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Intergenerational Conflict in the Somali Diaspora: The Perspectives of Young Somali Men in Australia and USA

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Abstract

This is a qualitative study investigating young Somali men's experiences and views toward the intergenerational conflict between young people and their parents in Australia and US context. The study explores young men's experiences and perspectives about the intergenerational misunderstanding during their social integration into the receiving countries: Australia and USA. The paper focuses on the areas of cultural, language, lifestyle and attitude differences between youth and their parents. Young men's sense of empowerment in the new environment in contrast to their parents who feel being disempowered will be explored. The paper also sheds light on young men's connectedness with their mothers than with their fathers concluding with young men's strategies of seeking advice and consultation.

Keywords: Somali Diaspora, Young Somali men, intergeneration, culture conflict, immigrants, Australia, USA.

1. Introduction

People have been on the move since the beginning of human existence (Berry e al., 2006). However, the movement of ethnically, racially and religiously diverse migrants across continents is a relatively new phenomenon, and has been on the increase since the beginning of the twentieth century due to well advanced technologies and transportation systems (Binder &Tosic, 2002). This new phenomenon of migration presents “both opportunities and challenges for migrants, and receiving societies alike” (Berry et al., 2006: 1). It also poses challenges between young and old generations of migrant background. Some of these people migrate voluntarily, hoping for a better life, but many are forced to migrate because they face persecution due to their beliefs, political opinions, or membership in a particular social group (Binder &Tosic, 2002).

Beside the nomadic way of life that still remains in the Somali mainstream culture, people are afflicted with prolonged civil war which creates hardships and requires moving constantly. As a result of war and violence happening in Somalia, hundreds of thousands of Somalis fled from their homeland seeking a refuge and shelter in countries such as Australia and the USA. Due to ongoing fighting and conflict:

> *Somalia remains one of the countries generating the highest number of displaced people and refugees in the world. There are more than 1.4 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Somalia while over 560,000 Somalis live as refugees in neighbouring and nearby countries* (UNHCR, 2010, online).

Similarly, there are hundreds of thousands of Somalis who sought refuge and shelter across continents mostly in North America, Western Europe, Australia and so on. (UNDP, 2009, online).

Cultures, languages, and general lifestyles of these receiving countries – within which young generation grew up – are greatly different to the culture, language, and general lifestyle which Somali parents brought from their country of origin, Somalia. These differences in terms of culture, language, and general lifestyle created enormous misunderstandings between Somali parents and their children not only in Australia and the USA but also in other countries where Somalis sought protection and shelter (Omar, 2011).

This paper will attempt to identify the underlying factors of this intergenerational misunderstanding, particularly in Australia and the USA context. It presents a story of the experiences of young Somali men who have fled Somalia and are now living in Australia and the USA, explaining Somali youth-parents conflict in the receiving countries. The overall aim of this paper is to investigate and compare the perspectives and experiences of young Somali men living in Australia and the USA in relation to the intergenerational conflict during their social integration process. The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify young Somali men's experiences and perceptions of the differences between them and their parents in the area of culture, language, and general lifestyle.
2. Identify young men's experiences and views on quality of their relationship with their parents together with the best strategies of seeking their parent's advice in matters concerning young men's lives.

This paper draws on the findings from my 2011 PhD thesis and, in doing so, it commences with a brief literature review which provides a context for this study.[1] Next, the methodologies used in the study are explained. Somali community profiles in Melbourne and Minneapolis are also described briefly. The qualitative findings are discussed focusing on young men's experiences and perceptions of intergenerational differences

including differences in thinking, cultural norms, negotiation strategies, language communication, lifestyle, and general outlook on life.

