, thus the Luther Middelford Northland Hospital System created two positions to not only help with language barriers in the hospital, but also cultural barriers between Muslim Somali women and healthcare practitioners of the host community. These interactions and relationships within the community are some examples of the sociospatial patterns have occurred, and are continually ongoing. Some foundation to sociospatial patterns, in turn, resulted in future recognition and placemaking.

Placemaking
Through some of the positive changes discussed above, Somalis began to feel a sense of place in Barron. As evident in Somali interviews and Barron news accounts, support by the host community for Somali placemaking was evident. One of the most important spaces the Somalis have created was the mosque. Here, with easy access, Somalis had a place to worship and for comfort. Other uniquely Somali places include the Safari Cuisine and the Olympic Coffee Shop as well as the International Center.

Incorporation
Three perspectives are used when studying relationships between host communities and migrants: assimilation, multiculturalism, and transnationalism. Assimilation is the process in which migrants shed their distinctive cultures in order to “blend in” to mainstream culture, multiculturalism is idea of immigrant and host culture interaction, where differences are valued, and migrants in a transnationalistic society tend to maintain their meaningful life activities outside of the host community (Nelson and Hiemstra 2008). While a limited multiculturalism may describe current development in the Barron, there also exist a transregionalism that captures the dynamic links Barron’s Somali community and with the much larger community of Somalis in the Twin Cities. On top of this, the ongoing connections with Somalia and Kenya—characterized, in part, by the remittances sent to family in Africa—take place in the context of transnationalism. Through interviews with Barron’s Somali and non-immigrant residents, it appears that there is growing appreciation for the cultural variety and perspectives that the new-immigrants bring to Barron.

The Case of Integration of Somalis in Barron, Wisconsin

Barron County, WI

Miriam Russell, Laurel Hanson, Erik Janssen, and Tyler Anderson
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Department of Geography and Anthropology

DYNAMICS IN SOCIAL SPACE AND PLACEMAKING: THE CASE OF INTEGRATION OF SOMALIS IN BARRON, WISCONSIN

Percent of the Total Population

Percent of Somali Population as a Percent of the Total Population

Map of Somali places in Barron, Wisconsin

Safari Cuisine & Grocery

Mosque

International Center of Barron, Safari Cuisine and Grocery.