2. Intergenerational Differences in the New Milieu

Each generation has its unique integration experiences as it faces distinctive challenges in its relationship with the larger new society and its own ethnic group (Nee and Alba, 1997). It has been found that first generation[2] migrants retain strong links to the culture in their country of origin, whilst the 1.5 generation or second generation struggles to maintain a balance, selecting from both: its background culture and the new culture (Melia, 2004, p. 127). Thus, the 1.5 or second generation is bicultural and by nature a cultural broker. This is because it breaks through cultural barriers between the country of origin and the hosting country (Vasta, 1994). However, this finding is at odds with studies conducted by Nee and Alba (1997) and Padilla and Perez (2003), who found that the 1.5 and second generation are primarily oriented towards the background culture because its life is profoundly influenced by the first generation, their parents and their migrant community at large. The second generation is also nurtured in traditional ways of thinking and exposed to the behavioural characteristics of its parents and of its community. As a result, it shows strong loyalty to its cultural background and a strong connection to its ethnic community at least theoretically (Nee and Alba, 1997).

Studies conducted in Australia identify that refugee adolescents and older generation including parents face special risks during integration processes. These can be attributed to the lower general adaptability of integrating older people as their involuntary migration aggravates the problem of cultural adaptation, while the "double transition of adolescence and acculturation reinforce each other, creating enhanced risk for youth" (Sam and Berry, 1997, p. 311). Similarly, Vasta (1994)

finds that many migrant adolescents are vulnerable because neither their home nor mainstream culture is entirely their own (Melia, 2004). Moreover, there is evidence that as time passes, and as individual's age, they explore various strategies of integration, choosing the one that is most useful and satisfying (Sam and Berry, 1997). Hamm and Coleman (2001) remark that migrant adolescents seldom adopt a single strategy for acculturation; instead, they develop various strategies to manage in different contexts. Sometimes they use assimilationist strategies, acting like mainstream youth in an attempt to fit into the wider society's culture. Within their communities and at home, however, they may prefer cultural maintenance strategies (Sam and Berry, 1997).

In a liberal western environment, teenagers may feel that their parents are authoritarian. However, (Vasta, 1994) such feelings often reflect their parents' reactions to the unfamiliar environment, lack of confidence in the new culture and concern for their children's integration into the wider society. When migrant children who perceive their parents as authoritarian mature and return to their country of origin, they realize that their parents' authoritarian attitudes were caused by the new environment rather than by their cultural background (Vasta, 1994, Melia, 2004). Sometimes, migrant teenagers may identify themselves neither with mainstream society nor with their ethnic group, instead identifying with another migrant ethnicity. For instance, some Somali teenagers in Australia may identify themselves with Lebanese youth in Australia. This perpetuates the identifier's sense of foreignness; the identifier may be marginalized by his/her own ethnic group, and eventually may develop chronic self-doubt "which can lead to delinquency" (Melia, 2004, p. 127).

3. Research Methodologies

3.1 Ethnographic Research

This is a qualitative study investigating the experiences and perspectives of young Somali men regarding the intergenerational gap and differences. The study was carried out in two field sites, the northwest suburbs of Melbourne, Australia, and the Cedar Riverside neighbourhood of Minneapolis, USA. The total number of formal interviews conducted as part of the study was 80 representing 30 young participants aged 16-25, and 50 other interviewees, including parents and key community members. Thus, the study is informed ethnographically. This type of research is particularly well suited for studying "hard-to-access groups", such as refugees and immigrants, or groups resistant to survey methods (Hudelson, 1996).

At the beginning, the research plan aimed at keeping the balance between female and male participants but during the pilot project in stage one, it was evident that girls were not comfortable discussing some matters related to gender relationships with me while boys did not mind. Islam teaches that interactions between men and women, who are not related, should be instructed and guided carefully particularly in the private spheres. Culturally, it is often taboo (especially by elders) for a woman to have a relationship with an unrelated man, although there is more flexibility for an interviewer's interactions with Somali men. These gender divisions made it difficult for the researcher to discuss a range of issues with young women. For that reason, the researcher decided to drop young women as participants.

3.2 Methods of Data Collection and Sampling

Primary data was mostly gathered through oral/narrative methods, which are best suited to Somali culture as well as to the participant parents'

levels of literacy. Data sources included audio recorded unstructured and semi-structured interviews, focus groups and field participant observations. The sampling strategy of this study was purposive, using a range of specific strategies including snowball sampling, and key informant sampling through community networks.

3.3 Young Participants' Socio-demographic Characteristics

Among those living in Melbourne, all but two of the young people were born in Somalia. One was born in Australia and the other in Saudi Arabia. Their ages range from 16 to 25. Eight young participants out of the 15 young people lived with both parents, and four young participants lived with their mothers only. One young man lived alone, one was married, one lived with his siblings and one lived with his mother and his uncle, who was also his stepfather. Most young people were from large families.

Melbourne participants had lived in Australia for an average of 11 years. Eight out of 15 participants were studying at the time of the interview; one was studying at university, one at TAFE[3], one at ESL[4]and the rest at high school. Two of these students had part-time jobs at the time of the interview. Seven out of 15 were not studying at the time of the interview and five of these seven who were not studying had full time jobs and two had part-time jobs. Again, ten out of 15guardians of the young people had jobs, four did not and one young man did not state his guardian's employment situation.

In the Minneapolis study, all but one participant was born in Somalia (one young participant was born in Kenya). Their ages range from 17 to 25. Only three out of the 15 young people lived with both their parents, six young participants lived with their single mothers, a young man with his father who was married to another woman, two young participants

with their older siblings, two with their uncles, one with his aunt and one lived alone. Most of these young people were from large families ranging from seven to 12 members.

In terms of lengths of residence in the USA, all of them except three young participants had lived in the USA for between seven to 16 years. One young man lived there three years, another young participant lived there almost three years and one young man for four years. In terms of education, all of them were studying either at high school, colleges or university. Five did not work, three worked during summertime and school holidays, three worked fulltime, one worked part-time and one worked as a volunteer. Regarding their guardian employment, 10 out of 15 participants' parents/guardians had jobs; for one, his mum was sick, and another one, his aunt did not work. Two participants, who lived with their old siblings, and one who, lived alone, did not mention if their siblings had jobs.

3.4 Methods of Data Analysis

I began my analysis early in the research process during the formal and informal interviews, which gave me time to reflect on and discuss the topic of the research with participants. Ongoing observations, field notes, interactions with the community members, particularly young people, and attendance at community gatherings and congregations were also important to my analysis, and to understanding the topic deeply. Moreover, I transcribed the interviews myself, which gave me the opportunity to analyse interviews individually and then to analyse cross-case data, comparing their similarities and differences. I then coded and categorised interviews under identified themes.

Data analyses are presented here both directly and indirectly. Sometimes I present direct quotations from participants; sometimes I conceptualise

participants' data in my own words; and sometimes I compare the qualitative data with views expressed in the literature. The main comparison is, however, between the qualitative data itself, for example, comparing data from Melbourne with Minneapolis data. The findings cannot be generalised to the wholly researched population or to the targeted community (Patton, 2002).

4. Somali Communities in Australia and the USA

4.1 Somali Community in Australia

A significant number of Somalis arrived in Australia, especially Victoria, under the Refugee and Special Humanitarian Program and the Family Reunion program, particularly during the period of 1991-2001 (Jupp, 2001; Clyne, and Kipp, 2005). As the 2011 Census shows, the Somali population in Australia numbered around 14000 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). The largest concentration was in Victoria, particularly in Melbourne (61 percent). The majority of Somalis have settled in Melbourne's northwest although there are communities in the inner city suburbs, in the northeast, in the west and in the south. The northwest suburbs of Melbourne are culturally diverse and the specific areas where Somalis have settled can be characterised as low income areas with a high proportion of public housing. The Somali community in Australia is highly urbanised – 98.7 percent live in capital cities (Victorian Multicultural Commission, 2007).

4.2 Somali Community in the USA

As a result of the civil war, the Somali community has become the largest group of African refugees in the USA. It is

> *One of the unique sets of newcomers to ever enter this nation … the uniqueness of these newcomers and the fact that relatively*

> *little is known about them makes it imperative to study and understand their situation* (Goza, 2007: 255).

The most recent estimates of the total population of Somalis living in the USA ranges from 150,000 (Shio, 2006) to 300,000 (Sonsalla, 2003).Probably this number has increased constantly in the last decade.

Since 1991, the number of Somalis has increased rapidly, concentrated in the mid-western states, particularly Minnesota (Goza, 2007, Kusow, 2007). The largest Somali community in the USA lives in the Twin Cities, Minneapolis and St Paul, with a combined population of more than 50,000; the Twin Cities are regarded as the *de facto* capital of the Somali community in the USA (Schaid & Grossman, 2004). Many Somalis, especially new arrivals live "in the Cedar-Riverside areas between downtown Minneapolis and the University of Minnesota where you can easily see women wearing the hijab or a group of Somali men lingering outside a coffee shop" (Roble and Rutledge, 2008: 135). Somalis have also been drawn to almost all cities of Minnesota including small ones. Thus, they can also be found in Rochester, St. Cloud, Owatonna, Waseca, Marshall, Faribault and Mankato (Shio, 2006, Minneapolis Foundation, 2009). Pull factors for Somali resettlement to these cities include good services, education and employment opportunities, a good social welfare system, a well-established Somali community, and word-of-mouth among the Somali diaspora about the benefits of living there (Horst, 2006).

5. Research Findings

The following is the main finding of the study. It explains intergenerational gaps such as: attitude and cultural conflict, language and communication challenges, youth connection and relationships with their mothers in comparison with their fathers, and finally youth strategies of seeking advice and consultation.

5.1 Attitude and Cultural Conflict in the New Setting

> *You take what she [mother] tells you, and you take what you have to do here and you end up somewhere in the middle* (a young man from Melbourne).

According to the data of this study, misunderstandings between Somali boys and their parents are common. Cornelius, and Faire, (2006, 57-58) argue that when two people or two groups are very different in terms of language, culture, way of life, interests and values, it is easy for small incidents to escalate into misunderstandings, tension and crisis. This is because everything they do and say seem alien and wrong to the other side.

Issues of language, culture and intergenerational gaps all contribute to these misunderstandings. Intergenerational gaps have been described "as psychological discontinuities … or absences in shared cultural knowledge, meaning and practices" (Kapteijns and Arman, 2004, p.23).

Cultural misunderstanding can be caused by discrepancies between parents and youth lifestyles, attitudes and general outlook on life, which are influenced by growing up in different contexts and environments. According to a young man participant from Melbourne "*They [parents] don't discuss with their children you know. They have to talk with them about what they do today…to know their problems*". Some young men complain that their parents are reluctant to discuss with them their situations and the challenges they encounter in their daily lives. Instead of conversation and persuasion, parents tend to resort to dictatorial methods and one way process of communication such as "Dos and Don'ts (do and don't strategies)". According to young men in both Melbourne and Minneapolis, most parents expect their children to behave the way they (parents) used to behave in Somalia when they were

children, while Somali children here in Australia and the USA expect their parents to treat them according to Australian/American norms and cultural context.

> *Somali [youth] have one problem. They have no communications with their parents. Parents talk like 1970s, old days are still in their memories, but the young ones are gaining new culture, new things* (a young man from Minneapolis).

> *Somalian parents tend to want you to be like them [and] how they live…your mother has totally different experience in view to you, because she lived in Somalia…there is that difference I mentioned before, culture clashes, like if you are born here, your parents are not born here, you are definitely not going to see eye to eye in every situation, so there is a definitely barrier of your parents expectation in what you see fit* (a young man from Melbourne)

Ramadan (2004) explains that adult Muslims who emigrate to the west bring with them packages of their Islamic cultural habits as they are practiced in Muslim countries. To prove that they are good Muslims, they strive to perpetuate these old customs and expect their offspring to behave similarly. But Ramadan argues that it is a mistake for migrant adults to push their children to follow customs imported from another country, which do not fit the new surroundings. "Today everything is proving that the formalistic imitation of models in an age other than one's own is, in fact, the betrayal of principles" (Ramadan, 2004, p. 133).

Some young men interviewed in this study suggest that Somali parents should be more compassionate and understanding with their children. These young men believe that if Somali parents engage with their children through a more friendly style of interaction, as other parents

(Australian and US parents) do, they would win their children's trust; otherwise, the children will look for alternative friends.

5.2 Intergenerational Power shift

Alongside cultural conflict between youth and their parents, the other issue that requires to be underlined is intergenerational power shift created by the new environment. Young respondents in both countries observed that, compared to life in Somalia, in the new environment children enjoy more power than their parents. These cultural differences create power struggles and challenges between young and old. On the other hand, parents try to impose their views on the youth, but young people are aware of the advantage they have in the new environments and therefore, they may challenge their parents by expressing their views and expecting their ideas and opinions to be considered. A study of Somali parents' involvement in education in Minneapolis-St. Paul (Nderu, 2005), found that Somali parents note that their children are aware of their power over them in the US context. Parents are afraid of being deported, imprisoned or punished by the authorities, or having their children taken away from them, if their children report negative stories about them to the authorities. As a result, some parents allow their children to become unruly. Similarly, Ramsden (2005, p. 203) emphasises that some Somali parents in Melbourne feel a loss of control as parents because of their children's increased freedom in Australia.

> *Whereas Australians promote kids, the kids [are] kinds of run things whereas in Somalia... parents [are the ones who] run stuff. So, definitely that affects that cultural difference whereas as Somalian parents they won't be able control their kids, whereas kids feel here [in Australia] they have sense of control and they should have a say...they [kids] definitely want more power...they wanna have that kind of negotiating and Somalian parents tend not*

> *to allow negotiating…kids want their views to be considered where[as] parents view kids should not have say, they [kids] like they should have say* (a young man from Melbourne)

Youth–parent power struggles and misunderstandings can result in mistrust, tension, precarious relationships and mutual disrespect. This can lead children to manage their affairs independently, without informing their parents of what they are doing because they perceive them as irrelevant in the new context.

> *Parents don't know what is going on. They do know nothing about their children. They do know nothing about what youth are doing. Youth just do what they want to do and they don't tell their parents…They [youth and parents] need more involvement with each other, have discussions, and go together in different places* (a young man from Minneapolis).

Instead of considering their children' views, showing mutual respect of different lifestyles and avoiding judgemental attitudes, disappointed parents criticise their children and their ways of life, which widens the already existing gap between them. Parents' criticism can extend to the ways young people dress, walk, and talk to their parents and elders in general; they emphasise that they (the parents) did not behave like that in Somalia when they were young. Then children perceive their parents' points of view as old-fashioned and irrelevant.

> *There is a sort of misunderstanding like they think differently because most Somali kids grew up in Australia and they straight away pick up Australian culture…and sometimes because of different culture your parents frown when they see you doing something because they didn't use it in Somalia* (a young man from Melbourne).

These misunderstandings and parents' attempts to keep children under control can lead to rebellion and ultimately the children may leave their families to live with their peers. Some young people in Minneapolis or Melbourne apply for government housing. However, when these young men face unexpected financial challenges, they may return home and conform to their parents' demands. It is indeed a clash of cultures, in which parents strive to keep their children away from mainstream influences and remain religious, Muslim Somalis, while youngsters want to behave like their Australian/American counterparts.

> *If you say this is haram, that is haram and you don't explain that is very dangerous attitude…some of them (boys) leave home… They apply house and stay their own ways, some join their friends too. Then when they face tough life, because the income they receive is not enough for rent, food and other expenses…or when disagree with their housemates, they [youths] return back to their families, then say sorry to their mothers. Because at beginning, they think they can stand their own way, but they face different realities* (a young man from Melbourne)

> *It is hard communication [both laugh]…they don't discuss…they [parents] dictate them [youth]… They yell a lot. They say do this and this, and don't do this, I don't know. [Then] They [youth] leave the house or go somewhere, or talk back to them* (a young man from Minneapolis)

Ramadan (2004) explains that the adult Muslim migrants' perspective is that less western culture equals more Islamic culture. Therefore, in order to remain good Muslims, many parents and religious teachers advise and inform young people that:

They should distance themselves from society and be not only vigilant but even radical with regard to the prohibitions …they [adult migrants] feel better in their isolation, in the end, this is easiest and safest. Confrontation with the other [culture] is dangerous…we [Muslim migrants] enjoy talk that affirms us in these feelings in the mosques and at conferences and seminars, speakers who vigorously refer to the prohibition, insist on 'our essential difference' 'our distinctiveness' because of the excellence of our religion 'our necessary distance' find an audience that is emotionally receptive and supportive …this world outside… is a fiction.…daily life is not as clear as our speeches… we may well be satisfied with clear speeches that make us no concessions, but around the mosques, after conferences, young people have school friends, listen to music, go to the cinema…cultural environment, television and their younger cotemporaries inevitably touch the hearts and minds of those who live in Europe or the United States and the answer lies more in learning to manage this impact than in denying or rejecting it (Ramadan, 2004, pp. 217-19).

5.3 Language Difficulties

Big, big issue…some of them [parents] don't speak English language but the son or girl, ma'sha'allah (Allah is great) knows English language well. Sometimes it is possible for children to understand parents' Somali language but get them back into English…So, they just have very simple understanding with their parents…she [mother] says this is my mistake…If I spoke with him in Somali language during his childhood, he could speak today good Somali language…I pushed him to speak English to improve his language so he forgot Somali language (a young man from Melbourne).

As the quote above implies, some young participants and their parents have significant misunderstandings because of language difficulties, and this is confirmed by the literature. Language barriers compound the lack of meaningful communication between first and second generations of Somalis (Clyne, and Kipp, 2005, p. 21).

There were discrepancies between participants' perceptions of the language barrier between them and their parents. The majority of young interviewees in both countries said that they communicate with their parents in a mixture of Somali and English. The determining factor is the generational difference – most young men who grew up in Australia or in the US cannot speak good Somali, whereas most Somali parents cannot speak good English. In this environment, young people and parents blend English and Somali in order to communicate. This phenomenon is described by researchers "as code-switching and/or language blending that are strategic in nature" (Shepard, 2005, p. 164). Parents' mixture of Somali and broken English is an indicator of their relative cultural adaptation to the new environment, whereas children's use of mixed languages is a sign of a continuation of Somali culture. Young male participants in this study revealed that siblings and Somali peer groups communicate in English, indicating that younger people's communication occurs along generational lines. Other studies have also found that most Somali children communicate in English (Clyne and Kipp, 2005; Oikonomidoy, 2005).

> *maybe Somali[language] plus English, mixture you know, we learnt how to mix both languages together, we create our own language you know, instead of saying chair we say 'Chair-ka' we make it Somali, then moms can easily understand it*(a young man from Melbourne).

> *The child understands his mum…because she is around him 24/7, he sleeps in the home, stays in the home, so, somehow, some ways they gonna understand each other, you know, in different ways. If she likes she speaks some broken English language and he may speak some broken Somali language. Most children speak broken Somali. You can see 18 years old born here who speaks like baby language, broken Somali language* (a young man from Minneapolis).

A number of young men in both Melbourne and Minneapolis believe that the motivation for parents to communicate with their children in English is to help the children to grasp English and study well. However, as the response below indicates, some youth believe that good parents are the ones who speak with their children in Somali. The second response below also suggests that, as young people grow up and their Somali remains poor, they feel embarrassed and guilty that they cannot speak in their mother tongue.

> *You can see now a Somali mum of 40 years old who tries to speak with her child in poor English…I swear by Allah, I am surprised!!! Because they think the child will get good job, parents believe that strengthens their children's English from childhood, but good parents talk with their children in Somali language, and children look like they want back to Somalia because of their good Somali language*(a young man from Minneapolis).

> *Some parents speak to their children in English rather than Somali language…if parents speak with them in Somali language, children couldn't lose it…sometimes it is mixed. They talk in Somali, they talk in English but children among them speak English….the more you get old the more you feel ashamed that you don't speak your own language* (a young man from Melbourne).

From a different perspective, one young man in Melbourne suggested that instead of speaking with children in Somali, parents should learn English and speak with their children in English, not in Somali. He sees this as practical because the language that children use at school and in public is English. According to him, speaking with children in English will help the children to improve their English, which will lead them to better educational performance.

> *They live in this country, so, by saying don't speak English at home, tend to cut off the practice they need it at the young age. I remember when I was in primary school, I was told not to speak English at home* (a young man from Melbourne).

As this statement indicates, a few young interviewees' parents encourage them to speak Somali. This is, however, at odds with Clyne's and Kipp's (2005, p. 21) conclusion that Somali parents tend to speak with their children in Somali and that most children reply to them in Somali.

A number of formal and informal interviewees in Melbourne and Minneapolis revealed that many parents prefer to speak to their children in English in order to learn English from them:

> *I swear by Allah, parents sometimes learn from you. They learn from their kids. There are some parents who before they judge their children, listen to them...they know that children can not be beaten in this country…* (A young man from Melbourne).

5.4 More Connection with Mothers than Fathers

During interviews, the majority of young participants in both cities talked more frequently about their *hooyo*/mother than about their *aabbo*/father, which may indicate that they feel more closely connected to their mothers than their fathers. Such attitudes could be

attributed to gendered parenting styles, where Somali fathers' relationships with their sons are generally authoritarian and distant. Somali mothers' softer, more caring styles, developed through their daily interactions and connections with their children, may be more effective in the new environment in which the child–parent relationship is generally based on negotiation, friendship and consideration (Kapteijns and Arman, 2004). Some children live with both parents, but the father's role is greatly diminished in the new environment, to the extent that children can perceive their fathers and other adult males as uncaring. In contrast, the mother's role is growing in the new environment because she takes on more responsibilities; in some cases, they extend into what are traditionally fathers' responsibilities. Many children live with single mothers and have no male figure in their families. Many families are "broken"; separation and divorce rates are very high in the Somali community. Many families came to the west only with mothers because the fathers had been killed in the civil war. Some of these views are summarised by a young man in Minneapolis.

> *The dad is more careless. People I saw them, all kids I have grown up with them; have mums, their dad probably they don't know where he is, or maybe he is at home but really he don't care... The mom is the one who every day runs after her son and asks [people] "have you seen my son, have you seen my son... they [mothers] care about their kids... When they [boys] see other kids [from the mainstream] are helped by their dads, then they reminisce that they miss something [good]. But the most important person is the mom. Moms are mostly taking both jobs mom's job and dad's job.*

Reflection: I observed that when young men talked about their relationships with parents, family matters and homework, they used the word 'mother' over and over again, but did not say 'father' very much. This is because the mother is the fulcrum of family life in Somali communities in the diaspora. Secondly, around half of Somali households are assumed to be run by single mothers. Moreover, mothers' roles in family and community affairs are increasing in economic, educational and social matters. Fathers' roles and influences are waning. Most fathers are also poorly connected with their children, particularly their sons, for whom, it is assumed, they are mentors and role models.

5.5 Seeking Advice and Consultation

When participants were asked about sources of advice and consultation when dealing with important issues, their responses included – parents, teachers, siblings, friends, and open minded people, but the most common answer was that they seek advice from a person qualified to deal with that particular issue rather than their parents. This is because parents are often perceived by young participants not to have enough understanding of young men's present situation in the new environment. They are also seen as lacking the skills and knowledge to help their children to solve the problems created by the new situation. The phrase "it depends on" what kind of advice you are looking for, was used by most young interviewees. "For *education, I probably go to my teachers, or my…library helper…for other stuff, I don't really seek help for it*" (a young man from Minneapolis).

> *It will depend on the situation the consultation is about, because I tend to go an experienced person in the field to give me that you*

> *know, someone who knows what they talking about, because there is no point to going someone who knows nothing about the topic, and asking advice for those is very useless, but just in general talking about normal problem I face day to day I tend to go that person in the family that I can make connected to speak the language and we can understand where we come from*(a young man from Melbourne).

While some young men, who do not live with their fathers, do not consult with either their fathers or mothers, a few interviewees in both countries who live with their fathers stated that if the issue is serious and private, then they go to their fathers and perhaps their mothers. Shepard (2005, p. 187) also found that most Somali boys and young men who live with both parents seek advice from their fathers rather than from their mothers. They perceive fathers as more educated, knowledgeable and understanding of what goes on beyond family boundaries.

> *It depends on the kind of advice. If it is personal advice, I go to my dad, and if it is job advice, I go to the agency, different advice for different resources…it is always different* (a young man from Melbourne).

> *I like my mum more but I am close to my dad. My dad, he is my best friend. When I have a problem, I talk to him. I am close more with my dad. Because he is a man and I am man… It depends on what it [the problem] is, but I most likely go to my dad. I may also go to my friends. I actually go to my dad, mum and friends basically and teachers…like if it is a serious issue, you go to your family. If it is something like is okay, you go to your friends. If it is something to do with school, you go to your teachers…it is different cases* (a young man from Minneapolis).

One young interviewee in Melbourne who was very religious noted that if he faces some challenges, he simply prays to Allah and does not seek help from Somalis. His view is that Somalis' appearance and their inward life are different and they cannot be trusted because they are spoilt by the new environment.

6. Conclusion

This was a qualitative study focused on the intergenerational conflict between young Somali men and their parents in Australia and US context. It suffices to say that each generation has its challenges and own unique strategies during a social integration process in culturally and linguistically diverse society like Australia and the USA. While the first generation of migrants attempts to hold their culture of origin in the new setting, young generation struggles to keep a balance between their cultural background and the culture of the new hosting country. For that reason, the young generation is defined as a cultural broker.

Language, attitude and cultural conflicts between Somali youth and their parents are huge. This is because of the absence of shared cultural knowledge, meaningful communication, mutual understanding and practices. Young men have been influenced greatly by the new environment compared to their parents who are stuck with their cultural packages they brought from Africa.

Instead of building up good relationships with their children that is based on compassion, consultation, understanding, more friendly style and consideration of their children' views, many Somali parents tend to employ authoritarian strategies similar to the way they had been ~~were~~ treated in Somalia when they were children. However, Somali children are aware of the advantages they have in the new system, and therefore, many of them do not value or pay attention to their parents' orders. For that reason, many Somali parents feel a loss of control over their children whilst children perceive their parents as irrelevant in the new

environment. This intergenerational misunderstanding and cultural conflict entailed mistrust, misconception, tension, and unhealthy relationship between young Somalis and their parents in Australia and the USA and in the West in general.

The difference in itself is not the problem; judgement, assumptions, and miscommunication, however, are the problem. If relationships, approaches and communications are health and appropriate, meaningful understanding and mutual respect are the expected to be the outcome. Therefore, it is crucial that non-judgemental attitudes, respectful approaches, health relationships, and appropriate communication methods should be adopted as principles and put into practices even if we disagree greatly with the opposing person or group (Cornelius, and Faire, 2006, pp. 57-58). Thus, Somali parents and their children in the West should develop mutual respect during their interaction in their everyday life.

In regard to the issues concerning relations with their parents, most young men felt more engaged with and connected to their mothers than their fathers. This is because Somali fathers' parenting style and relationships with their sons are generally perceived to be more authoritarian and remote whereas Somali mother`s parenting style and relationship with their children are softer, interactive, and more a caring style, and that would be more effective in the new environment in which the child–parent relationship is generally based on negotiation, friendship and consideration.

Finally, most young men participated in this study showed that that they seek advice from people qualified to deal with that particular issue rather than their mothers or fathers. This is because young men perceived that their parents have no enough skills and understanding of young men's needs in the new environment, however, young men seek their parents' advice particularly from their fathers when dealing with matters concerning family issues.

Notes

[1] Omar, Y (2011) "Integration from Youth Perspectives: A Comparative Study of Young Somali Men in Melbourne and Minneapolis" School of Social Sciences, La Trobe University.

[2] There is no universal consensus of the definition of the first generation or second generation. Therefore 'first generation' in this context refers to those immigrants or refugees who were born in another country and then migrated or were relocated to another country while they were older than 5 years and then have become citizens and residents in the new country. 1.5 generation refers to those young people who came to the new country younger than 5 years old. They are midway between the first generation and the second generation.Second-generation refers to individuals who were naturally born in the relocated country to one or more parents who were born outside of the new country. [More details for definitions of immigrant generations, please see: Moffett, D (Date unknown), How Is First-Generation Immigrant Defined? (Available online):http://immigration.about.com/od/glossary/f/How-Is-First-generation-Immigrant-Defined.htm]

[3] Technical and Further Education (TAFE) is Australia's largest provider of vocational education and training.In many instances TAFE study can be used as partial credit towards Bachelor degree-level university programs.

[4] ESL stands for English as a Second Language.

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